



African National Congress (South Africa)

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ANC STATEMENT ON THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS AT WITS UNIVERSITY

The ANC PWV Region is extremely concerned at the deteriorating situation at Witwatersrand (WITS) University. The crisis comes at a critical time of the academic year and cannot be allowed to degenerate further. The ANC calls on both the students, lecturers and the administration to commit themselves to genuine negotiations and peaceful resolution of the current impasse.

The University of Wits and all other institutions of higher learning must reflect the changes now sweeping across the length and breadth of our country in general and communities they serve in particular. In this regard, the ANC PWV Region gives its unqualified support for the student demand for the transformation of the university into a truly non-racial and representative organ of society.

The issue of transformation is however broader than a students issue. Both the students, lecturers and community organisations have a stake in the matter.

Consequently, a broad forum representative of all these stake-holders must be established to address the issue as a matter of urgency. The ANC PWV Region remains committed to ensuring that all obstacles towards the creation of such a forum are removed and the forum established in the near future.

In our deliberations with both the students and the administration on Friday 20 August, the ANC PWV Region insisted on the peaceful resolution of the current crisis. It is our view that a climate conducive for such a resolution should be created by: (i) the withdrawal of the police from campus, (ii) withdrawal of charges against arrested students and (iii) the lifting of the court interdict.

The ANC believes that the deployment of police and the continued interdict against students do not help create a climate conducive for both processes of learning and peaceful resolution of the current crises. The use of police and legalistic methods by the administration to resolve the current crisis is unfortunate under the circumstances. In this context the ANC PWV Region believes that the onus rests with the University Administration to create such a climate.

The behaviour and conduct of students on the other hand leaves much to be desired. The harassment and assault of other students, the petrol bombing of lecture rooms and damage to property does not advance their cause. We urge students to uphold the noble principle of non-racial.

Although the ANC appreciates the frustrations faced by students, we nonetheless unequivocally condemn such counter-productive actions and calls on the student leadership to exercise leadership, discipline and guidance. It is the duty of the masses of students to win over their counterparts to support the fundamental demand for transformation of the university, through debate and persuasion.

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