

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE PLIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICANS

Today we as concerned Australians from different communities have marched in Perth to show our support of your actions to fast-track the immigration of South African farmers to Australia on humanitarian and protection visa programs. We are extremely grateful that you have raised this issue, and for your continual efforts to provide assistance to these people wherever possible. We also appreciate the support from several other members of Federal and State parliament and the Senate.

We support responsible land reform but condemn the recent State of the Nation announcement by the new President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, that expropriation of land and property without compensation will be accelerated. These announcements from the South African government are irresponsible and create instability in the region and worsen the already volatile, polarised and violent situation in the country. The United Nations Minorities Declaration in its Article 1, refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence. We believe that South Africa is not fulfilling its duties to protect minority groups as they should, but that they are rather exposing them through discriminatory policies and by allowing racist and hate speech, even inside their parliament, against these minority groups. Evidence from independent researchers has shown that brutal attacks and torture against farmers in South Africa have escalated drastically and that the South African government does not have the necessary capacity to protect these farmers adequately. The South African government's actions to date have also shown that they do not have the political will to stop the brutal targeting of these farmers. Immediate intervention and humanitarian assistance from the International community are required to protect them.

South Africa is complicated in terms of demographics, cultures, languages, and religions. There is merit in that all of the communities affected in South Africa should receive assistance from the international community. We acknowledge that although immigration is an option for many South African families, there is a large population that prefer to remain in South Africa or do not have the resources to immigrate. The Australian government has the capacity to provide assistance both in South Africa as well as in Australia, and both options of this humanitarian assistance should be explored.

Due to the lack of effective governance in South Africa, all of its communities are affected by violence. The Australian government should be aware that many Australian citizens with South African heritage have families that are in constant danger from these unacceptable high levels of crime in South Africa. We hope that Australia will extend the privilege of living in Australia, to those families of Australian citizens who are facing this danger, by creating a family visa that is low cost and not subject to age and other conditions. We would support extending this to other countries where an unacceptable high risk of murder exists to the families of Australian citizens.

Also extremely concerning is the abuse of all woman and children in South Africa which has reached alarming levels. We would also support any actions that Australia may undertake to focus attention on this horrible abuse of lives.

We cannot be prescriptive to the Australian Government about the type and measure of assistance that should be offered, and we understand that treatment should be fair. However, it is worth pointing out that South African families in Australia have shown self-sufficiency, low maintenance and remarkable integration with the Australian culture and values. Furthermore, they make extremely valuable contributions in many spheres of the Australian economy and community.

Allowing more South Africans to Australia under various visa programs will greatly benefit Australia.