



# **LESEDI**

*Lighting the way to justice*

APRIL-JUNE 2020

EDITION 2 - YEAR 3

# ***THE WATER ISSUE: TURN ON THE TAP***

# LESEDI

LESEDI – a publication of  
Amnesty International  
South Africa 2020

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## WATER IS LIFE... NOW AND ALWAYS

*Shenilla Mohamed*

A tap seems like such a simple object, something many of us take for granted in our daily lives. Yet, millions of people in South Africa do not have access to clean, safe, sufficient and reliable water running out of a tap.

Access to water is a constitutional right, not a privilege. Decades of corruption and the mismanagement of public funds has weakened the Department of Water and Sanitation's ability to deliver on this right. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, the department was forced to draw up emergency plans to deliver water to those most in need. It was, and still is, a life or death situation.

In this issue of *Lesedi*, we reflect on the three months since we launched our ongoing [#TurnOnTheTap campaign](#), calling on the government to be transparent, accountable and progressive in its handling of South Africa's water crisis. A water crisis which is likely to worsen, as argued in a webinar we co-hosted with the Daily Maverick in May, and summed up by the Maverick's Estelle Ellis. We bust some myths around what's really running South Africa dry and our volunteer, Deepna Desai, questions whether the right to water is only guaranteed to the privileged. Staffer, Mienke Steytler, shows us how women bear the brunt of water shortages, and supporter Nick Wood takes us through hidden 'Water Wars' stories pointing out that the poorest citizens pay the heaviest price.

You still have a chance to take part in our #TurnOnTheTap competition, so share your water story of resilience with us before the end of July and stand a chance to win.

As the pandemic and the lockdown continues, it's important to remember that this is not only a health crisis, but it is also a human rights crisis.

The shadow pandemic of gender-based violence and femicide has, once again, surfaced with a surge in women being killed during lockdown, and we call on the government to protect women and girls, and to stop the violence, with urgency.

The excessive use of force by security forces was highlighted with the deaths of Collins Khosa and George Floyd, with Amnesty documenting beatings, the misuse of tear gas and pepper spray, and more.

The ongoing forced evictions were underscored by the inhumane treatment of Bulelani Qolani as he was evicted naked from his home.

We also reminded the government that it is obligated by national and international human rights laws and standards to protect the human rights of refugee and asylum seekers, even during a pandemic.

Then, despite the challenges of the last few months, our community and university chapters continued to make change happen, and our youth activists are on fire with written contributions from Shayna van Vuren, Boniswa Dineka, Priyanka Naik and Nelvia Rawheath.

