



25 February 2016

**JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLORS, PRINCIPALS
AND RECTORS OF UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA
ON THE VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTIONS AT OUR UNIVERSITIES**

We, the vice-chancellors, have noted with grave concern the nature and form of disruptive protests and escalating violence at some of our institutions, and most recently at the North-West University, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria and the University of Free State. It appears that these violent acts are being planned and committed by groups and individuals with a singular intent - to deliberately disrupt and destabilise our universities through intimidation and violence. The executives of the universities involved have engaged constructively with the affected parties on their continuous demands, and redirected already limited financial resources to ensure the safety and security of staff, students and visitors.

We recognise the constitutional right of individuals and groups to lawful and peaceful protest and remind students and other stakeholders to act responsibly, and to respect the constitutional rights of those who wish to learn and work. We cannot condone some of the methods used during several of these protest actions. In this regard, we particularly condemn all acts of violence, criminal acts, damage to property and behaviour that impinges on the constitutional rights of others. We also denounce external parties that increase divisions between our students and staff.

We urge students, parents and other stakeholders to recognise that our universities do not have the internal capacity to manage violent forms of protest action that places our communities at risk of serious harm. We also do not desire to develop such capacity, as this should not form part of the normal operations in the higher education sector. However, in the event of violent protest action, we are obliged to take the necessary steps to protect our staff, students and property. We call on all actors in society – the state, politicians, the private sector, individuals, civil society, parents and others – to resoundingly and collectively condemn these illegal acts, and support us in identifying and isolating the perpetrators involved, who have by their actions shown total disregard for the academic project, the rules of engagement and the laws and Constitution of our country.

Issued by:

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