



## **HUMAN RIGHTS DAY STATEMENT**

20 March 2013

In the year since the last Human Rights Day, our world has changed dramatically. South Africa is no longer the country it was a year ago. We have entered a precarious new period of our history in which some of our worst nightmares return to haunt us.

On 17 August last year, we woke up to a South Africa over which a dark shadow had been cast by a police force that had mown down 34 protesters at Marikana.

As CASAC's Chairman Siphon Pityana said on that day:

"The photos of the bodies of dead protesters filled me with horror, and I was forced to ask myself: Is this 2012 or is it 1985 or even 1976?"

Of course, 21 March is the date chosen as Human Rights Day because of the Sharpeville Massacre of the same date in 1960. And so, now, in 2013 we are forced to face the fact that history has repeated itself – this time not under an illegitimate, Apartheid government but under a democratically elected government.

Sadly, the Marikana Massacre was not the only terrible event to scar the nation in the past 12 months.

Most recently, the grotesquely brutal treatment of Mido Macia by the police, in broad daylight and in full view of scores of witnesses, proved how deeply rooted the culture of violence and abuse of human rights is within our police force.

Siphon Pityana said today:

"The leadership of the SA Police Service has yet to show the appropriate level of remorse and a willingness to take responsibility for what has happened. The testimony of National Police Commissioner, Riah Phiyega before the Marikana Commission of Inquiry on 19 March did little to change this perception. They do not appear able or willing to acknowledge the seriousness of what has happened and the harm that such human rights abuses do to the reputation of South Africa and its prospects of securing dignity and prosperity for all. "

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

Earlier this year, the savage rape and murder of Anene Booysen shocked a nation – a horrific reminder of the extent to which gender-based violence is endemic in our society.

We fear that these events represent the tip of an iceberg that threatens to undermine our democratic constitutional project.

Urgent action is required.

So, just as happened in 1960 after Sharpeville, we must mobilise support for human rights and challenge those who perpetrate abuses of human rights.

Human Rights Day 2013 must mark the start of a new period in which we collectively re-commit to the vision of the constitution and the values of human dignity, equality and freedom that underpin it.

As retired Justice Zac Yacoob said earlier this week:

“The passing of the Constitution does not mean we have the true recognition of human rights in our society ... the fact that the Constitution guarantees them does not mean that we have them. We need to change ourselves and ask whether we are truly non-racial, non-sexist ... we do not wish to live in a society where vulnerable people are trampled upon...”

We must say, as we once said before: No More!

No more Anene Booyens! No more Andries Tatanes! No more Mido Macias! No more Marikanas!

The leadership of our country – in government and in the private sector – must stand up and be counted.

Where necessary, as in the case of the police services, they must be held to account.

Above all, the Bill of Rights must be respected.

### **Enquiries:**

Lawson Naidoo

073 158 5736

lawson@casac.org.za