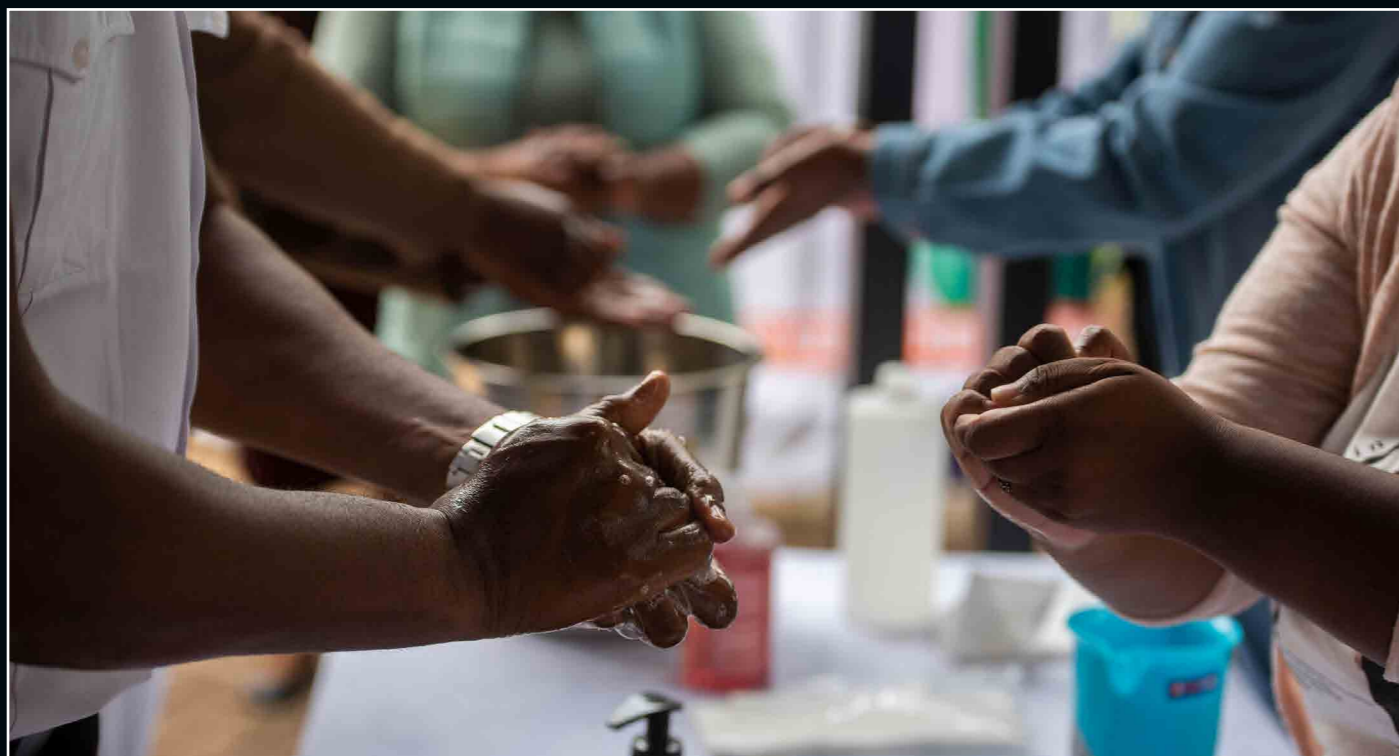
We are also 'In Conversation With' Lehlogonolo Muthevuli on the role of education in cultivating leadership.

As one of the biggest challenges of the century carries on, let's continue to stand with humanity, together. Stay safe and stay kind.

*Aluta continua!*

## COVID-19: EXPOSING A WATER CRISIS IN THE MAKING

*Estelle Ellis, Daily Maverick*



The outbreak of coronavirus infections, and the rush to provide water to communities so they can wash their hands, should be a major wake-up call to the South African government, experts said during a Daily Maverick webinar on water in this country.

The South African government's failure to plan and prepare when it comes to providing water to communities was starkly highlighted by the coronavirus pandemic – and communities' lack of access to water should be a major embarrassment to those in charge.

These were the views of experts during a webinar on water led by Maverick Citizen editor, Mark Heywood. During the webinar, the audience was asked to add their names to Amnesty International's [petition](#) to the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Lindiwe Sisulu, to recognise that one in three people in South Africa – about 20 million – has no access to safe or reliable water supplies, and to put plans in place to make access to safe, running water a reality.

The petition calls for transparency about the water situation in the country, and for progressive plans that will make sure access to water is sustained even after the pandemic. It also calls for accountability to make sure government follows through on its promises to provide water to communities so that they can wash their hands.

Economist Xhanti Payi said the outbreak of coronavirus infections in the country had exposed the inequalities in South African society, with water being a part of this. "People have to brave social distancing to collect water and communities have to share toilets," he said.

"Government's programmes have not adequately prepared us for this," said Payi. "We could have done things differently had we expanded our thinking about water as a human right," he said. Climatologist Simon Gear agreed that water was a fundamental human right. "It is a massive embarrassment for SA that so many households do not have access to water." Gear said Covid-19 must "act as a wake-up call".

He added that while South Africa is a relatively dry country, the water shortages currently highlighted by the pandemic are mostly caused by politics and bad decisions.

"Severe drought does exacerbate the problems," Gear said, adding that while there are drought-related issues, the vast majority of water shortages, including the failure by municipalities to produce drinkable tap water, is a consequence of bad governance.

