



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ministerial Statement on Resurgence of University Unrest

The Department acknowledges that university students, staff and workers, like all members of our society, have the right to protest and voice their opinions and grievances. However, in doing so they have a duty to do so peacefully and in a manner that respects both the rights and property of others. This right to protest is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and upheld by the Department of Higher Education and Training at all times.

The disruptions at the University of the Free State and University of Pretoria, as well as the violence at the University of Cape Town last week, clearly show that there are fringe elements seeking to destabilise our institutions as part of a perverse political agenda and attempting to dislodge legitimately elected student, worker and staff structures through illegal activity, violence and destruction of property. These fringe elements seem hell bent to exploit every problem as part of seeking to hijack legitimate student concerns for their narrow ends.

The Department urges university management to engage with legitimately and democratically elected structures, and address the concerns and grievances raised by these legitimate structures and not be held to ransom by elements who have no legitimate mandate.

The Department urges students and workers to adhere to the University rules, regulations and applicable protocols in dealing with grievances and

matters of concern. All our public higher education institutions have structures through which these matters can be resolved, such as the Council, Institutional Forums, Student Representative Council, trade unions and Executive Management.

The Department calls upon the management of universities to take decisive action against those elements that are bent on using any excuse to turn our institutions into sites of violence and vandalism. The Department cannot and will not tolerate the destruction of property and threat to lives and requests the South African Police Services to assist with the safeguarding of students, staff, workers and university property. We also call upon all progressive forces on our campuses to condemn and distance themselves from these acts of intimidation, violence and vandalism. The primary objective of our universities is teaching, learning and research, and these activities should remain sacrosanct.

We need to intensify the struggle against racism, but at the same time condemn the short-sighted anti-white chauvinism rearing its ugly head on some campuses, as ours is a struggle to build transformed and non-racial universities and South African society. The Minister urges the institutional governance and management bodies to deal with issues of racism and discrimination firmly and with the respect, seriousness and urgency it demands. Racism and discrimination have no place in our democracy and these acts go against the spirit and letter of the Constitution of our country.

The Department will in due course be announcing and engaging stakeholders on processes to take forward the many progressive resolutions from the Higher Education Summit in order to accelerate the much-needed transformation in our higher education system. The Department recognises the urgency of addressing the big and enduring questions of transformation raised at this summit and the importance of new and different ways of engaging on university campuses so that transformation debates are characterised by dignity and a recognition of diverse perspectives.

The Department urges all stakeholders in the university sector to work towards building on the progress and gains made in the university sector in preparation for this academic year. We must protect that progress and allow order to be restored and preserved at all our universities.

Issued by Ministry.

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