



**NUMSA remembers the miners who were massacred in Marikana 12 years ago
16 August 2024
Press statement**

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) commemorates the mass murder of striking miners in Marikana, who were gunned down for demanding a better life. Thirty four workers were massacred on this day, August 16, 2012. We must also remember the lives of ten workers, including mineworkers, security guards and the policemen who were killed between the 12th and the 14th of August in the days leading up to the massacre. This remains a dark day in post-Apartheid history, and we must never forget the lives that were lost. To date, the families of these victims are still struggling to live without their loved ones.

The tragedy of Marikana is that workers at Lonmin mines embarked on an unprotected strike to demand R12 500, which they viewed as a living wage. The mining company, like most mines in South Africa, was making major profits, whilst exploiting cheap African labour. Whilst the bosses at Lonmin and their shareholders were getting richer, the workers who live in the surrounding area, and the community lived in desperate poverty.

The mine management refused to negotiate with them. President Cyril Ramaphosa, was Deputy President at that time, and Jacob Zuma was President. Ramaphosa was the board chairperson of Lonmin mines. He was also the former founder of the NUM union and instead of negotiating with mineworkers, or sympathising with their demands he called for “concomitant action” to be taken against workers which resulted in them being shot and killed, live on TV. It remains an indictment against the ANC government that workers were murdered for simply demanding a living wage.

Despite decades of black rule by the ANC the majority of people still live in squalor and extreme poverty. Workers in the mining sector in post-Apartheid South Africa are still paid peanuts, and they are exposed to shocking working conditions. We have experience as a union, where contract workers in the mining sector earn R7000 per month with no benefits for doing the same work as permanent employees who earn a minimum R15 000 per month.

Working in a mine is not safe. Fifty-five workers lost their lives underground in 2023 due to mine accidents, and in 2022 we lost forty-nine mineworkers. Whilst we have seen some improvements in safety, we want to see zero incidents in the mining sector.

At the same time, workers get killed just for daring to affiliate with a particular union. NUMSA has lost organisers and members who were killed simply for recruiting workers and openly showing their support for the union. It is a disgrace that in 2024, the lives of ordinary mineworkers remain largely unchanged, and this is another reminder of the failure of the neo-liberal economic policies which the ANC, and also the current right-wing Government of National Unity (GNU), are continuing to promote.

The founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko once said,
“The true test of a nations greatness is not the achievements of its rulers, but the quality of life of its people.”

This is particularly true in our case where after decades of ANC rule, we are the most unequal society in the world, with crippling levels of unemployment and poverty.

The Marikana massacre is a painful reminder that the only way to transform the lives of the masses is through implementing Socialist policies such as nationalising the mines and the minerals, to ensure that the state is able to meaningfully transform the lives of the majority of people, by providing free quality healthcare, education and housing for all. It is shameful that the wealth of this country remains in the hands of a capitalist minority, whose only interest is to deepen their wealth at the expense of the masses.

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