



MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

Worst fears appear to be coming true

For immediate release: Tuesday, 11 September 2012

The Bench Marks Foundation says that its fears that the situation in Marikana might deteriorate seem to be coming true with the impasse with the striking Lonmin workers and Lonmin and the CCMA breaking down.

In a statement released this afternoon it cautioned Lonmin not to take the drastic action of firing all the workers and called on it to create an environment for talks to continue as the CCMA threatens to pull out.

“What we must remember is that these workers are unorganised. They are vulnerable and are influenced by parties who may not have their basic interests at heart,” said Bishop Jo Seoka, chairperson of Bench Marks Foundation, who has been closely involved in trying to resolve the present impasse. He will return to Marikana tomorrow (Wednesday, 12 September 2012) to continue his efforts to resolve the situation.

“I have been trying under difficult situations to bring about justice and peace,” he said, “and urge Lonmin management not to at this stage to take any drastic action.

“I hear rumours that if Lonmin fired all striking workers that they would then close operations for several months hoping that the situation will turn to normal. This would imply that workers will return home to the Eastern Cape and Transkei and that eventually the company will be able to employ again and resume production for Lonmin.

“This in itself will only hide the problems of discontent in the platinum mining industry and not deal with the broader issues of low wages, bad working and living conditions. In addition if it is decided to dismiss all the workers this could lead to higher levels of discontent on the platinum belt and further strife,” Bishop Seoka said.

He noted that in the meantime workers could mobilise for international support and bear the situation out and thus Lonmin would find itself in a difficult situation where any new recruits would have nowhere to stay.

Bishop Seoka added that the striking workers have lost their leader, ‘the man in green’, also referred as ‘Mambush,’ Mr Mgcineni Noki.

“This needs to be considered by the CCMA and if they are not able to deal with the situation that someone like Charles Nupen from the International Labour Organisation should be brought in to assist workers to understand the power dynamics and help them to find a way forward. Otherwise they might lose everything.

“My experience of these workers is that the need guidance and decisive leadership both of which we were able to give when we helped them to deal with the death of their 34 colleagues and ‘the man in green’.

Bishop Seoka said a longer-term view was needed which took into account the broader context going forward.

Notes to editors:

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.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu launched the Foundation in 2001 and the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka chairs the organisation.

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