

Freedom

PARK TRUST

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Freedom Park Trust Calls for Inter-Cultural Communication to Resolve Xenophobia Crisis

20 May 2008, Pretoria, Freedom Park Trust CEO, Dr Mongane Wally Serote, today pledged the Freedom Park Trust's commitment to assisting the nation in resolving the xenophobic crisis. "The Freedom Park acts as an international icon of humanity and freedom and we will spare no effort to ensure that the violation of human rights is halted immediately."

Dr Serote called on all South Africans to demonstrate their proven ability to choose a road of communication and negotiations instead of violence in resolving the xenophobic atrocities that have swept the nation. "The South African nation is no stranger to what may seem impossibly charged situations. We have experienced situations that could have resulted in a civil war consuming our country, but each and every time we have opted for the humane route. It is time that we make a conscious decision to opt for that route again."

In a situation that has been dubbed a humanitarian crisis, more foreigners in South Africa have come under attack than ever before. Various institutions and prominent figures have expressed their condemnation of the acts of violence. According to Dr Serote, the responsibility for resolving this matter does not rest solely with the powers that be. "As these are acts that influence each South African personally, we are all responsible for getting involved, be that in our communities, our organisations, our religious groups or on an individual level. We need to have this issue out in the open. Shifting the responsibility is not a luxury that we as a country can afford – not when human rights are being violated right on our doorsteps."

"The South African nation bears the scars of a turbulent past characterised by discrimination based on race, gender and so forth. We understand the tragic consequences as we have experienced them first-hand. It is therefore our duty to play a, if not the, significant role in humanity, freedom, reconciliation and nation building both continentally and internationally. Neither our past or present situation may be unique, but it is the manner in which we managed to transition from a nation plagued by discrimination to a united force that demands respect internationally. We have the ability. We have done it once before. We can and must do it again."

"These viscous attacks propel us back to an age of gross abuse of basic human rights – rights that does not depend on race or nationality. The Freedom Park offers a clarion call that echoes through history: "motho ke motho ka batho" – I am because we are. This call rests firmly on the pillars of Ubuntu, which emphasises a sense of community that cuts across racial and ethnical divides."

"All too often conflicts such as these result from ignorance and a fear of the unknown. The Freedom Park Trust calls on every South African to counteract this fear of the unknown with knowledge. The only way in which we can gain this knowledge is through communication, and more specifically, inter-cultural communication. Our past have set

the bar and have shown us capable of respecting communication and negotiation over violence. The time has come for us to put down our weapons and start talking.”

“The Freedom Park has been built on the pillars of humanity and freedom. As such, we are inviting all South Africans, be it on community, organisational or individual, to join forces. We are initiating a discussion forum comprising all interested parties that is concerned by this situation. Members of the public in any capacity are thus welcome to contact us at info@freedompark.co.za or on www.freedompark.co.za with comments or suggestions. A formal meeting will also be organised to discuss this vital issue.

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