

PRESS STATEMENT

Released by the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI)

Johannesburg, 2 August 2022

We, the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI), are gravely concerned by the threats of violence that have been targeted at the staff and clients of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI). We condemn these threats and stand in solidarity with SERI and other organisations that work to uphold the spirit of the Constitution in its vision for a more socially just, democratic, and free South Africa.

SERI have supported the South African Informal Traders Forum (SAITF) with a successful application to the Gauteng Local Division of the High Court to reverse the illegal eviction of information traders from the De Villiers trading precinct. Ignoring the legal merits of the case, Councillor Nkululeko Mbundu of ActionSA (MMC for Economic Development in the City of Johannesburg) criticised SERI and the Forum for this application on social media and accused the Forum of being a front for foreign nationals. Following his social media commentary in this regard, SERI staff and its client have received threats of violence from groups and individuals on social media and their photographs and contact details have been circulated.

We call on Councillor Mbundu, ActionSA and City of Johannesburg to condemn these threats of violence and to affirm their respect for court decisions. We call on our public representatives to speak in a manner which affirms the dignity of all, and which acknowledges the fragility of our social relations under the increasing weight of poverty, inequality, and declining state capacity.

Millions in South Africa are unemployed and face dire levels of poverty. Our focus, and that of government, should be on finding constructive ways to develop a more socially just country, and not on scapegoating already marginalised members of society.

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