

SACBC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION DEMANDS COMPENSATION DEAL FOR MENTAL HEALTH VICTIMS

We are deeply saddened by the deaths of 94 mental health patients in Gauteng.

We make a strong appeal to the Premier to swiftly compensate the families who lost their loved ones in a tragedy that could have easily been avoided.

Particularly, we urge the Premier and the Gauteng health department to explore and commit themselves to an alternative dispute resolution process to expedite the processing of all legitimate legal claims to be instituted as a consequence of the Esidimeni tragedy.

Speedy resolution of claims is an important step towards the healing of the affected families. Efforts should therefore be made to avoid drawn-out court cases that would deepen the wounds of affected families.

We are also calling on the health department to suspend the implementation of de-institutionalisation of mental health care until such a time that it has instituted strong policy measures that can guarantee the protection of human rights during the transitioning to community based care.

We reiterate our position that any process of de-institutionalising mental health care in South Africa should be grounded on the respect for the human rights of psychiatric patients and their families. It should also be based on the principle that protecting the lives of the psychiatric patients, as one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, is more important than achieving budget efficiency.

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