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POLICE CONTINUE TO TERRORISE MARIKANA WORKER LEADERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS THE FARLAM COMMISSION MEETS

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The Marikana Support Campaign is deeply shocked by this evening’s violent detention, on unknown grounds, of four Marikana worker leaders, and the abuse of other members of the community, including women, and the Marikana Support Campaign local coordinator by the police.

The group, returning by taxi to Marikana from a punishing and emotional day in the Farlam Commission, was corralled by an estimated thirty to forty police in a casspir, vans and unmarked vehicles. The group we all wearing campaign T shirts, stating ‘Remember the Slain of Marikana’ was ordered out of the vehicle by police wielding pistols and rifles, forced to lie face down in the dirt, and pinned down with booted feet at their necks. The police slapped and beat members of the group, threatening to shoot them if they attempted to look up. One member of the group was warned “I will blow your head away!”

Four of the men, all former strike leaders at Lonmin and key witnesses at the commission, were hauled up off the ground, identified by police as “these are the ones that we are looking for.” No reasons were given for their detention, and a member of the group recalls how the sounds of boots striking bodies could be heard as the men were dragged away and thrown into the police vans.

This unlawful and deeply abusive behavior by the police can only test the confidence of the family members of the slain workers, the surviving workers and community members’ in the work of the Commission. The police behavior signals their continued disregard for the civil and political rights of citizens, and the work of the Commission.

People testifying before or supporting the work of the Commission must be guaranteed their safety. Instead, community members attacked by the police tonight feel that the Commission has “become a hunting ground for the police.” This is the place where the police identify people, and will come after them to punish and silence them. The work of the Commission is being deliberately thwarted by the police to escape the responsibility they carry for the massacre of 34 people.

The Marikana Solidarity Campaign calls on the Farlam Commission and President Zuma to put in place an immediate moratorium on the SAPS and its harassment and victimization of Marikana workers and community members. We also call on the Commission to demand the immediate release of all strike leaders that have been detained in the past two weeks. The Commission and the President must ensure that the necessary conditions of trust and safety for those appearing before the Commission are met, or it will fail miserably!
STOP THE POLICE HARASSMENT AND BRUTALITY! LET THE COMMISSION DO IT’S WORK!

For more comment, please contact: Rehad Desai (0839979204)

Amnesty International South Africa; Advocates for Transformation; Centre for Applied Legal Studies; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation; Equal Education Law Centre; Human Rights Media Trust; Lawyers for Human Rights; Legal Resources Centre; RAITH Foundation; Right2Know Campaign; SECTION27; Social Justice Coalition; Socio-Economic Rights Institute; Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute; Treatment Action Campaign, Democratic Left Front; AMCU; NACTU; Thembelihle Crisis Committee, Operation Khanyisa Movement, Soweto Concerned Residents Committee, Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, Gauteng Concerned Citizens; Vaal Community Assembly, Everton West Crisis Committee, Masibambane Unemployed Peoples Solidarity Economy Education & Communication Cooperative, Ivory Park Eco City Solidarity Economy Education & Communication Cooperative, Makause Development Forum, Marlboro Crisis Committee, Zandspruit SANCO, Schubert Park Residents, Unemployed Peoples Movement Grahamstown, Unemployed Peoples Movement KZN, Ntabakadoda Eastern Cape, Botshabelo Unemployed Peoples Movement Free State, Mpumalanga Party, Wit bank Community, PYM Cape Town, Abahali base Mjondolo Cape Town and Durban, Mandela Park Backyarders Cape Town, New Womens Movement, Mayibuye Cape Town, Marikana Development Forum, Wonderkop Womens Group, Wonderkop Tribal Council, Alternative Information Development Centre, Workers World Media Productions.