

## **Marikana Massacre No Excuse: For Lack Of Progress**

Johannesburg, Thursday 13 August 2018

The Covid-19 crisis is no excuse for the lack of progress to date on prosecutions of police officers who were responsible for the deaths of 34 miners during the Marikana massacre.

Speaking on the eve of the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre on 16 August 2012, the Bench Marks Foundation said that in spite of the government saying a year ago that “all criminal matters related to the Marikana tragedy is [sic] now before our courts”, no further progress had been made in police prosecutions relating to the Marikana massacre. They first appeared in court in June last year.

Bench Marks Foundation CEO, Mr John Capel, added: “Time and again, organisations such as ours have warned of the need for justice in the Marikana massacre to be seen to be done. That we have reached yet another anniversary without any concrete progress in the matter is indicative of our government’s uncaring attitude towards the people they represent.

“As we said last year, the wheels of government turn slowly, but for the Marikana massacre families, the daily pain of this tragedy stares them in their faces,” he added.

Bench Marks Foundation said it was important for the new owner of the mine, Sibanye-Stillwater, to recognise that, in taking over the mine, it had also taken over Lonmin’s responsibilities in respect of reparations for the massacre. Sibanye purchased the company from its previous owners, Lonmin, in June 2019.

Capel commended Sibanye for its commitment to build houses for the widows of those killed in the massacre.

“While we have some hope that Sibanye’s CEO, Neal Froneman, will stick to his words of taking on the heritage issues of Lonmin, we are disappointed that only seven houses have been built so far. We believe that the first step should be a public apology and compensation to the widows and orphans of the massacre.”

“The new company said in February 2020 that it was pleased at its turnaround at the Marikana mine which generated over R1-billion in profit for the last six months of

2019. That is a major turnaround for Sibanye, generated partly by a series of retrenchments, and the company should ensure that there is a commensurate investment in the living conditions of mining communities in general, and at Marikana in particular.”

Bench Marks Foundation recently released a series of guidelines for the mining industry, which should take responsibility and act with great urgency in respect of community conditions.

Its recommendations were made in the context of the prevailing Covid-19 crisis and the fact that communities surrounding mines are heavily impacted by the virus and regulations to mitigate it.

“While we acknowledge that role players within the mining industry are involved in initiatives to support communities living in the proximity of mines, from all accounts this is inadequately related to the need and what could be done. In addition, as we are all learning on a daily basis, the rapidly deteriorating situation related to the virus and the economy is nothing short of calamitous. This in particular is the case for communities living near mines across the country,” the Bench Marks Foundation said.

These include four high level dimensions:

- Firstly, in supporting communities, the industry must initially engage as equals with the leadership and representatives of the involved communities and their organisations for the purpose of indicating their intention and associated plans, along with engaging with them on the most effective approach to adopt.
- Secondly, immediate survival priorities, such as food parcels or vouchers, must be combined with more sustainable forms of support, such as the establishment and maintenance of household and communal food gardens along with water supply resources.
- Thirdly, medium- to long-term interventions, centered around the effective and sustainable resolution of ongoing problems and conflict across the industry, should be initiated.
- Fourthly, mines need to adapt their SLP-Social and Labour Plans to take into account coronavirus impacts on communities and amend these plans in engagement with community organisations. Likewise, the CSI spend of mining in communities must take Covid-19 into account with demonstrable outcomes.

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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.

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