Police arrest Makause activists for wearing Marikana solidarity t-shirts

Marikana Support Campaign

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For the past month, the Makause Creative Youth Brigade (MCYB) and the Makause Community Development Forum (Macodefo) have been organising a march to the Primrose Police Station, to hand over a memorandum against the rampant police brutality experienced in Makause informal settlement. The planned march formed part of Makause campaigning on ‘One Makause, One Community Police Brutality Campaign’ under the Asihambi Land, Housing & Zero Evictions Campaign. The march was scheduled for Friday 19th October, however could not go ahead as planned due to the police’s refusal of permission at the last minute.

The organisers decided that a community meeting would be held instead at the convening point, the Makause Sports Ground, to discuss a way forward given the refusal of ‘permission’ of the march at such short notice. It was here that the police arrived in a number of vans, as well as a Casspir. During negotiations with the police it was decided that the organisers would go to the Primrose Police Station to discuss the situation with the police there. The police tried to get them to ride in the police vans, but the organisers refused and said they would ride in private cars. It was then that the police violently grabbed one of the organisers of the march, General Moyo, and threw him in the police van. They also threatened the peaceful crowd with guns and threw teargas.

General was arrested and taken to the police station. A number of people followed him there to see what was going on. In the police station a further two people were arrested for “intimidation”. The Station Commander later told Kate Tissington from the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) and Advocate Michael Eastman, that the two MCYB members had intimidated her because of the fact that they were wearing “Remember the Slain in Marikana” and “Women demand justice for Marikana” T-shirts, and badges that said “Justice for Marikana”. The young woman arrested was made to take off her T-shirt and wait in the public police station in her bra, handcuffed. A staff member of the NGO Planact, Nicolette Pingo – who was trying to find out what was going on with the arrested comrades, was also then arrested.

All four were held in detention overnight at the Primrose police station, despite the efforts of SERI and Advocate Eastman to release them on bail. These efforts lasted till midnight, as no public prosecutor could be located to grant bail for the four. Macodefo and MCYB members stood vigil awaiting the release of those detained. On Saturday afternoon, after endless phone calls, a public prosecutor was eventually located and agreed to release all the detainees on R1000 bail each. He told the four accused that they should all have been released on Friday, and that there appeared to be no evidence for the charges against them.

On Monday morning the four were scheduled to appear at the Germiston Magistrate Court. After a three hour wait, the police eventually brought the case dockets from the police station, and the Senior Public Prosecutor agreed to drop Pingo’s charges. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he agreed that the state could further investigate the three cases against the Makause comrades. The case has been postponed till 19 November.

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