

UNHCR calls for action against xenophobic attacks in South Africa

Authorities in South Africa are being urged by the UN refugee agency, [UNHCR](#), to act in the wake of recent violence against foreigners in the country, some of which has been deadly.

Last week, angry protestors in the Soweto area of Johannesburg killed four people, allegedly for stealing local jobs, according to media reports.

Many others, including refugees and asylum-seekers, have been affected by earlier rounds of violence, while, tension has also been observed in KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape provinces.

“UNHCR is calling on the authorities to ensure that those responsible for acts of violence and violations of human rights are brought to account. We urge all possible efforts to avert future attacks, including incitement or attempts to block peaceful solutions. If unchecked, such xenophobic attacks could lead to further damage and destruction,” agency spokesperson Charlie Yaxley [told](#) journalists in Geneva on Tuesday.

UNHCR is supporting government efforts to assist people who have been displaced or who were affected by displacement.

Mr. Yaxley reported that staff have visited refugees and asylum-seekers affected by the recent violence in Soweto to assess their situation and needs.

“Many foreign shop owners have been affected by the violence and their small shops – often their only means of livelihoods – have been looted and destroyed,” he added.

Just over 280,000 refugees and asylum-seekers are currently living in South Africa, according to UNHCR data.

The UN agency has welcomed public expressions of support from many citizens there who have been calling for peaceful coexistence and harmony with foreign nationals in the country.