

# Health and Human Rights Groups Condemn Cape Town Mayor Helen Zille for Promotion of Internment Camps

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(Cape Town, South Africa, 27 May 2008) the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), AIDS Law Project (ALP) and the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA) jointly condemn Helen Zille, the Mayor of Cape Town, for her continued insistence on setting up internment camps in remote locations throughout the Cape Town Metro area to deal with the thousands of people displaced by xenophobic violence and harassment over the past two weeks.

Based on sound principles of public health and human rights as well as accepted procedures for the management of displaced persons, we are calling for all individuals to be sheltered as close to where they originally resided, so that they can be near their regular health facilities, schools and places of employment. Furthermore, we believe that seeking local solutions for displaced persons can foster voluntary reintegration into communities, which exile to internment camps far from their original homes will simply make more difficult. Additionally, filling up camps with thousands of people in close proximity is a severe infectious disease risk for diarrhoea, tuberculosis, and other serious infection. Finally, setting up a parallel system of public services in the internment camps, including health and sanitation, is inefficient and will create further stress on normal provision of these services around the city and the province.

We call on Cape Town Mayor Helen Zille and Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool to work together to ensure that displaced persons find shelter as close to their original homes as possible, by opening all public facilities under the jurisdiction of the city and the province to temporarily house these individuals as the first step towards community reintegration. The groups are also calling for additional resources to be made available to promote reintegration of displaced persons and their access to essential services as well as to protect their health, safety and well-being. If these demands are not met TAC, ALP and ARASA will consider legal action to ensure that the internment camps are shut down and their inhabitants reintegrated into their local communities of origin in a timely manner.

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