He said it was a pity that government had allowed the country's water infrastructure to degrade over the past 25 years.

"Small municipalities are no longer able to provide potable water," he said, adding that in extreme instances, some local governments were making the problem worse by pumping raw sewage into rivers. "We are poor at planning and sharing resources," said economist Xhanti Payi.

"Every time we have a crisis, we say we will fix it for next time. We should plan and prepare so that we don't have to ask ourselves the same question over and over," he added.

Payi explained that South Africa should, for instance, by now have considered the issue of waterless toilets and made them part of its water plans.

"[Water supply] should be about the science. We must stop being surprised by problems," he added. Gear said while the impacts of climate change are becoming visible in the Eastern and Western Cape, the country should not become the "passive receivers of the natural world".

"We always knew that the environment was changing. You would have thought that we would plan, with budgets, for climate change. Put money into infrastructure and other investments. We have known for a long time that there will be fights over water. We know that we don't have infinite resources, so what do we do? Now we will probably see cuts in all budgets.

It would be a mistake to say that this is a Covid-19 crisis. It is a broader project. We wouldn't be here if we had planned," he said.

Gear said it was encouraging that government's first response to the Covid-19 crisis was to buy up every water tank in the country. "To me, it showed that water was something people were worrying about," he said.

"If we have to nationalise something, the tanks should be it. That would remove the temptation to steal them or divert them, because all the tanks

would belong to government."

Payi said government should make sure their emergency interventions become structural. "The main thing is to resist the temptation to provide a short-term fix."

Gear said he would also suggest that management of the country's water supply is centralised. "I do not trust municipalities to look after our water. They have proven that they are not able to do so. There are no small towns left in South Africa where you can drink the water." He said this was the result of both "brain-drain" and poor financial management.

"The long-term solution is very boring: you must get accountants in to fix this. This problem is going to be solved by accountants, not engineers.

Expecting small municipalities to run the system by themselves is not realistic. We should move in a centralised direction," he said.

Payi agreed, saying there was an urgent need for a government rethink.

"We must rethink it and find better frameworks. There is a hope that we can build capacity [in our municipalities to handle water provision]. Every time [we try] it doesn't work," he said.

This article first appeared in the [Daily Maverick](#) on 14 May 2020.

**WATCH THE  
WEBINAR  
ON ACCESS TO WATER  
IN A POST-COVID  
SOUTH AFRICA  
[HERE.](#)**



## WHAT'S REALLY RUNNING SOUTH AFRICA DRY?

It shouldn't take a global pandemic for the South African government to consider making provisions for immediate access to clean and safe water for all people in the country.

Heading into the lockdown, 5.3 million households in South Africa still did not have access to safe and reliable drinking water, yet it is one of the key preventative measures for the spread of the virus. What use is watching a government hand-washing guide when your main struggle is accessing water?

In their response to Covid-19, the Department of Water and Sanitation promised to make water available to everyone. Prior to the pandemic, the department itself highlighted that 3 million people in South Africa had no access to water, and as the outbreak hit, Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Lindiwe Sisulu promised that her department would deliver water to 2 000 communities during the lockdown period in order to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

It's imperative that the government is held accountable for delivering on this promise, but also to ensure that provisions are put in place to avoid this kind of scramble in the future.

Over 100 days into lockdown, it's reported that there are still communities without water and that water tanks are already running dry. So, when we see South African officials congratulating themselves on Twitter for making emergency water deliveries, are we alone in wondering 'why the celebration?' when there are still people without water and it's the government's responsibility to protect our right to water? The pandemic has highlighted that, if there is enough political will, immediate action can be taken to deliver water to all. But why hasn't it happened before? Perhaps it is now that the South African government can finally prioritise investment in water security for future generations.

There are many theories about why South Africa is not a water secure country. Now's the time to bust some myths and find out what's really running South Africa dry.

service which requires the timely implementation of policies as well as transparency and accountability across all government levels.

