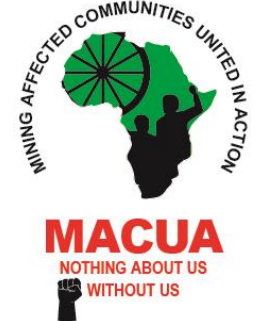


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MACUA Responds to Distortions About Requests by Trapped Miners in Stilfontein

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Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) has noted the latest cynical attempts to dehumanise the mine workers trapped in shaft 11 at Stilfontein Mine.

We reject the characterisation by some that wish to portray the miners as refusing to come out of the shaft, and that they are making demands. From all the letters we have seen that have emerged from the shaft, the miners are humbly making requests, in a situation in which they are trapped underneath the earth and where their human dignity has been greatly impaired by the continued refusal by the state to start the extraction operation.

These callous characterisations only serve to amplify the state's efforts to de-humanise the miners and thereby justifying their actions to starve them.

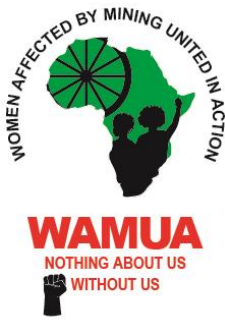
The request for condiments by the miners who remain trapped far below the earth in conditions of starvation and a deprivation, while seemingly objectionable to those of us who continue to enjoy the comfort of our homes, symbolises the broader struggles for dignity and autonomy that all communities, who experience the poverty and deprivation of their exclusion from the mainstream economy, are struggling for every day.

The request by miners who have been denied their basic human rights for more than four months, challenges us, and the public, to consider the nuanced humanity of the miners beyond their illegal status.

As MACUA, we affirm the rights of all marginalised and excluded people to struggle for justice and for human dignity. While we respect the right of the miners to claim their dignity in any small way they can, we respect the decision by the Community Rescue Task Team members to deny the request at this time due to the need to ensure basic foods are provided first. Our priority remains to provide basic essentials with the limited donations we have received, while acknowledging the basic humanity and dignity of the miners trapped underground.

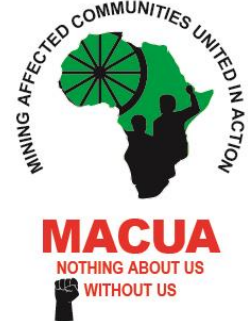
We also call on the media to provide the public with less biased reports in which unfounded allegations are reported as if they are gospel truths. Papers that have been submitted to the Pretoria North High Court have made it abundantly clear that it is humanly impossible for anyone to come out of shaft 11 without assistance as there are no pulling systems in place. Harmony Gold has also confirmed in court papers that miners trapped in Shaft 11 are not able to exit via the Margret Shaft. Yet the police continue to press a narrative that miners are refusing to exit and the media have not provided the public with the alternative information which is in the public domain.

We also debunk the continued repetition of the false narrative proffered by the Police that miners are refusing to come out. Every time a rope went down to extract the miners out of Shaft 11, it ALWAYS comes out with people. Either a dead body or a miner hanging on to dear life. This, along with the numerous letters calling for a speedy recovery is ample testimony that they desperately want to come out.



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If the government does not intervene and continues to dilly-dally, the rescue operation facilitated by the community members is likely to finish three months from now, judging from the number of people that can be extracted a day. This on the face of it runs contrary to what the Police have claimed their intentions are. If they want this matter to be resolved, then why not simply extract the miners? Why are those questions not being asked? Why are the police allowed to get away with bold faced contradictions and yet the media placidly accepts the contradictions without question?

We also appreciate the role that some media have played in amplifying the voices of the trapped miners when the government wanted to reduce their humanity and label them as mere criminals, but we fear that main stream media have been reluctant to provide alternative voices to influence the way the crises is interpreted.

MACUA reiterates that this is a socio-economic issue firstly, and that the workers underground are not the kingpins, but are merely the workers, who are now exploited by syndicates on the one hand and oppressed and starved by the state on the other.

Paying too much attention to trivialities, such as particular food items, distracts all of us from the fact that we are dealing with people, who are deserving of being treated with humanity, by mere virtue of the fact that they are people and that they are being held in appalling conditions in conditions that are akin to the worst cases of human suffering in modern history.

Only the state has the resources and the authority to resolve the situation, and yet it is the very state that continues to prolong the crisis and refuses to put in place the necessary equipment to end the crises.

The primary goal, and the truth of the matter, is that the government has thus far refused to extract the trapped miners despite the millions of rands that remain unused in the rehabilitation fund at the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) and the billions of rands allocated to the operation through the NPA.

We call on the government to urgently start the process of extracting the miners so that this precarious human rights crisis can be resolved as speedily as possible. We maintain that the state has the primary responsibility to ensure that the miners are extracted, and every day that we drag out the matter, only serves to undermine the rule of law. This crisis dehumanises the trapped artisanal miners and sets up their lives as less worthy in the eyes of South Africans.

Our primary goal is to save lives and bring the artisanal miners to the surface unscathed. We would like to remind the public that the trapped miners are dying and more bodies are likely to come out as a result of the dilly-dallying tactics of government officials.

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