

Xenophobic Attacks on Nigerians in South Africa

Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D

The developments in South Africa and subsequent reactions in Nigeria are extremely sad and reflect the failure of leadership in both countries and more so in South Africa.

The intermittent hate exhibited by South African mobs on other Africans has happened a number of times before the recent spate. There has been enough time for the South African government to address the problem radically including through to its root causes. Disbanding, detention and/or repatriation of criminal gangs operated by other Africans should have been a regular occurrence.

Simultaneous dialogue between the leadership of Africans from other countries and leadership of host communities should have been regular peacebuilding efforts supported by the government of South Africa.

Envy and jealousy of successful entrepreneurial Africans by unemployed South Africans cannot be addressed in one day. However, there should have been regular social and traditional media efforts that are geared towards letting South Africans know that other Africans are not responsible for their individual plights. It is not enough to defend mines and major corporate economic ventures by South African security apparatuses and have no plans for the small and medium scale businesses of Africans in South Africa.

Furthermore, the South African government should have been more proactive on community intelligence gathering to nip any attempt to go on rampage in the bud. Similarly, contingency plans to handle outbreaks immediately should have been in place. Deployment of overwhelming forces from the beginning as opposed to waiting days should have been the case.

Equally, the Nigerian political leadership has woefully failed by maintaining a failed state situation in Nigeria as the leaders continue to steal as these actions continue to drive our people into forced self-exile.

The Nigerian political leadership is equally a failure by its inaction when it comes to protecting its citizens and their respective individual interests around the world.

The weakness of President Muhammadu Buhari in wishing problems away and behaving as if they will disappear on their own has been the case in Nigeria well over four years. While this may work in Nigeria as a result of nationals' relative docility, it should have been considered that built up tension would be unleashed in cases of perceived external injustice being meted on compatriots. I repeat perceived as it may or may not be reality. In the current situation, the Nigerian mobs decided that the Nigerian government will do nothing as it has shown over time that it cares very little for Nigerian lives in its country. In this situation, Nigerian mobs descended to the levels of barbarians and started looting and attacking South African brand names in Nigeria as a tit-for-tat.

If the Nigerian government had visibly taking actions of showing that it was ready to take actions; that it would demand respect and extension of rule of law to Nigerians, the Nigerian mobs would not have descended to the situation of a wrong self help. Belated actions like recall of Ambassador and withdrawal from World Economic Forum if it had been timely could have indicated to Nigerian barbarians that President Buhari and his Foreign Minister would embark on pressures for the protection for Nigerians and their properties as the rule of law kicks into place on punishment for criminal Nigerians and criminal South African mobs.

As a matter of urgency after much time being wasted, both governments must deploy security officers to restore order and protect lives and properties. Immediate stock taking on losses and arrangements for

compensation must kick in and well publicised to assuage feelings in order to mitigate any thinking of self help. Legal processes must be rapidly initiated against all those arrested in both countries.

With stability returning, both governments must address the problems of criminal gangs of Nigerians in South Africa. The South African government must be assisted, if necessary, to brake into and disband reported Nigerian drug lords and other criminals. It is not enough to watch and make unfortunate statements by both countries that it is Nigerians who are killing Nigerians in South Africa as if such is normal in a State properly so called.

Thereafter, a lot of resources must be put into boosting intelligence gathering for rule of law as peacebuilding efforts like mentioned earlier, are vigorously implemented to prevent a recurrence of the perennial attacks of South Africans on other Africans, including Nigerians.