

## **The Marikana Massacre: locating violent industrial disputes in a global perspective**

### **Abstract**

The massacre by the South African police force of 34 platinum mine workers on 16 August 2012 at Marikana made news throughout the world and demonstrated that the collective bargaining and dispute resolution systems devised by the post-apartheid regime had failed dismally.

It is important to find out what has gone wrong in South Africa that the police force of a state governed by the African National Congress (ANC) that is in an Alliance with the largest trade union federation, COSATU, shoot and kill Black African mine workers who are out on strike. Where and how have things gone wrong in the political, economic, labour and employment relations spheres that an event like this could take place 18 years after South Africa's transition to a constitutional democracy?

The aim of this Workshop is to shed light on this fundamental question and to seek for an answer in a broader global perspective by exploring the trend towards increased violence in workplace disputes around the world.

The Workshop will commence with a 10 - 15 minute extract from the documentary film ***Miners Shot Down*** by Rehad Desai. This will set the scene for the debate very vividly. The film will be followed by four speakers and two discussants. The speakers have all researched Marikana, but from different perspectives.

**Gavin Hartford**, who worked for 10 years as a trade unionist on the platinum mines and wrote a report for the South African Cabinet on the socio-economic causes of the Marikana dispute, will present an overview of the factors giving rise to the strike and why it ended in a stand-off between striking workers and the police.

**Paul Benjamin**, one of the leading labour lawyers and academics in South Africa, will talk about the collective bargaining legal structures and processes that could and should have prevailed during the negotiations and the dispute, as opposed to what actually happened resulting in the tragic massacre.

**Crispen Chinguno**, who did his PhD thesis on strike violence which entailed on-site research of underground workers on the Rustenburg platinum mines for a year and was on site when the strike started, will speak on the dynamics of the conflict between NUM and AMCU workers.

**Kally Forrest**, researcher for the Farlam Commission of Enquiry and an expert on labour issues, will present the Farlam Commission's findings on the causes and consequences of the Marikana strike and its disastrous outcome.

The discussants will be Emeritus Professor **Eddie Webster** who has been in charge of research and run workshops on the Marikana disaster, and Professor **Elena Gerasimova**, Director of the Centre for Social Labour Rights in Moscow, Russia. Both Professors Webster and Gerasimova participated in a conference which showed that there is a new global dynamic in strikes in countries like Russia, South Africa, China and some countries in Europe. They will therefore be able to broaden the discussion and analysis of the Marikana dispute by placing the conflict within a wider global perspective.

**Johann Maree** will act as convenor and chair of the Workshop.

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