

11 March 2021

Statement

From the desk of the General Secretary, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana

SACC SHOCKED AT RAMPANT DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE; CONDEMNS POLICE BRUTALITY

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is horrified at the use of brutality by the South African Police Service (SAPS) as a means of dispersing crowds, as evidenced by the scenes in Braamfontien and Auckland Park in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 10 March 2021 that resulted in the loss of human life.

This is following the death of a 35-year-old man who was shot by the SAPS in Braamfontien. The man is said to have been walking out of a clinic onto the street where the police shot at him, under the assumption that he was part of the student protests.

"The SACC has been a long-time advocate for comprehensive quality education, and has kept a close eye on the developments in the higher education sector," said Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, General Secretary of the SACC. "As such, our concern at this time is two-fold; we continue to question if the strides being made in reducing the burden of debt on students is adequate to make a meaningful change in order to remove the barriers of entry for students seeking a higher education. The matter of historical debt and the challenge of registration fees has been with us for a long time, and it should not be a surprise item when the academic term begins," he added. "We welcome the swift budget adjustments decided by Government to meet the pressing needs of students; and appeal for a long term solution to avoid the annual protests on something as basic as the right to education." The SACC has a legacy in education that pre-dates 1994, of support to students in both secondary and tertiary education pursuits.

"Secondly, as advocates for social justice, we cannot stand by and witness police brutality of this level. There just should be no room at all; NOT AT ALL, for live ammunition to be used with unarmed civilians in any crowd control situation. You will remember that it was less than 90 days ago that we made a similar call when church-goers on a Sunday morning in the Vaal, were injured under similar conditions," said Mpumlwana. "Even the protocol for the use of rubber bullets should be reviewed in the spirit of the human rights culture of our constitutional order," he added. The SACC affirms the absolutely essential service of the SAPS, and frowns on public hostility towards their work in our communities.