



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION SAYS HOUSING TENSIONS ARE ON THE BOIL AGAIN

Johannesburg, Tuesday 13 December 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tensions in the Marikana community around the Lonmin Platinum mine are again running high over housing, with at least one activist having been killed over this issue in recent days and another fearing for his life, the Bench Marks Foundation has warned.

At the same time, Bench Marks has called for the social and labour plans of all mining companies, not just those of Lonmin, to be audited as they are all suspect in respect of their compliance.

Bench Marks was responding to the statement on Sunday by President Jacob Zuma, in which he said that Lonmin faced suspension or cancellation of its mining right if it did not submit a compliant housing plan.

Bench Marks CEO, John Capel, said that his organisation had as long ago as 2013 revealed Lonmin's failure to build 5 500 houses promised for workers and had at the time called on the Department of Mineral Resources to revoke the mine's licence.

"Government has, however, consistently refused to heed our calls for action on Lonmin's recalcitrance. For President Zuma to now be threatening action is way too late to be effective.

"Tensions are already running extremely high in the community over housing and one of our community monitors reports that a community leader, Charlie Sabata, was killed on Friday evening by a mob over a housing dispute.

"Our monitor reports that Lonmin had donated land earmarked for worker housing to the local council in spite of pleas by the community not to do so. This led to some members of the community allocating houses to themselves which resulted in the council successfully taking legal action to reclaim the houses.

"All this has succeeded in doing is to destabilise the community, resulting in these latest killings.

"Another Bench Marks community monitor is now also in fear of his life, and believes that he will be the next person to be killed," Capel said.

Capel added that Bench Marks has long proposed that all platinum producers who all promote private home ownership in line with the proposed Mining Charter must review this model.

"Our surveys show that workers generally don't want to buy houses. What they want is subsidised rental accommodation or revolving stock accommodation.

"Unless and until both government and mining houses start to listen to the workers and act according to their interests and wishes, the mining housing crisis is never going to be resolved," Capel said.

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