



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Bench Marks Foundation outraged at cold-blooded mining-related murder

Tuesday, 29 March 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Bench Marks Foundation is devastated by the news of the cold-blooded murder last week on the South African Wild Coast of Sikhosiphi "Bazooka" Rhadebe. His murder is reminiscent of apartheid-style death squads.

Rhadebe was chairman of the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC), a community organisation that has been resisting attempts by Australian-owned mining company MRC and its local subsidiary TEM to mine titanium in the area.

We strongly suspect that his killing was connected to his opposition to the mining operations.

Bench Marks extends its sincere condolences to Bazooka's family and the Xolobeni community.

We welcome the international attention that is being given to this crime by protestors standing on the steps of South Africa House in London.

We have been seriously concerned about the safety of the community, let alone the rape of the environment, that will rob communities of their livelihoods and welfare.

Bazooka's murder, apparently by two people in civilian dress, using what looked like police vehicles, underlines the severe level of intimidation being applied to community members opposed to the mining.

The apparent circumstances of the murder – Bazooka is said to have been shot and killed after he opened his door to what he thought were the police and then followed them outside only to be shot 8 times – is spine-chilling. It is frightening and threatens anyone or any community or organisation involved in challenging mining operations anywhere in South Africa.

Bench Marks has experience of such intimidation in its own work with community monitors in many different parts of our country. We are sure now that MRC and TEM will not get community consent and that civil society will rally around Xolobeni to ensure MRC packs its bags and goes home. We will take strength from this assassination in order to rally forces everywhere to ensure that communities have the right to say "No" to mining.

In an email last year, CEO Mark Caruso quoted the bible: "And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger, those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee." We demand that he explain himself as it seems to us he was inciting violence. We also ask that the Australian High Commission explain the mining codes of Australia and how they plan to intervene to respect the right of Xolobeni community to say "No".

We call on the police, who are investigating this killing, to make a statement fully explaining the progress so far in apprehending the killers.

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The Bench Marks Foundation is an organisation that monitors multinational corporations to ensure that they meet minimum social, environmental and economic standards and promotes an ethical and critical voice on what constitutes corporate social responsibility.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, go to www.bench-marks.org.za.

Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC in 2001.

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