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Press Release

NUMSA demands a living wage in the coal mining sector

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) will be meeting with the Chamber of Mines today to discuss wages in the sector. In terms of their process NUMSA will be negotiating for higher wages at Glencore mine where we have a majority representation. It's been over two decades since the first democratic elections, and yet mining houses in South Africa continue to pay low wages and expose workers to inhumane working conditions. NUMSA is demanding a living wage for our members in the mining sector. Below are our demands:

- We want a 15% wage increase across the board, which translates into a R1020 (\$78) increase for the lowest paid worker.
- We want a housing subsidy of R80 000
- We want an increase of 20% in all allowances

Mining houses have rejected this just demand for a living wage. They claim our demands are unrealistic. This is a reflection of the racist attitude that they continue to have towards African workers. They do not view our members and their families as human beings deserving of a living wage.

As NUMSA we believe that our demands are fair given that mining houses in South Africa have made obscene profits in the last 23 years and they continue to do so, whilst the working and living conditions of workers have not improved at all to the same degree.

For example, last year Glencore made a profit of 10.3 billion U.S. dollars and increased profits by 18%. The CEO of Glencore Ivan Glasenberg made 1.5 million U.S. dollars, in 2015, and yet, shamefully the lowest paid worker at the mine earns a pathetic R6800 or \$513 per month! This is truly disgraceful. The mining house could **never** have achieved

success without the sweat and toil of our members, and yet, they have the nerve to continue to pay them slave wages.

The mining industry in South Africa has demonstrated that it does not give a damn about the life of an African worker. Every year since 2012 at least 73 people die underground as a result of mining accidents because mining bosses don't have the political will to improve safety conditions. That is the equivalent of *two* Marikana massacres a year! Two weeks ago five miners were killed at Kusasaletu mine in Carletonville after they were trapped underground because of an earth tremor. Capitalists argue that they deserve to make millions because they put up the finances to fund the mining company, and yet they place no value on the life of an African worker.

The CEO and shareholders continue to earn millions per annum; they drive fancy cars and live in mansions. Glasenberg is one of the richest men in South Africa. But his employees are forced to live in squalor with the indignity of shacks which have no running water or electricity. Our members can barely afford cars and must depend on the unreliable public transportation system, and yet, were it not for our members, Glasenberg and other executives at Glencore would not be able to enjoy their luxurious life styles. Our members are responsible for creating the wealth in the industry but they are treated like animals.

We are unapologetic about the demands we are placing on the table. We are fighting for genuine transformation in the industry. We want to see the lives of mine workers and their families drastically improving. We are no longer willing to listen to lame excuses in order to justify the exploitation and the suffering of our members. Glencore claims that one of the four pillars of its sustainability strategy is "respect for human rights". As NUMSA we demand that Glencore prove its commitment to this value by treating our members like human beings and paying them a ***living wage***.

As a Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union we are inspired by the words of the great Cuban leader comrade Fidel Castro who said:

"There is often talk of human rights, but it is also necessary to talk of the rights of humanity. Why should some people walk barefoot, so that others can travel in luxurious cars? Why should some live for thirty-five years, so that others can live for seventy years? Why should some be miserably poor, so that others can be hugely rich? I speak on behalf of the children in the world who do not have a piece of bread. I speak on behalf of the sick who have no medicine, of those whose rights to life and human dignity have been denied."

We demand that the Chamber of Mines and the industry at large take these talks seriously. They must prove that they value the lives of our members and their families. They have not begun to make up for the suffering they caused under Apartheid, therefore they have no choice, they have a duty to drastically improve living and working conditions of workers.

Aluta continua!

The struggle continues!

Issued by Phakamile Hlubi

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