### Myth: Immigration and a growing population means there isn't enough water in South Africa

The [National Water and Sanitation Master Plan](#) states that high levels of corruption have impacted on the water and sanitation service delivery in a number of municipalities. The country has enough water, but it needs to be correctly managed to develop a sustainable supply. There is much yet to be done around sourcing alternative water – it is estimated that around 85% of South Africa's groundwater has not yet been utilised.

### Myth: Water should not be free

South Africa has an indigent policy of free basic services including water, electricity and solid waste collection.

By law, every household should receive the first 6 000 litres of water a month for free; only water that is used over and above this must be paid for.

But what happens when you live in a country where systemic corruption has infiltrated the water sector and hinders the government's ability to deliver on this basic human right? Coupled with a looming

economic crisis and a recent downgrade to junk status, the investment in water security will now come at an increased cost.

So, in addition to fulfilling the legal duty to provide clean and safe water for all people, it's clear that more than ever, now is the time for transparency and a zero-tolerance approach to corruption.

### Myth: People don't have enough water in South Africa because of drought

There is a lot more to the water crisis in South Africa than drought. The lack of investment in infrastructure means that the water we do have is not being properly managed. A good example of this is that over 1/3rd of water in South Africa is lost due to ageing and leaking infrastructure.

The government must plan ahead so that when a drought, or a global pandemic for that matter, hits, adequate resources are already in place.

### Myth: The government doesn't owe you water

The right to water entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe and reliable water for personal and domestic use, as guaranteed in Chapter Two of the South African Constitution as well as international human rights laws.

### Myth: South African citizens are responsible for providing their own water

Local communities are well-placed to know what their needs and strengths, are and have been largely taking this responsibility on themselves. However, the government needs to support local initiatives and lift the burden of vast corruption from communities.

### FACT: It is time to make safe, running water an everyday reality for everyone

Yes, South Africa is a water-scarce country, but it is the government's duty to invest in appropriate infrastructure so that water can be stored and managed in an efficient and sustainable way for future generations.

Take action: Call on the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Lindiwe Sisulu, to recognise that many people in South Africa are denied their constitutional right to water, and to publicly commit to providing equal access to water for everyone – now and always.

### Myth: Climate change is the main reason many go without safe water in South Africa

If you looked only to government funded campaigns around water shortage, you'd be forgiven for thinking that climate change may be the culprit. But climate change is by no means the only factor at play in the country's lack of sufficient water supply. With 44% of water treatment works in poor or critical condition and 50% of water service authorities having no or very limited technical staff, the lack of adequate infrastructure and the maintenance of this infrastructure puts additional burden on South Africa's water resources.

The government must address these challenges urgently to ensure proper usage, development, conservation and management of water resources and prioritise the investment in progressive infrastructure.

### Myth: Water in South Africa isn't always safe because of pollution

We can all agree pollution is a challenge, but with proper management, and if we filter corruption out of the water system, there would be enough clean water to meet demand. One report suggests that R4 billion has been lost to corruption since 2014.

Water supply is a human right and a public

TAKE ACTION ON THE  
RIGHT TO WATER  
[HERE.](#)



## GOVERNMENT MUST TURN ON THE TAP, NOW AND ALWAYS

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 3 million people did not have access to a basic water supply and 14.1 million people did not have access to safe sanitation, according to the government's National Water and Sanitation Master Plan. Yet, for several weeks, the government has been advising people to regularly wash their hands with soap and water.

As Amnesty International South Africa's campaign, [Right To Water: Turn On The Tap](#), calls on the South African government to urgently ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe and reliable water as a protection measure against COVID-19 and as a reality for everyone, always.

The government has committed to delivering water to 2 000 communities in South Africa during the pandemic. We recognise that the Department of Water and Sanitation has been taking steps to tackle the water crisis during the COVID-19 outbreak, and has assured communities that water will be delivered to those that need it.

