

MEDIA STATEMENT

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EMBARGO: NONE

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS A FAILING SYSTEM

The SAOU can only condemn the current lawlessness which is experienced at school level.

When Minister of Basic Education Siviwe Gwarube and Minister of Police Senzo Mchunu signed a mutual agreement on the promotion of safety in schools, now known as the Safe Schools' Protocol on the 25th of June 2025, all members of the education sector heaved a sigh of relief. This agreement would bring the much-needed relief in the education sector by ensuring safety in schools. The current unsafe environment in schools is brought about by overcrowding in classrooms, the growing lack of discipline in classrooms as indicated by continued reports on bullying and learners physically attacking one another in schools and classes and this is widely shared on social media.

However, like so many other initiatives, this again seems to have been a vanity project.

The recent attack on the Principal of the Hoërskool Roodepoort who was injured while trying to protect her learners, and in which three of the learners were injured, is totally unacceptable and could have been prevented if the Safe Schools Protocol had been implemented as promised. The preliminary suspension of learners of West Ridge High School in their Grade 12 year, shortly before their Grade 12 exams, could have been prevented, if the necessary preventative measures to promote safety had been implemented.

The current situation causes growing uncertainty and unrest in the education system.

Some suggestions have been made that the Principal of the Hoërskool Roodepoort should have called the police during the incident. This is cumbersome as the incident of the previous Friday had been circulated on social media and it would have been reasonable to assume that increased police visibility in the area could be expected.

Teachers and principals already fear the growing aggression and violence in schools. Reports of the stabbing of a colleague, is just a further indication that there is no protection for teachers.

Teachers perform a service to the State and are entitled like any other employees, to a safe working environment. However, if the State as employer cannot ensure the safety of employees, the time for hollow initiatives and policies might be passing by and unions will have to open the conversation on which measures should be taken to protect members.