

Xenophobia does exist in SA, says Roshan Dadoo IOL 20 SEPTEMBER 2019

Foreign-owned shops were burnt in Pretoria CBD. Picture: African News Agency (ANA)

Johannesburg - The daughter of former freedom fighter and SACP chairperson Dr Yusuf Dadoo has slammed South Africa's handling of the thorny issue of immigrants in the country.

Roshan Dadoo was speaking on Thursday at the 110th birthday commemoration and memorial stone unveiling ceremony for her father at West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg.

She criticised the government for sending envoys throughout the continent to apologise for the recent violence involving locals and foreigners, while it simultaneously denied xenophobia was a South African reality.

"Why are we saying sorry if there is no such thing as xenophobia? What is going on?" she asked.

Roshan said that her father, with his immense contribution, was a first-generation South African, his parents having migrated from India in search of better economic opportunities. Dadoo, who died in exile in London in 1983 and was buried a few metres from the tomb of Karl Marx at Highgate Cemetery, was a celebrated medical doctor and anti-apartheid activist who led both the SACP and the South African Indian Congress, and championed close co-operation of the two organisations with the ANC.

Roshan took a swipe at President Cyril Ramaphosa over his address in Parliament this week, saying he blamed the violence on the fact that South Africans were frustrated about their economic conditions, saying that securing the borders was a solution.

"If the problem is the socio-economic conditions, the solution has to be to deal with the collapsing health and education systems, otherwise we are saying it is the foreigners' fault," she said.

Former minister in the presidency Essop Pahad also lamented the fact that South Africans often referred to African immigrants as foreigners.

Pahad said while it was necessary to bring illegal immigrants to book, calling them foreigners stigmatised even those who came from the rest of the continent. "Foreign just implies something different, which must be gotten rid of," he said.

Also speaking at the event, SACP general secretary Solly Mapaila said Dadoo's legacy of selflessness as a doctor had to be taken forward through defence of the National Health Insurance.

"Right-wing organisations in this country have already raised about 80000 objections to the introduction of the NHI. The NHI is going to help all South Africans have access to better health at the point of service without being asked to pay," Mapaila said.

Some of the organisations that have been actively campaigning against the NHI include the Institute for Race Relations (IRR), Afriforum and the DA.

Mapaila said Dadoo had used his practice to treat many of the oppressed and poor for free.

Dadoo's ceremony was organised by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, and the memorial stone has been erected next to the tombstone of Kathrada. Roshan said her family had declined the proposal by the foundation to repatriate Dadoo's body from London to South Africa.

"We felt as the family that he was probably happier continuing his discussions with Karl Marx, and also my mother is buried next to him," she said.

Political Bureau