

WHY DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST THE #BOPHELOHOUSE117

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. According to the Department of Health, community healthcare workers are the foundation of the healthcare system. They work in difficult conditions for little pay and provide services to South Africa's poorest, most vulnerable people.
2. The Free State, under the leadership of MEC Benny Malakoane, has one of the worst functioning healthcare systems in the country.
3. In April 2014, MEC Malakoane without notice or cause effectively dismissed all CHWs in the province – approximately 3 800 people lost jobs and the thousands who depended on them lost access to healthcare.
4. A group of the CHWs wanted to protest their dismissal and working conditions as well as the state of the healthcare system in the province.
5. MEC Malakoane repeatedly refused and avoided their requests for meetings.
6. In July 2014, over 100 of the CHWs, most of them elderly women, were arrested at a peaceful vigil in front of Bophelo House, the headquarters of the provincial health department. At no point did the vigil pose any threat to the public – only to the reputation of MEC Malakoane.
7. They were charged with violating the Regulation of Gatherings Act, an apartheid era law that is currently being challenged in court for being unconstitutional.
8. Almost a year later, the prosecution drags on. The CHWs are mostly elderly, poor and unemployed. They have appeared in court five times only for the case to be postponed. The Magistrate described the conditions of their trial as not “dignified or humane”.
9. The CHWs will appear for trial on 6th to 9th July. The TAC will be holding the “People’s Commission of Inquiry into the Free State Healthcare System” simultaneously—while the CHWs are on trial, so too will the healthcare system be.
10. This is a political and malicious prosecution that should be stopped.

We ask for your support to call upon Honorable Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi and Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa to take a public position that the charges should be dropped.

We also ask for you to sign our petition and make it a resolution of this conference that the charges should be dropped.

When they are acquitted or the charges are dropped, the CHWs will continue their campaign for dignified employment and access to quality healthcare services for all.

#BOPHELOHOUSE117 #FIREBENNY

