



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Diakonia Council of Churches wishes to express its deepest dismay at the decision by the Sydenham Police Station Commissioner Nayager to restrict pastoral access to the Kennedy Road 13.**

Immediately after the sixth postponement of the bail application of the Kennedy Road 13, on Wednesday 18 November, and upon hearing they were to be removed from Westville Prison and further incarcerated at Sydenham Police Station, a group consisting of clergy, representatives of Diakonia Council of Churches, and Abahlali baseMjondolo, visited the police station and met with the Station Commissioner, Senior Superintendent Nayager. The purpose of the visit was to plead with the Station Commissioner for adequate visitation times for clergy, friends and family to visit the Kennedy Road 13.

Nayager responded by granting no more than 5 minutes per day for pastoral visits with the Kennedy Road 13, which could only be availed of between 12pm and 1pm or 5pm and 6pm. *“When pastors come and pray with my policemen, they are done and gone in two minutes. How much longer does one need to pray?”* he responded. When asked whether he considered the needs of free police officers to be different to those of the Kennedy Road 13 who have been detained without trial for two months, and who have been subjected to extreme violence and stress, he refused to be drawn into further debate.

The Kennedy Road 13 have made it clear that they refuse to eat food served to them at this station, and when asked whether they would be allowed food from friends and family, Station Commissioner Nayager responded that all food would be examined and searched for drugs and weapons.

In response to Nayager’s statements, S’bu Zikode, Chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo noted that *“I am not surprised by the response from Nayager. He has never viewed us as human beings and continues to be satisfied in ensuring that we live in sub-human conditions. Like others he is happy for us to remain in squalor and filth and be satisfied with the least possible.”*

Diakonia Council of Churches expresses its deepest concern for the spiritual and mental welfare of the Kennedy Road 13, and is deeply saddened by the hard and callous attitude of the South African Police Services, as displayed by the Station Commissioner of Sydenham Police Station. Bishop Barry Wood, the Chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches, said, *“We believe that our request was made in good faith and we remain disappointed and disturbed by this response. We call on all people of faith to pray and protest against this blatant disregard for human rights – our need for prayer and communion with our Higher Power and one another, are at the core of our common humanity.”*

END