



**MINISTRY  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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### **Nzimande calls for investigation into the reported death at Wits**

27 September 2016 - Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande has called for an investigation following the reported death of an employee of a private security company offering services at the University of Witwatersrand.

Minister Nzimande wishes to extend his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family and the university community at large. The Minister has noted that the university has not disclosed the identity of the employee while seeking the permission of the family.

“We are shocked by the conduct of the university for its failure to report such an incident, which is alleged to have occurred last week on its premises. It is clear from the report that this particular death occurred as a result of the actions of protesting students who are reported to have released a fire extinguisher that affected this employee who later died. The university should have reported this matter immediately so that a proper investigation can take place” says Minister Nzimande.

The department has directed the university to conduct a formal investigation and submit a report to establish what exactly happened. The report should also explain why the university took so long to report the matter and announce it to the university community and the public. The South African Police Service (SAPS) should also be given the space to conduct an investigation.

The Minister and the department have been consistently calling for responsible protests that show respect for the rule of law, and do not result in damage to property, injury or the death of anyone. This incident therefore, painful as it is, is proof that there are people who are hell bent on holding our universities to ransom and have no regard for the vast majority of law-abiding members of the university community who do not want to participate in protests. This majority sector highly values the integrity of the academic programme and has shown an understanding of

and appreciation for the lengths government has gone for support to the poor, middle class and missing middle students in the recent fee adjustment announcement.

“This death is what I have been cautioning against and deeply concerned about. It is further proof that there is a small minority determined to undermine the wishes of the majority and that they have gone to the extent of using violence to intimidate other non-protesting students. We reiterate this call for all students to desist from these damaging protests and return to class so that the academic programme can resume,” Minister Nzimande further said.

“I am of the firm view that these elements have demonstrated no regard for the sanctity of all human life when protests become violent. Ours is to work tirelessly to prevent any further loss of life as a result of these violent protests. We call on all protestors to restrain themselves from any activity which can lead to further loss of life,” he continued.

The violent protests and damage to property witnessed on some of our campuses is wholly unacceptable and should be condemned by all of society. The Minister calls on parents, non- protesting students, trade union movements and faith based communities to isolate these rogue elements who are gambling with the future of this generation of students.

Violence has no place in our society. Government has addressed the concerns of students by subsidising the poor, middle class and the missing middle. Government has also ensured that those students from households with up to R600 000 annual income do not pay any fee adjustments in the 2017 academic year, which will benefit about 80% of undergraduate students in our universities and colleges.

The Minister calls on university vice chancellors and law enforcement agencies to act firmly and immediately against any form of criminality and make sure that the perpetrators are brought to book.

Minister Nzimande will continue to engage all relevant stakeholders to ensure that these protests are brought to an end.

End

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**Issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training**