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**The President
Republic of South Africa
Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa
By Email.**

Dear President Ramaphosa

**SUGGESTED PROTOCOL FOR THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF
AFRICAN FOREIGN NATIONALS IN SOUTH AFRICA ESPECIALLY
DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN.**

OneAfrica, as an organization initiated to understand the causes, and act to prevent and manage the manifestation of intra-African tensions and conflicts at community level, wants to commend you and the government for an unprecedented announcement of measures to defeat the Covid-19 virus, to secure the lockdown and to manage the exacerbated consequences – hunger, joblessness, recession and poverty – thereof. We are worried that African foreign nationals in our communities, who are exposed to the same potential danger of the virus and experience the same consequences of the lockdown and economic devastation, may be the secondary victims of official confusion, neglect or abuse. This letter, therefore, urges that policy clarity, regulatory consistency and security against opportunistic criminality be provided urgently.

OneAfrica has been concerned that pre-existing tensions and hostility between South Africans and their African counterparts could be exacerbated during the lockdown brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. We were hoping that the overarching sense of danger would create a sense of solidarity. Three weeks into the lockdown, however, we fear that this solidarity and tenuous coexistence are in danger of degenerating into old tensions, hostility and anticipated violence. For this reason OneAfrica convened an online conference of South African leaders and activists who are monitoring the potential for Xenophobia and who were especially active during the relatively successful management of the 2007/2008 episodes of intra-African conflict in the Western Cape.

OneAfrica would be keen to replicate and significantly update and improve the comprehensive Social Cohesion model implemented proactively through 2007 and the interventions that mitigated the conflict and violence in 2008. Many of the drivers of these were present in the



discussion and were able to suggest an immediate ***Protocol for Preventing and Managing the Potential for Intra-African Conflict.***

The key components to be presented to Government include:

1. START WITH THE DRIVERS OF TENSION

If prior to the Covid-19 lockdown already there were conflicts arising out of the competition for scarce resources in the poorest areas of South Africa, then the conditions for tension would only worsen under lockdown. Unemployment, food security and evictions from homes have already worsened with no prospect that these will easily be restored after lockdown. An economy that had already entered recession, worsened by a downgrade and exacerbated by the lockdown will take long to recover, with the prospect of deeper inequality and poverty, and thus we can expect the drivers of tension and conflict to be even more fertile terrain for competition and violence.

It is crucial that those who are not South African, co-existing under the same danger of the Covid-19 virus and the same socio-economic hardships, are included in measures announced for relief and stimulus.

2. DISABLE THE INSTINCT FOR XENOPHOBIA

In times of stress, tension and depression, in an environment of poor services to maintain and build people's coping mechanisms and innate relational resources, where material resources are scarce and the potential for conflict is ever present, markers of difference, varying identities and a perceived power differential can often graduate tensions to violence. While the underlying causes are the real drivers of conflict, they are often presented as intra-vulnerable identity strains, exploited by unscrupulous populists, and manifesting as one bigotry or the other. Poverty is real, but so has the violence of xenophobia become real because an 'other' has been presented as the cause of the misery.

It is crucial that a media-driven campaign of education is driven alongside the Covid-19 campaign that instills a message of peaceful coexistence, respect for all people, and alerts to the dire consequence for impunity, whether for those who foment – through inciting hate speech - or those who practice conflict.



3. DON'T INHIBIT TESTING AND TREATMENT

While we understand the need for rules and regulations to apply equally, we can often have unintended consequences in an over-zealous application thereof. In a time of danger, the relentless pursuit of the undocumented may inhibit them from seeking testing when they exhibit symptoms or seek treatment or isolation when suspected of having the virus. This could pose a serious danger for all.

It is crucial that the first priority remains defeating the virus by flattening the curve and making it safe, therefore, for ALL to present for testing or treatment, notwithstanding whether they are documented or undocumented. There should be a known lockdown amnesty for such official infractions.

4. PROVIDE HUMANE AND EQUITABLE SERVICES

Cape Town is witness to two deplorable examples of alternative accommodation of people affected by Covid-19, in addition to the already awful situation of housing affecting the poorest of the poor. While the housing crisis must be addressed, the immediate challenge is to find humane and equitable alternatives to homelessness, both for the South African homeless as well as the homeless among refugee and immigrant communities. Tents on the cold, wind-swept beaches of Cape Town – WITH services like water, sanitation and food – are marginally more acceptable than their equivalent at Wingfield – WITHOUT any of the services.

We need a commitment to equitable, humane services for ALL exposed to the danger of Covid-19, without the stark contrast of differential treatment.

5. PREVENT CONFLICT AND CRIMINALITY

The early signs show that fellow Africans are already being exposed to instances of exploitation, conflict and criminality – both by state officials and citizens. Exploiting the vulnerability of refugees and migrants, state officials either benignly (suggesting that African Foreign Nationals should rather desist from exercising their right to do business to avoid



conflict) or malignantly (extorting bribes in exchange for permits) are preventing legitimate work and business by fellow Africans. Also, this same vulnerability allows for spontaneous or opportunistic looting attacks on foreign-owned businesses.

It is crucial that law enforcement is equally applied against ALL instances of wrongdoing – from price manipulation to food expiration to rental extortion to looting – since combatting impunity is the surest preventative mechanism, while assisting with an immediate, if rudimentary, mechanism of early warning, rapid response and conflict intervention.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS ORIENTED SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT

If South Africans are subjected to harsh, gratuitous and inhumane treatment by security force in the enforcement of the lockdown, then the situation is worse for those perceived to be alien, undocumented and different. While law enforcement is appreciated against impunity, it should not itself be a cause for distress.

It is crucial therefore, that African foreign nationals should enjoy equal and humane treatment from security personnel, based on our constitution, and should have recourse to a complaints mechanism and subsequent relief, not official opprobrium. A toll-free line should be available for ALL in order to ensure accountability of those we trust to enforce the mechanisms critical for everyone's wellbeing.

7. DEPOLITICISATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND SERVICE INTERVENTIONS

The President embodies the legitimacy of the Covid-19 response, enjoys unprecedented trust and is the focus of our unity as a nation, together with all who reside in South Africa. Aware that next year is the scheduled Local Government Elections, it is crucial that the cohesion of the nation, the cooperation of parties and the synergy of spheres of government not be compromised. Already we are seeing branded relief, incoherent policy application and divisive behavior manifesting. The people who suffer are the poor and the more vulnerable among them since they could be perceived not to be voters and therefore, not worthy of assistance.

It is crucial that we maintain unity and cohesion, that we unite around the President and that we depoliticize any Covid-19 interventions.

Wishing you wisdom and strength. Be assured of our support.

Ebrahim Rasool

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for: OneAfrica

cc: Gen B Cele	: Minister of Police
Ms N Dlamini-Zuma	: Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Ms N Mapisa – Nqakula	: Minister of Defence & Military Veterans
Ms L Zulu	: Minister of Social Development
Mr E Patel	: Minister of Trade and Industry