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OUR REF:  
PLO/PER/GEN/2026

YOUR REF:  
TBA

DATE:  
6<sup>th</sup> May 2026

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**OPEN  
LETTER**

Through:

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*Your Excellency,*

RE: **XENOPHOBIA, THE RULE OF LAW AND THE MORAL BURDEN OF LEADERSHIP  
IN AFRICA**

I write to you not merely as a concerned African, but as one who believes deeply in the promise of our continent and in the responsibility that rests upon its leadership.

Recent reports of xenophobic attacks within the Republic of South Africa have once again brought into sharp and urgent focus a matter that has, for too long, lingered at the margins of our collective conscience. These developments are no longer abstract. They have manifested in protests and violent confrontations in major urban centers such as Johannesburg and Pretoria, where foreign nationals, including those who are properly documented, have been targeted, businesses looted, and communities subjected to fear and uncertainty.

The situation has escalated to the point where at least one hundred and thirty (130) Nigerian citizens have formally sought repatriation out of concern for their safety, a development that underscores the depth of insecurity now felt among sections of the African diaspora within the Republic of South Africa.

Further, reports indicate that migrants have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, and in some instances fatal violence, while others have been advised to close their businesses or remain indoors for fear of attack.

Your Excellency, even more troubling is the growing pattern of individuals being profiled and targeted merely on suspicion of being “foreign.” There are documented instances in which persons have been confronted in public spaces and forced to justify their presence, sometimes without regard to their lawful status. Such occurrences reveal a dangerous trajectory one in which identity becomes a trigger for violence, and suspicion replaces law.

South Africa occupies a unique and honoured place in the history of our continent. Its liberation was not achieved in isolation, but through the solidarity, sacrifice, and support of Africans across this continent. That history imposes not merely a duty of remembrance, but an obligation of conduct.

Xenophobia, in whatever form it manifests, represents a repudiation of that shared history.

It undermines the ideals of Pan-Africanism. It erodes the principle of African unity. It diminishes the dignity of the African person. And perhaps most significantly, it exposes a troubling disconnect between constitutional promise and lived reality.

Your Excellency, the question before us is not simply one of law enforcement. It is one of leadership.

For while the Republic of South Africa is endowed with a robust constitutional framework and established institutions of governance, the persistence and recurrence of such incidents suggest that the challenge is as much societal as it is institutional.

History teaches us that:

- (i) Where impunity is perceived, it breeds repetition;**
- (ii) Where accountability is delayed, it weakens confidence; and**
- (iii) Where leadership is hesitant, it creates space for forces that threaten both order and justice**

In this regard, it is imperative that decisive and visible steps be taken to:

- (i) Affirm unequivocally the protection of all persons within the Republic, irrespective of origin;**
- (ii) Ensure that perpetrators of such acts are held to account swiftly and transparently;**
- (iii) Reinforce public messaging that rejects xenophobia in all its forms; and**

**(iv) Strengthen the alignment between constitutional ideals and societal conduct**

Your Excellency, Africa stands at a delicate moment in her history. At a time when we speak of integration through instruments such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, and when we aspire toward greater unity of purpose, it is contradictions of this nature that threaten to undermine the very vision we seek to advance.

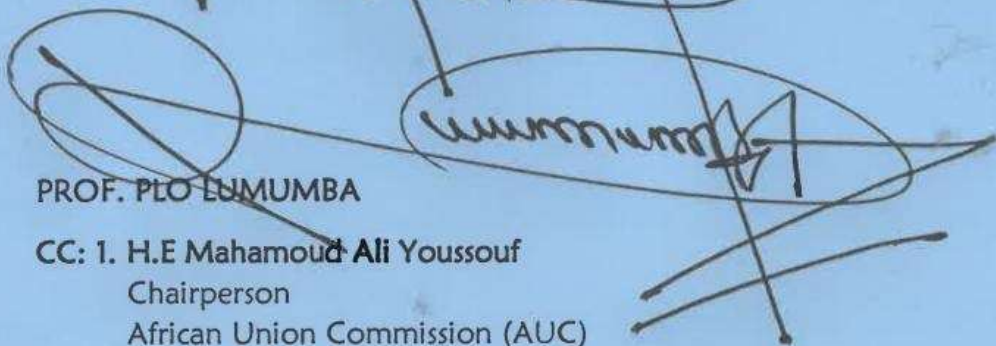
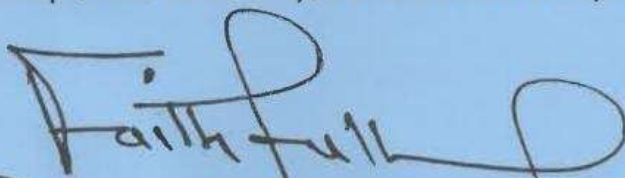
Leadership, in moments such as these, must not only be exercised—it must be seen to be exercised.

I trust that under your stewardship, the Republic of South Africa will rise to this occasion, reaffirm its commitment to the dignity of all Africans, and demonstrate, once again, the moral authority that has long defined its place on our continent.

Your Excellency, it cannot be right that the Republic of South Africa stands up for Palestinians in Gaza and yet they are seen to be persecuting their own kith and kin from other African countries.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours



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