

XENOPHOBIA TIMELINE

1994

- The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) threatens to take „physical action“ if the government fails to respond to the perceived crisis of undocumented migrants in South Africa.
- IFP leader and Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi says in his first speech to parliament: “If we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme.”
- Violence erupts in a squatter camp in Hout Bay when Namibians are physically attacked by South African migrants who claim that the migrants are “stealing their jobs” in the fishing industry.
- Protestors in Alexandra Township march to the local police station with demands that include “Zimbabweans, Malawians and Mozambicans go home.”
- Gangs of South Africans try to evict Mozambicans, Zimbabweans and Malawians from Alexandra Township, blaming them for increased crime, sexual attacks and unemployment. The violent campaign, lasting several weeks, is known as “Buyelekhaya” (Go back home). One victim, Kenneth Ngwenya, had arrived in South Africa from Zimbabwe some thirty years previously.

1995

- A report by the Southern African Bishops’ Conference concludes: “There is no doubt that there is a very high level of xenophobia in our country ... One of the main problems is that a variety of people have been lumped together under the title of ‘illegal immigrants’, and the whole situation of demonising immigrants is feeding the xenophobia phenomenon.”
- A report by the HSRC, based on flawed methodology, claims there are 5-8 million “illegal aliens” in South Africa. The number is taken as a fact by politicians and the media. The study is not withdrawn by the HSRC until 2001. The falsified numbers continue to be cited to this day.
- South Africa offers permanent residence to long-serving migrant miners from neighbouring countries. 51.000 miners from Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland are granted permanent residence.

1996

- Violent conflict between local and foreign migrants breaks out in Mizamoyethu (“Our Own Endeavours”), Cape Town. A one thousand strong crowd tries to drive foreign nationals out of the settlement. Two immigrants

Compiled by Ashley Hill and Kate Lefko-Everett. Sources include: UN, Human Rights Watch, SAMP, SAHRC, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Wits Forced Migration Programme, Mail&Guardian Online, ANC News Brief, BBC News. Source: The Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) (2008), “The Perfect Storm: The Realities of Xenophobia in Contemporary South Africa”. Migration Policy Series No. 50. Series Editor: Prof Jonathan Crush. Cape Town. ISBN 978-1-920118-71-6 Transcribed for study purposes: Research Unit on Liberatory Processes in Pre- and Post-Colonial Southern Africa (RULPSA), www.benkhumalo-seegelken.de 09.11.2008

and two South Africans are *killed*. A peace accord is brokered by the ANC mayor, Dickie Meyer.

- Local hawkers attack foreign traders in Germiston. One of the leaders of the foreign hawkers, Mr. Patrick Acho, is shot to death. Somali refugees are forced to stop hawking in Kempton Park after being threatened, and in some cases attacked, by local hawkers. On complaining to the police they are reportedly told "this is not your country, go back to your own country."
- At the urging of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, Minister Buthelezi appoints an independent Green Paper Task Team chaired by Prof Wilmot James of Idasa.
- South Africa offers permanent residency to SADC nationals who have been living "illegally" in South Africa for more than five years. Over 200.000 apply and approximately 124.000 receive permanent residence.
- Residents of Alexandra demonstrate at the Department of Home Affairs in an attempt to disrupt the issuing of identity-documents to immigrants who they claim steal their jobs.

