



TO: STAFF AND STUDENTS
FROM: PROF O AYO-YUSUF, ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR
DATE: SUNDAY, 08 SEPTEMBER 2019
SUBJECT: Statement on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and recent Xenophobic attacks

Women's month was concluded on a very sad note in the country as we continued to witness violent acts against women and more recently at foreign nationals.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a serious societal problem confronting South African women including the Lesbian, gay and bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) communities – it is a menace. The recent tragic killing of Uyinene Mrwetyana, a student from University of Cape Town, as well as Jesse Hess from the University of the Western Cape provides a grim picture of how women continue to be victimised in our country on a daily basis.

The Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) adds its voice in condemning perpetrators of these pernicious atrocities meted out mainly against women. The recent GBV cases involve young female students who had a full potential to become professionals, who were to meaningfully contribute to the development of society.

With a vision of being a benchmark South African, Pan African, and international institution of learning, teaching and research, we are committed to an inclusive institutional culture that contributes to social cohesion. We therefore also condemn all acts of violence particularly on foreign nationals including the looting of stores and destruction of property.

Violence is bad no matter who it is directed to or by whom it is committed. We urge government to act decisively and speedily to ensure a safer environment for all. The SMU community expresses its deep condolences to families, friends and colleagues of the recent victims of these recent violent attacks.

We need to deeply look at the relationship between GBV and patriarchy or the degree to which patriarchy adds to the perpetuation of GBV, for it is known that there is a

relationship between GBV and the exercise of power where those who are perceived to be weak and vulnerable are often victims. Research on GBV will remain a focus at SMU and, as an environment that can effectively bring about social change, we recommit ourselves to driving the decolonization or Africanisation of our curriculum, among other initiatives to ensure that we bring about positive change in the attitudes and culture of those who go on to become members of our society.

The University will continue to engage other partners, both internally and externally in its efforts to intensifying the war against GBV and other forms of violence as well as ensuring that all its students in particular are also engaged, encouraged to speak out and are protected.

We urge the entire SMU community to unite against GBV and xenophobia or Afrophobia in all their manifestations. We call upon the State to ensure that the rule of law offers equal protection to all country's citizens and legal residents while ensuring the problem of porous borders and undocumented immigrants are adequately addressed. We are stronger standing together to condemn all forms of violence, abuse and discrimination!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O Ayo-Yusuf', written in a cursive style.

**PROF O AYO-YUSUF
VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACTING)**