



Statement on the war in Ukraine and the treatment of Africans trying to flee the country

Like countless people all over the world, the members of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence based at the University of Bayreuth (Germany) and African Cluster Centres at the University of Lagos (Nigeria), Joseph Ki-Zerbo University (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso), Moi University (Eldoret, Kenya) and Rhodes University (Makhanda, South Africa), are greatly shocked about the Russian war on Ukraine and the Russian government's disregard for the rights of everyone in the Ukraine to live in peace and security. We declare our concern for all those affected by the virulent and reprehensible attacks by Russian forces on Ukrainian territory.

At the same time, we are deeply troubled by the flagrant racism towards Africans—predominantly students—anxious to flee danger to their lives during this turbulent period, which has been widely observed and reported in the news and social media from train stations in Ukrainian towns as well as from the Ukrainian-Polish border. The blatant racial profiling exercised through officials' refusals to allow Black people cross the border, forcing them to remain in areas of conflict, is abhorrent and not to be condoned.

We also note with dismay how several white-positioned government officials and media representatives have expressed their shock at the necessity of Ukrainian citizens to flee as refugees while simultaneously articulating racist comparisons to previous waves of Iraqi, Syrian, Afghani, and African refugees to Europe in the past years. The current display of racism vis-à-vis Africans trying to flee Ukraine sadly reconfirms the pattern of dehumanization of non-white refugees that has become all too familiar in many refugee crises in Europe of the recent past.

Just as we stand in solidarity with all Ukrainians and Russians who never wanted this war, we declare our solidarity and concern for all Black people and people of color who became embroiled in this conflict. We join the African Union in urging “all countries to respect international law and show the same empathy and support to all people fleeing war notwithstanding their racial identity” (official [AU statement](#) issued on February 28, 2022). We further demand of the European Union as well of the respective national governments to call out the racist practices and to play their part in putting an end to the suffering caused, through creating the conditions necessary to preserve the dignity of Africans fleeing the country and to protect all human lives during this time of war.

Eldoret (Kenya), Lagos (Nigeria), Makhanda (South Africa), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), and Bayreuth (Germany), March 4, 2022

The Directors of the African Cluster Centres

The Members of the Management Board, Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

Prof. Dr. Yacouba Banhor, Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Ouagadougou

Prof. Dr. Andrea Behrends, Vice Dean of Early Career & Equal Opportunity, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Olumuyiwa Falaiye, University of Lagos

Prof. Dr. Ute Fendler, Vice Dean of Internationalisation & Public Engagement, University of Bayreuth

Dr. Franz Kogelmann, Managing Director, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Enocent Msindo, Rhodes University, Makhanda

Prof. Dr. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Vice Dean of Research, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Cyrus Samimi, Vice Dean of Digital Solutions, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Seesemann, Dean, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Peter Simatei, Moi University, Eldoret

Dr. Christine Vogt-William, Director of the Gender & Diversity Office