1997

- Defence Minister Joe Modise links the issue of undocumented migration to increased crime in a newspaper interview.
- In a speech to parliament, Home Affairs Minister Buthelezi claims "illegal aliens" cost South African taxpayers "billions of Rand" each year.
- Local hawkers in central Johannesburg attack their foreign counterparts for two consecutive days, scattering and looting their belongings and beating the foreign traders with knobkerries. A flyer announcing the protest states "We want to clean the foreigners from our pavement." The chairperson of the Inner Johannesburg Hawkers Committee is quoted as saying: "We are prepared to push them out of the city, come what may. My group is not prepared to let our government inherit a garbage city because of these leeches."
- Five hundred South African hawkers march in Johannesburg chanting "chase the makwerekwere out," and "down with the foreigner, up with South Africans."
- A privatized deportation holding centre is established to process deportees. Called Lindela ("wait"/"placing of waiting"), the centre is initially operated by the Dymbu Trust, a venture set up by a group of top ANC Women's League figures.
- A Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey of migrants in Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe shows that very few wish to settle permanently in South Africa. A related study of migrant entrepreneurs in Johannesburg finds that they create an average of three jobs per business.
- A Draft Green Paper on International Migration is produced by an independent task team. It calls for *a rights-based approach* to immigration. Minister Buthelezi and his senior white officials are unhappy with the report and appoint separate task teams to draft refugee and immigration white papers under Departmental control.
- In December, the Cape Town refugee Forum claims that 20 immigrants have been killed in the city as a result of xenophobia that year.

1998

- South Africa introduces its first refugee protection legislation. Problems of implementation bedevil the Act for many years leading to major backlogs of refugee claimants.
- Three non-South Africans are killed on a train travelling between Pretoria and Johannesburg in what is described as a xenophobic attack.
- Two foreign nationals are “necklaced” (burnt alive) in Ivory Park, near Midrand.
- In December The Roll Back Xenophobia Campaign is launched by a partnership of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the National Consortium on Refugee Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- The Department of Home Affairs reports that the majority of deportations are of Mozambicans (141.506) followed by Zimbabweans (28.548).
- A report by Human Rights Watch documents extensive abuse of migrants by employers and the police. The report is heavily criticized by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs.
- Six white police set *attack dogs* on three Mozambican migrants and insult them with racist and xenophobic abuse. The incident is captured on video and aired to public outrage in 2000. The perpetrators are later tried, found guilty and imprisoned.
- SAHRC issues Braamfontein Statement on Xenophobia.

1999

- South Africa offers permanent residence to Mozambican refugees who have been in the country for 10-15 years. Approximately 90.000 applicants are successful. This brings the number of Mozambicans legally in South Africa to well over 200.000.
- A report by the SAHRC notes that xenophobia underpins police action against foreigners. People are apprehended for being “too dark” or “walking like a black foreigner.” Police also regularly destroy documents of black non-South Africans.
- SAMP releases a survey of South African attitudes to immigrants and immigration which shows that most South Africans share the same “stereotypical image of Southern Africans.”
- The Department of Home Affairs releases a White Paper on International Migration and accompanying legislation calling for a new immigration policy. Human rights groups criticize both as a recipe for increased xenophobia. The new legislation stalls in Parliament and Cabinet for three years.
- Six foreign nationals accused of criminal activity are kidnapped by a mob in Ivory Park. Two are *killed* by “necklacing,” three of the others are seriously injured and one manages to escape.
- Reports surface that undocumented Mozambican migrants being repatriated to Mozambique are regularly robbed, beaten and sometimes *thrown from moving trains* on the journey home.

2000

- Sudanese refugee James Diop is seriously injured after being thrown from a train in Pretoria by a group of armed med. Kenyan Roy Ndeti and his room mate are *shot* in their home. Both incidents are described as xenophobic attacks.

- In Operation Crackdown, a joint police and army anti-crime sweep, over 7.000 people are *arrested on suspicion* of being "illegal aliens." In contrast, only 14 people are arrested for serious crimes.
- A SAHRC report on the Lindela deportation centre lists a series of abuses at the facility, including *assault* and the systematic denial of basic rights. The report notes that 20 percent of detainees claimed South African citizenship or that they were in the country legally.
- A SAMP report on media attitudes to migrants finds evidence of xenophobic reporting by the press.
- Two Mozambican farm workers are *assaulted* at a farm by a group called Mapogo-a-Mathaga after being accused of stealing by their employer. One of the men dies as a result of the attack.
- COSATU issues statement condemning xenophobia.

