

SOUTH AFRICAN UNION OF STUDENTS

DATE: 17 September 2019
ATT: SRCs, DHET, USAF, Print, radio and digital Media
RE: SAUS statement on the closure of the University of Zululand due to Student Safety Concerns



The South African Union of students (SAUS) has learnt with grave concern the escalating crime in and around the University of Zululand (Unizulu) which is aimed at vulnerable students residing off campus in private accommodation and in particular the Dlangezwa area.

For long the Union has maintained that the Dlangezwa area is breeding ground for the most vicious crimes- rape, sexual assault, burglary and heavily armed robbery etc.- which subject students in and around the area to continue to live with regrettable fear at the hands of "Amadabuka", local gangs within the area.

The characteristics surrounding the area, dilapidated buildings which are used to house students due to insufficient university accommodation, has yet again led us down the road of violent crime which have resulted in a student, Msawenkosi Nxumalo, being shot on Saturday 14th September in his room and who is currently fighting for his life in ICU.

As SAUS we have made several calls to the Department of Police and the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology (DHET) to look into the growing concerns around campus safety across all universities and especially in historically disadvantaged institutions, for which both departments and other relevant stakeholders are yet to make the matter of immense priority.

Moreover, as a union we note with concern the communique from the University Management- in consultation with the Minister Blade Nzimande (DHET) and Chairperson of UniZulu Council- which instructs all students to evacuate the university premises by the end of today until further notice.

Notwithstanding, as a union we reject and caution against such a decision which seeks to absolve the institutions responsibility to safe environment for ALL its students rather than placing students within the reach of an already violent surrounding.

As SAUS we encourage the university management- together with its “consultees”- to channel their energies to more strategic plans on averting the situation rather than further condemning students to homelessness- and at this rate, death.

Moreover, it is equally imperative to bring forth constitutional considerations surrounding this decision of eviction in that student’s residence is and must be regarded as a student’s home and as such the relevant constitutional protections and legislative procedures are applicable and which the university management ought to adhere to- a position that the Pretoria High Court has already ruled accordingly in the matter between TUT and TUT SRC (2014).

The South African Union of Students has thus observed the collective reactionary approach by the university management, council and DHEST which in the main exclude the primary stakeholders being students and subsequently appeal to their sensibilities to resolve the matter amicably and with the urgency that it deserves.

To this end, we pledge solidarity with students who continue to fight for their right to safety and security and will remain in constant communication to try and bring this matter to a sensible and viable rest.

Issues in behalf of the South African Union of Students

For enquires contact

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