

## **PRESS STATEMENT BY REV RAY McCAULEY**

### **RESPONSE TO HIGHER EDUCATION CRISIS**

22 October 2015 - Pastor Ray McCauley says religious leaders are extremely concerned about the crisis currently engulfing higher education. Speaking on behalf of the National Religious Leaders Council, McCauley said what the country witnessed yesterday was the culmination of seemingly deep-seated frustration by South African tertiary students.

“The situation calls for calm heads and a collective resolve to deal with the challenge. All stakeholders – students, university management and councils, business and government – must sit around the table and discuss how we got here and how to get higher education out of the morass in which it finds itself. This is no time for finger-pointing. The future of our children and of our country deserves better leadership on this matter,” McCauley said. He said religious leaders were encouraged by the meeting that President Jacob Zuma has called tomorrow at the Union Buildings with all the affected stakeholders and hoped it will emerge with short-term solutions that will enable academic activities to resume while a long-term solution is being worked out.

Meanwhile, the religious leaders lament the use of excessive force by police and have called for restraint from the police in this already charged environment. Students have the right to protest and police have a duty to maintain law and order. The two can co-exist without either party provoking the other. We therefore appeal to police management to handle the situation with caution and the students to protest in a manner that will not undermine their legitimate struggle,” McCauley said.

Religious leaders are also appealing to political parties not to inflame the environment through their utterances and use students in order to score political points. “That, in our view, would be scraping the bottom of the barrel. We all can support the students without losing our moral ground by taking advantage of our children. There is a legitimate cry for help and justice and we must be on their side. Access to education must not be determined by the size of one’s pocket but must be seen as a basic human right.” We support the students demand for no increase in fees for 2016.

Issued by

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Rev Ray McCauley and the NRLC (National Religious Leaders Council SA)