2001

- According to the 2001 census, out of South Africa's population of 45 million, just under one million foreign nationals are legally resident in the country. However, the Department of Home Affairs repeats its earlier discredited claims that there are more than seven million undocumented migrants.
- Three Somalis are attacked by a *dog* pursuing a burglar. When the policemen are asked to control their dog one responds with: "Don't tell me what to do you f---ing foreigners." Witnesses speak of the policemen claiming that they were checking to see if the dog could still bite.
- The chairperson of SAHRC accuses the Department of Home Affairs of being "rabidly xenophobic."
- SAMP releases a second report on South African attitudes to migrants. The report warns that xenophobic attitudes could turn violent.
- Wits academics, Klaaren and Ramji, release report highly critical of xenophobia and abuse of migrants by the police force.
- SAMP argues that the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa is grossly exaggerated. The Head of Statistics South Africa, mark Orkin, agrees and withdraws an earlier HSRC study.
- South African residents of the Zandspruit settlement near Johannesburg force hundreds of Zimbabwean residents from the area and *burn dozens of homes* after a Zimbabwean is accused of killing a local woman.
- Violent clashes break out in Milnerton between Angolans and South Africans who accuse the migrants of taking their jobs and women. Three Angolans and one South African, accused of killing one of the migrants, are *killed*.
- Writing in ANC Today, President Mbeki criticizes South Africans for their attitudes to other Africans.
- The SAHRC winds up its Roll Back Xenophobia Campaign due to lack of funding.

2002

- Parliament passes a new Immigration Act. As a result of criticism of earlier drafts by human rights organizations, the Act promises to combat xenophobia but does not say how.
- A Nigerian man is *beaten to death* by three South African policemen.

2003

- A National Refugee Baseline Survey carried out by CASE finds that “Almost two thirds of applicants (63%) perceived South Africans in a negative light. In one third of the cases, applicants indicated that South Africans do not like foreigners, that they are xenophobic, and that they often refer to applicants as “amakwerekwere” (a hate name for foreigners). In addition, 28% of applicants indicated that South Africans are particularly hostile and aggressive, often due to being ignorant about the plight of refugees.”
- A survey carried out in Johannesburg and Hillbrow finds that two thirds of respondents believe that foreigners are responsible for crime. 40 percent of foreigners surveyed have the same opinion.

2004

- Protests erupt at Lindela over claims of *beatings and inmate deaths* coinciding with hearings into xenophobia by SAHRC and parliament’s portfolio committee on foreign affairs.
- Violence breaks out between Xhosa and Shangaan speaking peoples in informal settlements near Rustenburg. Two are *killed*, four are injured and 52 families are displaced when their shacks are burned down.
- A fifteen year old South African boy is picked up by police who attempt to repatriate him to Mozambique, claiming that he is *too dark to be South African*.
- A Somali shop owner is shot dead in broad daylight in his own shop on Christmas Day. Nothing is stolen and xenophobia is thought to be the motive.

2005

- Three Somali refugees are *stabbed to death* outside their shop. The attacks are thought to be motivated by xenophobia and resentment of their successful businesses.
- A Human Rights Watch report documents the *harassment, mistreatment and extortion* of asylum-seekers and refugees by law enforcement agencies, the arrest, detention and threat of deportation of refugees and asylum-seekers as “illegal foreigners”, and the unlawful detention and threats of deportation at Lindela Repatriation Centre.
- 146 people are arrested for malicious damage to property and theft following *attacks* on twelve foreign-owned businesses in Viljoenskroon
- Zimbabwean and Somali refugees are *beaten* in Bothaville, in the Free State. The attacks occur after a community protest against the local municipality, and are accompanied by looting.

2006

- Somali shop owners in a township outside Knysna are *chased out* of the area and at least 30 ‘spaza shops’ (tuck shops) are damaged. Tensions start when an 18-year-old South African is *shot* by a Somali shopkeeper. After police arrest four robbery suspects and a shop owner, a crowd goes to all the Somali-owned shops in the area and *destroys* them.
- Violent riots erupt in Choba between foreigners and local residents, who claim that the migrant steal their jobs. Two are *killed*, including a Zimbabwean man who is *burned to death*.
- Two Zimbabweans are *killed* in violent clashes between South Africans and foreigners in the informal settlement of Olievenhoutbosch.

