



MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

Marikana situation is becoming untenable

For immediate release: 15th September 2012

“It seems as if both government and Lonmin misread the situation on the platinum belt and now what seemed resolvable might become an untenable situation,” said Bishop Jo Seoka, president of the SACC.

“I am shocked and extremely angry to hear today that the police are out in full force and people have phoned me telling me that workers have been shot at.

“In addition 6 women walking in Marikana were shot with rubber bullets, and one is in hospital. I am concerned that all the hard work around the peace accord, the negotiations with Lonmin and the rock drillers, where we were making a lot of progress, might now come to an abrupt end,” he said.

“I will hold government and the Lonmin accountable. The workers have been peaceful, have not injured anyone and when I told them to not to carry dangerous weapons, they agreed. Today police asked the workers to give in any weapons. This they did and then they were shot at. This is a gross violation of human rights!

“Why pull in the police in such large numbers, threaten a huge crackdown and then destabilise all the good work done over the past 4 weeks?” he asked.

“Both Lonmin and the state are now acting in bad faith and not understanding the root cause of the problem. Yes, I understand political opportunists are taking advantage of the situation, but this is really not the main issue at stake,” he said.

“Workers, whether in Lonmin or Amplats have legitimate grievances, grievances that go back years that have now come to the surface. I know that it is not instigators that are driving the work stoppages but genuine issues of absolute poverty, lack of respect for workers in the economy and how they contribute to the overall development of the country.

“For far too long now workers have had to bear the brunt of bad working and living conditions and all government can think about is cracking down on legitimate worker grievances. The problem will not go away even if this crackdown wins the present battle; the ‘war’ between workers who do not receive just remuneration against the enormous amounts of money paid to executives will continue to fester.

“We must understand that mine workers build Johannesburg or Egoli, the city of gold, but do not benefit likewise. Historically mine workers have been used based on a cheap labour policy that under globalisation has worsened and they wonder when their lives will improve. Yes, the strike is spreading as consciousness of workers grows,” he said.

“I am particularly concerned that government’s present action will in fact lead to the worsening of the situation and eventually to a complete revolt across the platinum belt.

“I strongly urge that the police be removed from the areas and that minimal policing with strong mediators be used.

“Government must be crazy believing that what to me resembles an apartheid era crackdown, can succeed. We must not forget that such crackdowns in the past led to more resistance and government can ill afford to be seen as the enemy of the people that put them in power,” he said.

“Rational thinking, on-going dialogue and sober actions are called for now, not more police brutality.”

Notes to editors:

Client Contact:

Rt. Rev Dr Jo Seoka 082 893 1378

John Capel for enquiries if one can’t get hold of Bishop Jo