

URGENT ACTION

TWO REFUGEES DEAD AND MANY INJURED IN ATTACK

Attacks on foreign-owned shops in Mamelodi, Pretoria, have left two refugees dead and dozens reported injured. At least 75 shops have been looted. The situation in the township northeast of South Africa's capital city, Pretoria, remains tense. Refugees and migrants are being evacuated from the area by civic groups but there is concern for the safety of those assisting evacuation.

On the afternoon of 7 June, attacks started against mostly Somali-owned shops in Mamelodi Extension 6, a township northeast of Pretoria. The motive for the attacks is not known. A group of over 100 people used the cover of an electricity black-out in the area to loot and burn approximately 50 shops. One shop keeper was shot dead and one is missing, feared dead. Police in the area did little to protect targeted shops or to assist in the evacuation of people and property. It is also alleged by refugees in the area that the police seemed more interested in verifying the legal status of the shop owners than preventing the crimes that were being perpetrated in front of them.

By Sunday 8 June, a vehicle from the local cluster policing unit had been deployed to the area and managed to dissuade groups of youths from carrying out further attacks.

On 9 June, shop owners in Nellmapius, an area just outside of Mamelodi, were reporting being under attack. By later that afternoon, shop keepers across Mamelodi were being attacked and their shops and property looted. Refugee groups from outside Mamelodi tried to assist with the evacuation of shops but came under attack themselves. One vehicle was destroyed. By the end of the night, 10 shops had been evacuated but 25 more shops had been looted. By early afternoon of 10 June a new wave of attacks and looting in Mamelodi East was underway.

The failure of concerted police action to protect the lives and property of refugees in the Mamelodi area is leaving many at risk.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern about the resurgence of attacks, property violence and forced evictions of refugees (including asylum seekers) in the Mamelodi area;
- Calling on authorities to ensure that the South African Police Service provides protection and impartial and professional services to all people living within its jurisdiction. All police station commanders in the province should be equipped with clear and consistent standing orders to protect the lives and property of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants against perpetrators of organised violence, looting and threatened or actual forcible closures of their shops;
- Calling on authorities at all levels to uphold South Africa's obligations to protect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JULY 2014 TO:

Station Commander, Mamelodi East Police

Station

Brigadier L. Tshayana

Private Bag X79248

Mamelodi East, 0122

South Africa

Fax: +27 12 815 7024

Salutation: Dear Brigadier

Cluster Commander, Mamelodi Cluster,

South African Police Service

Major General G.D. Seswike

PO Box 55

Mamelodi West, 0101

South Africa

Fax: +27 12 812 9030

Salutation: Dear Major General

And copies to:

Gauteng Provincial Commissioner, South
African Police Service

Lt General L.J. Mothiba

16 Empire Road

Johannesburg, 2017

South Africa

Fax: + 27 11 274 7312

Email: gpprovcommpa@saps.org.za

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These attacks in Mamelodi have occurred against a backdrop of ongoing and widespread targeted violence against refugees and migrants in South Africa. In the first two and a half months of 2014, similar incidents were recorded in seven provinces of South Africa. Around 1,000 refugees and migrants, including family members of shop-keepers, were displaced as a result of looting and destruction of property in 300 small businesses and a number of refugees were reportedly killed. In late March, approximately 600 people were displaced as a result of looting and property destruction in over 150 shops in one single location in Mpumalanga (a province in the east of South Africa). Further incidents have continued to be reported throughout April and May. In some cases, humanitarian, refugee and civil society organisations working with some local or Public Order police units have managed to avert or mitigate the worst effects of this violence.

Amnesty International remains concerned that in the six years since the large-scale violence and displacements of 2008, the South African authorities have not put in place any systematic measures of prevention and protection.

In the absence of systematic measures of prevention and protection, as well as the apparent impunity for the perpetrators, some refugees and migrants have sought to protect themselves with arms. In the past year, at least three community members have alleged to have been involved in attacks were reportedly killed or seriously injured.

Amnesty International has continued to raise its concerns with the South African authorities, at local, provincial and national authorities in recent years and most recently, in a letter to the President in April 2014.

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