- Violence erupts against foreigners in Plettenberg Bay. Local residents claim that the migrants are stealing their jobs. At least one man is *killed*.
- Attacks occur against Somalis in the Cape Flats. During a period of just over a month, somewhere between 20 and 30 people are *killed* in townships surrounding Cape Town. Shops are *robbed and looted*. At least one Somali woman is *shot*, execution style, at a taxi rank.
- Somali-owned businesses in the informal settlement of Diepsloot, outside Johannesburg, are repeatedly torched.
- A gang vandalises more than 20 tuck-shops and fruit stalls owned by Mozambicans in Zamdela. 10 Mozambicans are *injured* when they are pelted with stones in the same attack.
- Somali refugees in Masiphumelele are attacked and shops looted and torched. Dozens are forced into hiding.
- The Baltimore Sun publishes an article called "Rising Tide of Xenophobia" about the particularly violent form of xenophobia that exists in South Africa.

2007

- UNHCR notes its concern over the increase in the number of xenophobic attacks on Somalis. The Somali community claims 400 people have been killed in the past decade.
- Anti-Somali riots are held in Port Elizabeth. Reuters reports that about 40 Somalis have been *killed* in Western Cape in a six month period.
- In Motherwell, over one-hundred Somali-owned shops are *looted* in a 24 hour period. A day later, more than four hundred Somalis *leave* the township in fear, most without any of their belongings.
- Mobs of youths *destroy and loot* shops belonging to Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali and Ethiopian shop-owners in Ipelegeng near Schweizer-Reneke.
- More than 20 people are arrested after shops belonging to Somalis and other foreign nationals are *torched* during anti-government protests in Khutshong Township, southwest of Johannesburg.
- Shops owned and staffed by non-nationals are *attacked and looted* in Delmas. 40 non-nationals flee and are temporarily accommodated at mosques and with friends.
- A pub in Port Elizabeth *bans* Nigerians.
- Two Somali men are *burnt alive* in their shop in Mossel Bay the night after another Somali man is killed by armed gangs in Cape Town.

2008

January:

- Jeffrey's Bay: A crowd of residents *attack* Somali-owned shops and many Somali nationals seek shelter at the police station.
- Soshanguve: Four foreign nationals break into a spaza shop owned by a local trader. Residents apprehend the suspects and *burn one to death*. Residents call for foreigners to leave. Shacks are burnt and shops belonging to non-nationals looted. Many non-nationals *flee* the area.
- A community forum in Albert Park indicates that they want all foreign nationals living in the area to *leave*.

February:

- Itireleng: At a community meeting residents are encouraged to *chase* foreign nationals out of the area. Violent clashes take place. Shacks and shops are *burnt* and other *looted*.
- Valhalla Park: Residents forcefully *evict* at least five Somali shop owners from the area.

March

- Choba: 2 Zimbabweans are *beaten to death* by residents.
- Atteridgeville: At least 7 *lives are lost* in a series of attacks over a week. The deceased include Zimbabwean, Pakistani and Somali nationals as well as a South African who was mistaken for a foreign national. Approximately 150 shacks and shops are *burnt down, destroyed or vandalized*. Approximately 500 people seek refuge elsewhere.
- Diepsloot: 3 Zimbabweans are *killed* and shacks *destroyed*.
- Human rights organisations condemn a spate of xenophobic attacks around Pretoria that leave at least four people dead and hundreds homeless.
- Worcester: A large group of Zwelethemba informal settlement residents *destroy* foreign-run shops and leave a large number of foreign nationals *homeless*.