However, it needs to urgently scale up its efforts by ensuring that the planning and delivery of water is:

1. **Transparent with communication and information regarding which communities water is being delivered to, the distance needed to travel to access water, and how much water is being distributed per household;**
2. **Accountable to its commitments, including ensuring municipalities monitor water levels, so that individuals have access to sufficient, safe and reliable water each day, and are able to regularly wash hands with soap;**
3. **Progressive, so that equitable access to sufficient, safe and reliable water becomes a reality for all, even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Amnesty International South Africa's Right To Water: Turn on the TAP campaign calls on the Minister for Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, to recognise that many people in South Africa are denied their constitutional and human right to water, and to publicly commit to providing equal access to water for everyone – now and always.

**Prior to the outbreak, government statistics showed that:**

- **5.3 million households (35%) did not have access to safe and reliable drinking water, that's around 20 million people;**
- **56% of wastewater treatment plants and 44**

**% of water treatment works were in poor or critical condition;**

- **11% of the wastewater and general water works were dysfunctional,**
- **41% of municipal water in South Africa did not generate revenue;**
- **35% of municipal water was lost through leakage.**

In its National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, launched in 2019, the government committed to meet the target of providing reliable and safe water to 100% of households in South Africa by 2030.

The time is now for the government to fix this once and for all, not only during the crisis, and to realise the Right to Water for All.

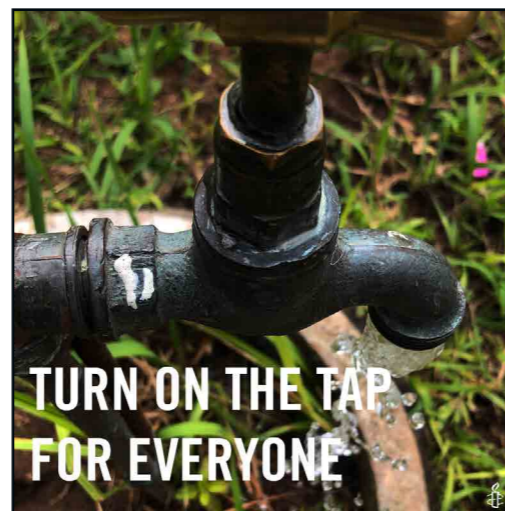
Now more than ever, we need our government to put people first. They must ensure everyone has access to the water they need to stay safe.

### Background

The South African government is obligated by national and international laws and standards to deliver on the right to water.

The national government, acting through the minister for Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, must ensure that water is protected, used, developed, conserved, managed and controlled in a sustainable and equitable manner, for the benefit of all persons and in accordance with its constitutional mandate.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this mandate into stark light with many people in South Africa already vulnerable and at a greater risk of contracting the disease because they do not have access to protective measures including sufficient water to regularly wash their hands.



## ACCESS TO WATER: AN EXCLUSIVE RIGHT GUARANTEED TO THE PRIVILEGED

*Deepna Desai*

Residents in affluent suburbs rarely experience water cuts, but when they do, tweets are promptly sent, local municipalities receive an influx of calls and radio stations immediately report it on their daily news. Shortly after their grievances have received attention, the privilege is restored.

This effective service delivery from local municipalities is offered to the minority only. The reality for the majority of communities in South Africa is strikingly different.

On 13 April 2011, residents in Maqheleng Township did not have the luxury of resorting to tweeting or picking up the phone. Instead, residents were compelled to protest about the inadequate water supply. Callously, the police responded by using water cannons to disperse the residents. Even worse, they publicly executed Andries Tatane who led the protest on access to water. Andries Tatane's death received media attention, but no government attention. Subsequently, the law failed Tatane by unjustly acquitting the police officers who murdered him. Similarly, the residents of QwaQwa, who have been faced with a water crisis since 2016, resorted to protesting for access to this basic human right – but their cries were not immediately heard. The government responded to the community only when the media reported on the water crisis in light of the tragic drowning of Mosa Mbele, a seven-year-old who was fetching water for her family.

Both of these cases show that the government and local municipalities only seem to take action when media attention is involved. However, we cannot rely solely on the media to bring attention to the ongoing water crisis in many parts of the country. The law needs to assist in pressuring the government and local municipalities to act accordingly.

