

Operation Dudula targets young children in latest hate campaign

MEDIA RELEASE

By Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia

Release Date: 01 February 2023

As though Operation Dudula's xenophobic scapegoating could not get any worse – last week things reached an all-time low when the movement launched a campaign to remove children from classrooms in Diepsloot, Johannesburg.

A message circulating via social media platforms (WhatsApp, etc) invited members of the Diepsloot branch to attend a mass meeting at extension 8, on Thursday 26th January at 8am.

The message went on to say:

“As Operation Dudula Diepsloot branch and Parents we can't allow South African Children to be out of school this year foreigners are accommodated and leaning in our Public Schools.....no retreat no surrender” (sic)

Operation Dudula Diepsloot contact details for this 'operation' were given as: Che Serobedi 0603895664

Following the meeting, Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia activists on the ground were informed that OD members were heading to schools and burning tyres on the N14 highway.

KAAX members acknowledge a crisis in places for Grade 1 learners in Gauteng, where an approximate 5000 children are yet to be placed in school. However, we strongly condemn laying the blame on migrant families and targeting kids of six and seven years, for the Department of Education's failures to plan adequately.

We further point out the psychological and potentially physical trauma caused to young children by Dudula's hate campaigns. Targeting children is the height of cowardice.

This action takes place at the same time as Operation Dudula members are removing people – including pregnant women and small children - without South Africa IDs from public clinics. Several clinics have been attacked in the last week. Once more, vulnerable people, young and old, are affected by these forced removals. Despite the efforts of some of the clinic staff to prevent Operation Dudula from engaging in this despicable behaviour, the continued inaction of the police in enforcing the law and ensuring everyone's rights is pouring fuel onto the xenophobic fires.

Operation Dudula are cowardly, and anti-black. The group's false narrative of blaming migrants, all of whom are black and the majority African, for deep systemic problems and poor political leadership that exercises anti-poor austerity as a go-to economic policy - is moving society in a dangerous trajectory. In order to avoid accountability for their failure to solve the multifold crises we find ourselves in – many political leaders opportunistically emulate Dudula's scapegoating.

The Constitution guarantees the rights to health and education to 'everyone' and the courts have explicitly confirmed that no child, regardless of status, can be denied access to the public school system and that no person may be denied access to primary health care. Operation Dudula's statements and actions in this regard are flagrantly unlawful.

Disappointingly, the media is not challenging the language and tropes contained in the Dudula xenophobic narratives and indeed, often advance them.

We make an appeal for a responsible media, one that investigates fully, reports accurately, calls out xenophobic policies and censures racism amongst journalists within its ranks. We demand that the police as well as the Departments of Basic Education and Health uphold the law and do their jobs. Stop playing xenophobic politics with people's lives.

Help us to arrest the growing cancer of hate in our country that as the cost-of-living crisis escalates, has the potential to plunge us into deeper violence.

Ends

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Release Date: 02 February 2023

This press statement was released by Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia on 30 January 2023.