

SOUTH AFRICA LAW DEANS' ASSOCIATION (SALDA) STATEMENT ON CONTINUING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

We, the Law Deans of the South African Law Deans' Association (SALDA), are deeply distressed by the continued perpetration of gender-based violence, including femicide, in South Africa. The recent and brutal killing of **Ms Nosicelo Mtebeni**, a law student at the University of Fort Hare, is an urgent reminder that without immediate action, the constitutional rights to gender equality and freedom and security of one's person are meaningless.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Ms Mtebeni's family, friends, the staff and students at the University of Fort Hare. SALDA calls for all organs of state, including Universities and all sectors of society, to take urgent, proactive measures to create an environment where women can be physically and psychologically secure.

SALDA recognises the role that law faculties play in fostering and realising the ideals and values of our constitution. Socially conscious and proficient legal practitioners strengthen the conditions for the effective administration of criminal justice, and we recognise our role in realising such graduate attributes in our students. Through our legal education, it must be clear that violence against women is unacceptable.

We call on the leadership of all tertiary institutions to take seriously their duty of care to students and their responsibility to create safe environments that nurture a future generation of professionals who will build a more equitable society that respects all people.

Tertiary institutions have unique agency to pioneer new cultures in our communities. At a minimum, this includes the adoption of the following:

- Ensuring that institutional policies around gender harm (including sexual harassment and gender violence, physical, emotional, digital etc) are publicised, understood, and enforced
- Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and updating of these policies as circumstances change
- Creating a bottom-up approach to policy development where women and the marginalised lead the conversation of where the gaps are and what is necessary to build a safer, more inclusive, and more equitable environment
- Focusing on transformation so that more women, particularly women of colour, are recruited into the institution and principally into leadership roles
- Prioritising course content that focuses on gender harm – not just as a box-ticking exercise but as a tool to have serious conversations that lead to behaviour changes
- Using the institution to have public discussions on ways to address gender inequality and gender violence in this country
- Recognising and harnessing the power of the law to hold accountable those who transgress

Creating safer and more equitable environments for women on our campuses is an essential step to eradicating the culture of violence against women in our country and across the globe.