



## Open letter by the Bench Marks Foundation

---

### **Harassment, intimidation, violence and assassinations of activists on the increase**

21 April 2016

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Bench Marks Foundation has expressed its deep concern at the increase in harassment, intimidation, violence and assassinations of community leaders as well as activists in South Africa.

The organisation's own monitors have also been subjected to violent intimidation.

Although this kind of persecution has been experienced for many years by communities, reports received by the Bench Marks Foundation and other organisations, from communities, indicate that these incidents seem to have escalated this year.

In early March 2016, the Bench Marks Foundation reported that its community monitors in Chaneng, on the North West Platinum belt in Rustenburg, were harassed by police with 25 police vehicles descending on one of its monitor's houses and scores of community members were intimidated and threatened with violence. The Bench Marks has taken this up with the North West SAP legal division who say they will investigate.

Later that month there was the assassination of activist, Sikhosphi "Bazooka" Rahadebe, of the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC), on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape followed by attacks on journalists reporting from the funeral, together with two members of the ACC.

Reports received from the Bench Marks' monitors so far in April indicates that more of its community monitors have been harassed and injured, this time in Mpumalanga and this week, in Limpopo, activist Holly Maponya who is a leader in the community's opposition to Ivanplats Mine, survived an attempted assassination. His girlfriend was wounded in the attack on his life.

"This violent impunity towards communities, activists and leaders has to stop. The Bench Marks Foundation will continue to fight for the rights of those who are affected by companies that shirk their corporate social responsibilities," says the Bench Marks Foundation.

"The Bench Marks Foundation will continue to offer its support to communities and train them to monitor private corporations, such as mines and government, to ensure that these entities are acting in an accountable and socially responsible way and to share their findings through community meetings, blogging and other social media tools," the Foundation added.

Bench Marks said it would continue to encourage monitors to form groups to work together to submit grievances and memoranda of demands to companies on behalf of communities.

"We call on the government, the Human Rights Commission, and the National Minister of Police, yet again, to investigate the persecution that is occurring throughout South Africa, particularly in mining areas of our people".

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, go to [www.bench-marks.org.za](http://www.bench-marks.org.za).

**ENDS**

---

Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC in 2001.

<b>Bench Marks Foundation Contact:</b>
Mr John Capel, Executive Director 011 832 1743 or 082 870 8861 Email: <a href="mailto:jcapel@eject.co.za">jcapel@eject.co.za</a>
Mr David van Wyk Lead Researcher 082 876 5954 Email: <a href="mailto:d.vanwyk58@gmail.com">d.vanwyk58@gmail.com</a>
Mr Hassan Lorgat Chief Strategist 082 362 6180 Email: <a href="mailto:hassenlorgat@yahoo.com">hassenlorgat@yahoo.com</a>
Media contact
Chantal Meugens 083 676 2294 Email: <a href="mailto:Chantal@meugens.org.za">Chantal@meugens.org.za</a>