In terms of the law, the right to water is guaranteed in section 27 (1b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (the Constitution). The right to water is undeniably linked to the equality clause (section nine) and the right to live in a healthy environment (section 2).

Denying the basic right to water not only overtly infringes section 27 (1b), but also undermines the right to equality – as there is evidently a discrimination in the provision of services. Furthermore, section 24 is disregarded, as insufficient access to water exacerbates health risks

such as diarrhoea, cholera and polio, to name a few.

As indicated above, the Constitution explicitly guarantees the right to water, however it is up to the courts and government to ensure that this right is enforced, especially in communities that need it most.

It is evident from the above information that access to water is hindered by ineffective regulation. Public authorities disregard the right to water and thus fail to regulate local municipalities. The law needs to be enforced and upheld in order to hold municipalities and government accountable.

Additionally, through the effective use of law, pressure needs to be put on the government to explore the reason why municipalities are under-performing even when they receive adequate funding. These are problems which need to be addressed immediately – no one deserves to wait for water.

**Deepna** is currently a Candidate Attorney (the views expressed above do not necessarily reflect those of her employer). She has a keen interest in helping the community and improving human rights for all. Deepna has volunteered with CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa since 2010 and has been a part of the Amnesty International South Africa Volunteer team since 2018, introducing and developing a Human Rights Education Programme for schools throughout Gauteng.



*This article was contributed by a guest blogger. This blog entry does not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Amnesty International South Africa.*

# GIVE WOMEN SAFE WATER NOW, SO THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS HAVE A CHANCE TO THRIVE

Mienke Steytler

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought pre-existing inequalities into stark light, in particular the right to clean and sufficient water. And, no, it's not only due to the climate crisis, droughts and pollution. It's mostly due to mismanagement of funds and corruption.

Amnesty International South Africa's [Turn on the Tap campaign](#), calling on the government to realise the right to water for all, has also brought into focus the full extent of the water crisis in the country and its particular impact on women.

Due to gender-assigned roles in many families, women are the ones who walk long distances to fetch water, they are the ones who cook, wash and clean with it. They are also the ones who keep their families and communities healthy with it, now more than ever.

So, as the world marks International Day of Action on Women's Health today, highlighting sexual and reproductive health rights, it's also crucial to underscore how lack of safe, sufficient and reliable water affects women's human rights, that of their communities and future generations.

During our campaign, we have been collecting testimonies on whether people have sufficient water, how a lack of water impacts on them, and what measures they are taking to get hold of it.

We reached out to Caroline Ntaopane, [WoMin African Alliance's](#) South Africa national campaign co-ordinator, after the alliance sent a [joint urgent request](#) to President Cyril Ramaphosa and ministers

to address the water crisis, reported [here](#).

The information we have received – and more is coming in – is mostly from women and is in the form of powerful stories of their own and their communities' resilience in the face of extreme deprivation. It is also important to note that these experiences don't only tell of lived realities during Covid-19, but of years, and often decades, of living with either very little or no water accessible in their immediate vicinity.

For example, eight informal settlements in the Witzenberg Municipality in the Western Cape, a reported Covid-19 hotspot, have been short of safe and sufficient water for about seven years. Somkhele, based in the Mtubatuba Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, where more than half of the households are headed by women, has faced severe water scarcity for the past decade.

We have received numerous reports during the lockdown from all over the country of harassment by the police when women travel to collect water during the day, forcing them to wait until it gets dark to do so, putting their safety at risk. There was also a concerning [report](#) of a woman who allegedly lost her eye after being shot by a police



officer using rubber bullets when she was out to fetch water for her household.

Women, some from QwaQwa in the Free State, have told us that their health has been affected as they carry heavy buckets of water over long distances for cleaning, cooking and laundry. Others told us that they have to rely on rainfall to have water in their homes and some are forced to travel to neighbouring villages, in contravention of lockdown regulations and risking fines or arrest, only to find the water is not clean and cannot be used.

