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### **Corruption Watch strongly condemns Mashaba's inflammatory statements about migrants**

Corruption Watch condemns the recent reprehensible statements made by Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba in which he describes illegal immigrants in Johannesburg's inner city as criminals who should be dealt with as such. The mayor was delivering a speech to mark his first 100 days in office.

The organisation calls on the DA to repudiate these unfounded comments that have the potential to spark anti-immigrant emotions, and urges the party to call the mayor to order. At the helm of a city as diverse as Johannesburg, it is surely incumbent on Mashaba to seek to unite rather than to divide the residents of the city which he oversees.

In November Corruption Watch released a [report](#) on corruption in the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) immigration system, exposing a long chain of exploitation of immigrants by crooked officials demanding that they pay thousands of rands for services that are actually free, as stated by the department itself. The report highlights the extent to which migrants are subject to the corrupt administration of the DHA and are at the mercy of political leaders without the political will to address the backlogs in claims for valid documentation. South Africa has the highest number of pending refugee applications in the world - the reality is that many migrants who are undocumented are so through no fault of their own, and owe their illegal status to delays, incompetence and corruption within the home affairs system.

David Lewis, executive director of Corruption Watch commented: "Fear and hatred of immigrants and contempt for the rule of law clearly crosses party political boundaries. Mayor Mashaba of Johannesburg should be condemned in the same terms as Minister Gigaba of Home Affairs. They may belong to different political parties but both clearly harbour identical xenophobic attitudes. Both should be rejected by the residents of Johannesburg and of South Africa.'

Immigrants face a daily battle to make a legitimate place for themselves in South African society. Mashaba's statement takes no account of the human rights violations that they are forced to endure, but rather taps into previous initiatives such as Operation Fiela-Reclaim in 2015, which resulted in the targeting of foreign nationals and culminated in mass-arrests and detentions.

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