



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

SACBC Justice and Peace statement on the senseless killings of Mthokozisi Ntumba

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Justice and Peace Commission is deeply shocked by the tragic event and loss of life that took place in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 10 March 2021, during the students demonstration at Wits University.

Until the government finds the political will to enforce profound changes in the ethos of policing in our country, more such deaths are inevitable. Mthokozisi Ntumba joins a long list of people, by far the majority black men, killed or murdered by the SAPS. From Andries Tatane ten years ago in Ficksburg and the 34 dead at Marikana in 2012 to the shooting of Petrus Miggels in Uitsig, Cape Town at the beginning of lockdown last year, the SAPS kills on average two and half times as many people per capita of population as the American Police do, and eight times as many as their Canadian counterparts.

Noting therefore that the death of Mthokozisi Ntumba is a sign of structural problems in our policing system, we therefore call upon the Minister of Police to consider the following measures:

- He should take appropriate measures to de-militarize the police. It is now ten years since the National Development Plan called for this to be addressed and nothing has so far been done.
- He should stop rhetoric that encourages police brutality. Over the years, there has been continued refrain from him and previous ministers that "the police must shoot to kill," "use maximum force" and "use deadly force."
- He should review the poor training received by the public order police officers, especially its over-reliance on the use of force when it is the black protestors, with no room for negotiation and many other non-violent intervention.
- He should ensure that there are consequences, not only for lower ranked police officers, but also command structure in charge of the operation that has resulted in loss of human life.

We wish to remind the Minister of Police that each loss of human life resulting from police brutality shocks our social conscience as a nation because human life is sacred and a gift from God Almighty. Jesus Christ came to give us this life to the full (John 10:10). We would like to reiterate the words of Pope Saint John Paul II that: "every human being is endowed with a dignity that must never be lessened, impaired or destroyed but must instead be respected and safeguarded, if peace is really to be built up" ([Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Oct. 2, 1979](#)).

The SACBC Justice and Peace extends to all the family and friends of the late Mthokozisi Ntumba its deepest sympathy and may his soul rest in eternal peace.

Issued by Bishop Victor Phalana, Chairperson of SACBC Justice and Peace Commission. Contact number: 0824707151.