

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LETTER

President Joseph R Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500



Re: President Ramaphosa's White House visit

Dear President Biden,

We are thrilled to see you hosting South African President Ramaphosa at the White House this week. We recognize your long commitment to a partnership with South Africa dating back to your 1986 condemnation of apartheid. Since the end of apartheid, the US has continued to support South Africa as a leader in the region on key human rights issues. Much like the US however, South Africa continues to face challenges when providing and protecting human rights for all people. We hope in your meeting with President Ramaphosa that you will raise some of the key issues currently being faced.

Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa is a continuing crisis. The recent statistics published by Police Minister Bheki Cele show that the murder of women increased by 53.2%, with 855 women killed between April and 2022. Meanwhile, there were 9,516 reported cases of rape in the three-month period. Of these, 3,780 took place at the home of the victim or the home of the rapist. The criminal justice system is failing people living in the country, particularly women and children. Despite progressive laws and policies, the failure lies in their implementation. In 2019, the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, a multi-sectoral inter-governmental plan to address GBVF, was adopted. However, the National Council on GBVF, meant to oversee the implementation thereof, has yet to be established. This is one element of many necessary to prevent and end GBVF in the country, and **we urge you to ask Ramaphosa to immediately establish the National Council on GBVF.**

Right to Education: School conditions in South Africa are abysmal, with 5,167 schools still using illegal pit toilets, a major health concern, which also puts children's lives at risk. According to the 2013 Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, all schools should have been provided with sanitation by 29 November 2016 and brought into compliance with the Norms and Standards by 29 November 2020. However, the Department of Basic Education missed those deadlines and is now proposing new changes to the regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. The draft amendments completely remove the deadlines by when the government must get rid of illegal pit toilets and provide essential services such as water, electricity, classrooms, fences, and libraries. Removing these targets is contrary to South Africa's immediate obligation as a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to take steps that are "deliberate, concrete, and targeted" toward the full realization of the right to education. **Amnesty International urges you to recommend that concrete timeframes remain in the amended regulations to aid the planning and budgeting process of government and to**

ensure accountability against time-bound targets. We further urge you to ask the South African government to eradicate all pit toilets immediately.

Migrant Rights and Xenophobia: Migrants in South Africa have been subjected to violent physical and verbal attacks by anti-migrant vigilante groups, which ultimately led to the murder of Zimbabwean national Elvis Nyathi in Diepsloot, Johannesburg. This problem first began in 2008 when more than 60 people were killed in anti-migrant attacks. These have continued every single year since. There were sporadic xenophobic attacks throughout the year, with businesses owned by migrants targeted in Durban. In your meeting with Ramaphosa we **urge you to emphasize the importance of the South African government employing a national strategy to prevent violence against migrants and bring to an end the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these fatal assaults.**

The 2021 Human Rights report on South Africa, published by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the US Department of State, highlights xenophobic violence as one of the human rights violations in South Africa. This problem persists with impunity, and vigilante groups like Operation Dudula continue to target migrants, at times leading to the loss of life. In 2019, the South African government launched the National Action Plan Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. However, this is not being implemented effectively, and **we urge you to call on President Ramaphosa to urgently implement this plan and end the culture of impunity.**

We believe that it is both necessary and morally imperative for you to bring these often-ignored issues to the forefront. As you go about other agendas of bringing economic growth and pushing for other diplomatic priorities, please take care to fight for the lives of millions who could benefit from your actions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International