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STUDENT CENSORSHIP AT UKZN

The Freedom of Expression Institute is disconcerted with growing incidents of blatant censorship within South African tertiary education institutions. Several South African institutions of higher learning have experienced a wave of student protests recently, which have been met with hard handed response from the respective administrations. The growing discontent is a result of frustrations from many on-going unresolved grievances within the system. A case in point being the posting of an open letter on the internet by students of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Lukhona Mnguni together with three fellow students, raised their concerns in a letter addressed to the vice chancellor of the University, an action which prompted a disciplinary hearing by the University.

The University has based the disciplinary action on a charge of misconduct on the grounds that the letter published inaccurate/ false and defamatory statements which are in violation of University regulations. It is noted that the letter has no real ground for such charge of defamatory statements. The FXI strongly condemns this action and views it as an act of intimidation and censorship. The expression of student views and opinions is a critical component within the tertiary education system, adding credence to governance based views of their fellow students who are the primary beneficiaries of these institutions. It is the right of all students to freely express their concerns and such should not warrant banning on the basis that these are dissenting views. Transparency and accountability are undisputable markers of democracy, which should be exhibited in all organisations.

As FXI we encourage and support freedom of expression in all spheres including within learning institutes. It is hoped that these charges will be dismissed and the administration will respect the fundamental right of free expression.

Freedom of Expression Institute is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 1994 to protect and foster the right to freedom of expression and to oppose censorship. Its vision is a society where everyone enjoys freedom of expression and the right to access and disseminate information.

Executive Committee: Anton (chairperson), Raymond Louw, Nobuntu Mbelle, Indra de Lanerolle, William Gumede, Oupa Lebogo, Sam Radebe, Franz Kruger. **Executive Director:** Tusi Fokane