Press Statement: Xenophobic violence in Tel-Aviv, and Israeli deportation of African Refugees and Migrants

On the 28th of June, PASSOP, Kairos and BDS South Africa will be demonstrating outside of the Provincial Legislature to raise awareness of the recent outbreaks of xenophobic violence in Israel, and in opposition to the ACDP march in support of Israel.

Recently, xenophobic violence erupted in Tel-Aviv, with over 1,000 taking to the streets to violently protest against African migrants, targeting the vehicles of migrants, shops known to serve and employ migrants, and their homes. Whilst Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has condemned the violence, he has simultaneously added fuel to the fire of xenophobic sentiments in Israel through his instructions to speed up the deportation of 25,000 African migrants and by referring to them as “infiltrators” undermining the national identity, security and social fabric of the Israeli state. Other Israeli MPs have referred to migrants, particularly those originating from Sudan, as a “cancer” in the body of Israel and other such derogatory statements that fuel xenophobia in the country towards African migrants. It is estimated that around 60,000 African migrants live in Israel at present. We are further alarmed at the incentivising of African migrants to repatriate, with the Israeli government offering $300 and a one-way plane ticket to those willing to return. Israel has recently forcibly repatriated 150 African migrants, and figures suggest that around 300 have accepted the repatriation incentive thus far. Finally, Israel is continuing with the construction of what will be upon completion the largest refugee detention centre in the world, expected to house between 8,000 and 11,000 refugees in the Negev Sand Dunes. The ACDP, through its declarations of support for the Apartheid Israeli state, justifies and legitimates the xenophobic rhetoric and behaviour of Israel and its politicians. The state of Israel is encouraging, through both its rhetoric and its actions, intolerance of migrants and increased xenophobic sentiment throughout the country.

We also reject the ACDP attacks on Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies, for the government’s decision to label products originating from the Occupied Palestinian Territories as such. This move brings South Africa into line with the consumer policy of many bodies, such as the E.U, where consumers must be informed whether products from the West Bank are from Palestinian enterprises, or Israeli enterprises operating in the Occupied Territories. We believe that consumers have the right to make conscious choices in regards to the origins of the products they purchase and fully support Minister Davies’ decision.

This protest aims to increase awareness of these issues and to take a stand against xenophobia around the world. Join us at 14:00 outside of the Provincial Legislature Building on Thursday the 28th of June.