

JOINT WORKING COMMITTEE

NATAL REGION

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RE: Attacks against COSATU leadership involved in the Peace Process

We, the Northern Natal region of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), wish to express our outrage at the attack on the home of our regional secretary, Cde Siphso Cele, and the subsequent brutal assault on him and other residents of Ngwelezane township by members of the South African Police (SAP) from Empangeni.

Cde Cele's assault and arrest came after attacks on our members in the township over the weekend of March 14 and 15, and is particularly serious in view of the fact that Cde Cele is a member of the Natal Interim Regional Dispute Resolution Committee (RDRC) representing this region of Cosatu.

At about 4pm on Saturday, March 14, a mob of about 100 Inkatha supporters went to the home of Cde Thulani Ngubane, an organiser for the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) in the Empangeni Cosatu local.

After finding out from Cde Ngubane's grandmother that he was not at home, they told her that the family must move out of the township.

The mob then moved to Cde Cele's home, which they fired at and stoned. At the time of the attack Cde Cele and Cde Khumbulani Mkhize, the Cosatu regional treasurer, were at home.

Neighbours came to the assistance of Cde Cele and managed to drive away the attackers.

Cde Cele then contacted Col Louwrens, the SAP representative on the RDRC, and asked for police protection. When the police arrived three hours later, they wanted to search Cde Cele's home instead of searching for the attackers, who were heavily armed. The police left and youth from the township gathered at Cde Cele's home in order to protect him from any further attacks.

At about 4.30am on Sunday the house were stormed by a group of men wearing balaclavas who assaulted the youth guarding the house and drove them inside. Inside the house the assaults continued, and the premises were searched.

The attackers then ordered the occupants of the house outside and forced them to lie face down on the ground with their hands behind their backs. Cde Cele, and others were

severely assaulted again and were then taken away in a unmarked police van. To our knowledge, a few rounds of ammunition were found in the possession of one of the 17 people who were arrested. We have subsequently discovered that the attackers were in fact members of the Empangeni Murder and Robbery Squad, who have charged them with murder and public violence.

At this point in time the above Cdes are due to appear in court, but were are highly concerned as to their welfare as we have received reports that the assaults on Cdes Cele and others continued while they were in custody.

We also wish to place on record our concern over the following issues:

1) Cde Cele is a senior official of Cosatu and a key member of the Natal Interim Regional Dispute Resolution Committee (RDRC), a structure set up in terms of the National Peace Accord in an attempt to bring about peace in the province.

2) In terms of the Accord, the police and their vehicles were supposed to have been identifiable. This was not the case. Instead, they brutally assaulted Cde Cele and the others before arresting them.

3) The police unit which arrived at Cde Cele's home was, again in terms of the Accord, to have first located and arrested the attackers. Instead, their intention was clearly that of harrasing Cde Cele, instead of coming to his aid as requested through Col Louwrens.

4) Cde Cele had, in recent months, applied for a firearms licence. This application was turned down by the South African Police.

5) The SAP unit which arrested Cde Cele clearly violated the Accord in both its approach in arresting him and in subsequently assaulting other residents who had gathered to defend his home.

This latest violation of the Accord by the SAP in the Northern Natal area is of even more concern when viewed against the backdrop of the ongoing attacks on and harrassment of specific individuals who are directly tied into the peace process.

Among these incidents have been repeated attacks on the homes of senior Cosatu officials Welcome Mthimkulu, Bheki Ntuli and Khumbulani Mkhize, all of whom have been involved in peace initiatives in the Empangeni area; the burning of the home of Willis Mchunu, the Northern Natal regional education officer of the Numsa, a member of the Executive Committee of the RDRC and delegate to the RDRC, in full view

of members of the security forces SADF, SAP, KZP; the hit squad attack on Enoch Nzuza, a Numsa organiser and has been central to peace initiatives in his area Dlangubo; police harrassment of Mike Mabuyakhulu, the Northern Natal regional secretary of Numsa and a member of the Joint Working Committee which has been central in initiating peace in the Natal region and the burning of the home of Sam Nyawo, a Numsa member and a member of the Esikhawini peace committee. All the above comrades have been key people in the peace process in the region at various levels.

It is clear to us that there is a coordinated and well-planned programme to disrupt and derail the peace process in this area by the SAP and other elements of the security forces, given their outright failure to provide assistance to our membership and leadership when requested to do so and their blatantly partisan approach to policing.

It is impossible for the peace process to take root in this region if the leadership of the ANC/Cosatu/SACP Alliance continues to be harrassed, hunted down and targeted for attacks. We would also like to place on record that every attempt has been made in the past to establish peace in the Northern Natal region by the alliance. Even now we have made every effort to support the formation of a Local Dispute Resolution Committee in Northern Natal. It appears that other parties are still reluctant to involve themselves in the peace process, particularly in regard to the Amakosi, SAP, SADF, KwaZulu Police and I.F.P.

ENDS.

C.C

NUMSA Northern Natal Regional Office - Mr Mike Mabuyakulu
 Minister of Police - Mr Hernus Kriel
 Minister of Defence - Mr Rolf Meyer
 National Peace Committee - Mr John Hall
 National Peace Secretariat - Mr. A. Geldenhuys, Mr Jayendra Naidoo
 ANC H/O - Mr N.R. Mandela President
 SACP H/O - Mr Chris Hani General Secretary
 NUMSA H/O - Mr Moses Mayikiso - General Secretary
 COSATU H/O - Mr Jay Naidoo General Secretary - Mr John Gomomo
 Interim RDRC Natal Region - Mr M.C. Pretorius, Archbishop Hurley
 The Standing Commission on Public Violence and Intimidation
 - Mr Justice Goldstone -

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TELEFAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET: 4

(1) National Peace Secretariat
(Jayendra Naidoo, A Geldenhuys)

(2) National Peace Committee
(John Hall)

OPERATOR: Harper

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