

# The Salvation Army

## Positional Statement - Southern Africa Territory

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## Xenophobia

### Statement of the Issue

Xenophobia is defined as an unreasoned fear and hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. The word comes from the Greek word Xenos meaning stranger and Phobos meaning fear.<sup>1</sup>

Xenophobic attitudes lie in complex socio-economic, political and cultural factors, both contemporary and historical. The Human Sciences Research Council<sup>2</sup> identified four broad causes for the xenophobic violence in South Africa:

Relative deprivation, specifically intense competition for jobs, commodities and housing. This refers to the experience of being deprived of something to which you believe you are entitled to.

Group processes, including the categorization of people along national lines. This can be associated with a mob mentality.

South African exceptionalism, or a feeling of superiority in relation to other Africans;

Exclusive citizenship or a form of nationalism that excludes others.

### Statement of the Position

The Salvation Army believes that all people are created equal, in God's image and as such he loves us all equally. Christians are called to love their neighbours as themselves. The Salvation Army condemns xenophobia and firmly believes that we should treat foreigners with love, respect and dignity. This affirmation is based on scripture's teaching concerning the treatment of foreigners.

### Biblical Considerations

Scriptures, both the Old and New Testament, give guidance regarding the treatment of foreigners. Our guiding principle is to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Galatians 5:14b ESV).

We should treat foreigners with love and grace (Zechariah 7:9-10, Matthew 25:35, Luke 10:25-37, John 13:34).

We must treat a foreigner similar to a native of the land. This includes causing them no harm and loving them (Leviticus 19:33-34, Numbers 15:15-16, Matthew 7:12).

Foreigners have the right to justice (Deuteronomy 1:16).

Practical support should be given to foreigners (Deuteronomy 26:12-13, Matthew 25:35).

People seeking refuge in foreign countries should be given a safe haven. Jesus, himself, sheltered in a foreign country until God directed them to return home (Matthew 2:13).

#### Practical Responses

The Salvation Army calls on all people:

- to examine their own attitudes towards foreigners;
- to use their influence in condemning xenophobia;
- to actively get involved in assisting those who have been victims of xenophobic violence and help to alleviate their suffering;
- to pray for a change in attitude in those who perpetrate violence; and
- to live lives that exemplify and promote the gospel values of love, peace and justice.

#### Footnotes:

1 Compact Oxford English Dictionary, third edition, revised 2008; Catherine Soanes and Sara Hawker

2 <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-data/view/4048>

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