April

- Diepsloot: 30 shacks belonging to Zimbabweans are *destroyed* following a community meeting.
- Mamelodi: Fifteen shacks and spaza shops are *burnt down*. One girl is *burnt to death* in her shack.

11 May

- Alexandra: The most recent spate of xenophobic attacks begin when an angry mob takes to the streets in Alexandra Township, targeting foreigners who they say are not welcome in the country. Two are *killed*.

12 May

- Alexandra: A man is *shot dead* as violence continues.

13 May

- Alexandra: Foreigners *take refuge at police stations* and elsewhere to prevent further violent assaults on themselves and their property.

14 May

- Alexandra: Relative calm returns on Wednesday night following violence clashes between residents and the police. Heavy police presence in the township is maintained.
- Diepsloot: A mob *throws stones* at police and *loots* spaza shops. One man is *injured*.

15 May

- Cleveland: 5 people are *killed* and 50 *injured* in xenophobic attacks.

17 May

- Violence spreads to Thokoza and Thembisa

18 May

- Alexandra: Another foreigner is *shot*.

19 May

- The *death toll rises* to 22 with many more *injured* and over 200 arrested.

20 May

- Boksburg: 1 person is *killed* and 2 critically *injured* in attacks.
- Johannesburg: 2 refugees taking refuge in a police station are seriously injured when they are *stabbed* on their way from the station to the shops.

21 May

- Violence spreads from Gauteng to Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. President Mbeki approves military involvement in the situation as the *death toll climbs* to 42.

23 May

- Violence spreads to Cape Town. Somalis and Zimbabweans are *attacked* by mobs and their shops *vandalised and looted*. Somali-owned shops are *looted* in Knysna.
- Mozambican officials claim that 10.000 of their nationals have *left* South Africa and returned home since the attacks began.

24 May

- Thousands of people take part in an anti-xenophobia march organised by churches and labour unions in Johannesburg.
- President Mbeki is criticised for his lack of action on the crisis.

25 May

- Mbeki condemns the attacks in a televised address, calling them an "absolute disgrace".
- Baberton: Jacob Zuma speaks out against the attack in an address to thousands of people.

26 May

- Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula claims that the xenophobic attacks are under control. He adds that 1.384 arrests have been made.
- The *death toll stands at 56* with 342 foreign-owned shops *looted* and 213 *burned down*. Tens of thousands more have been *displaced*.

28 May

- The government denies having made a decision to establish refugee camps to house those displaced by the violence. A representative from the Department of Home Affairs admits that "temporary shelters" will be constructed.
- Police intervene when Somali nationals at a camp for displaced persons near Pretoria attack other foreigners trying to enter the camp.

2 June

- Hundreds of migrants, mostly Somalis, march to the South African parliament in a demonstration against xenophobia.

3 June

- Foreigners living in camps set up for those displaced by the violence call for the involvement of the United Nations because they claim that the South African government has failed them.
- Mbeki denies that the government was warned of the possibility of xenophobic attacks by the National Intelligence Agency over a year ago.

4 June

- The government expresses its commitment to reintegrating those affected by the xenophobic violence back into their communities.

5 June

- Senior prosecutors are appointed to oversee the prosecution of people arrested for involvement in the xenophobic attacks. Over 140 cases have been brought to court.

7 June

- Somalis in Port Elizabeth are attacked after the alleged shooting, by a Somali, of a local resident. Somali shop owners move their merchandise and police guard their shops.
- The premier of the Eastern Cape and other local politicians gather to officially apologise to the foreign community for the xenophobic violence of recent weeks.

14 June

- Brazzaville: a Mozambican man is *stoned and burned to death*.

19 June

- An Ethiopian man is *shot dead* in Masiphumelele two days after returning home after the May attacks.

27 June

- Local residents in Ramaphosa warn that they are not happy about "foreigners" returning to their community.

3 July

- A Day of Remembrance is held as a tribute to the victims of May's xenophobic violence.
- President Mbeki notes that the violent attacks in May were not the result of xenophobia but rather of "naked criminal activity."