According to WoMin, the water crisis has exacerbated hunger, poor health, poverty and, in some places, it has also increased the long distances people, mostly women, have to walk to find safe drinking water. Some women walk for more than six hours a day.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought pre-existing inequalities into stark light, in particular the right to clean and sufficient water. And, no, it's not only due to the climate crisis, droughts and pollution. It's mostly due to mismanagement of funds and corruption.

[With 44% of water treatment works in poor or critical condition and about 35% of South Africa's water lost to leakage](#), it's not that the country has too little water, it's that the country's water resources have not been properly developed, managed and conserved.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous line.

*Water, water, everywhere,*

*Nor any drop to drink*

*could have been "Water, water everywhere, / Nor any drop to wash one's hands, or cook, or clean, or keep one's family healthy".*

Unless the government takes urgent steps to address this issue while it's managing the impact of the pandemic, women will continue to bear the burden of the government's failure to guarantee safe, sufficient and affordable water to all, with the effects rippling through families and communities.

This International Day of Action for Women's Health, [join](#) Amnesty International South Africa as we call on the government to be:

- **Transparent** with communication and information regarding which communities water is being delivered to, the distance needed to travel to obtain water, and how much water is being distributed per household;
- **Accountable** to the commitments made, including ensuring municipalities monitor water levels, so that people have access to sufficient, safe and reliable water each day and are able to regularly wash their hands; and
- **Progressive** so that equitable access to water becomes a reality for all, even beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

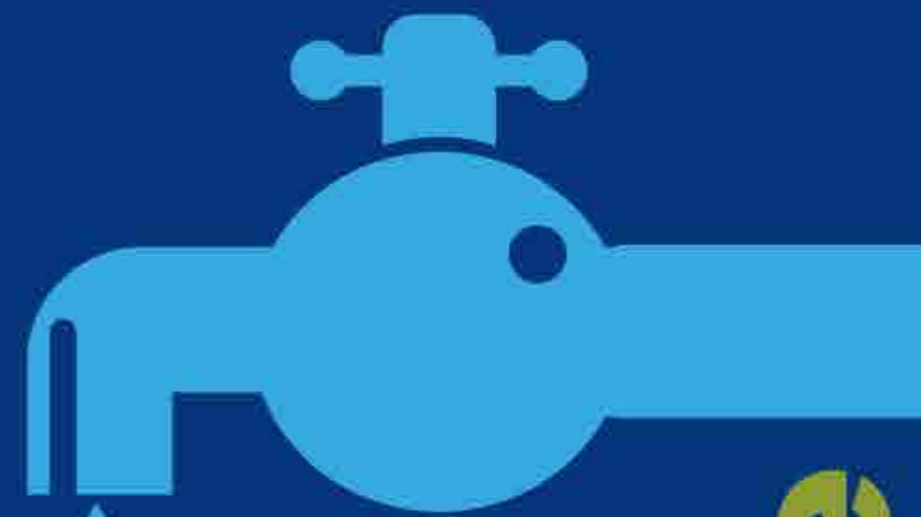
By being forward-thinking, the government will move closer to fulfilling its human rights obligation to provide clean, sufficient and reliable water to everyone, always.

It will also be protecting women and their communities, thereby building a South Africa where future generations have a chance to thrive.

This article first appeared in the [Daily Maverick](#) on 29 May 2020, which was International Day of Action of Women's Health.



# #Turn OnThe Tap



SHARE  
YOUR  
WATER  
STORY

Send us a video showing the spirit of resilience in people living in communities where the government has not met all their water needs.

WhatsApp  
your video to  
060 998 3311  
Stand a chance to win a  
R2000 cash prize

T&C's  
<https://bit.ly/WaterCompAI>

# Water Is Life



## WATER WARS: WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Nick Wood

In a climate changing world, one of the most vital resources is global fresh water. That is, how much is left, is this dwindling as the planet heats up – and, if so, who gets access to it, and at what cost?

The genesis of my recently published science fiction novel [Water Must Fall](#), was the then pending Day Zero crisis in Cape Town. This was the predicted apocalyptic moment (April 12th, 2018) when Cape Town would become the first major world city – of approximately 4 million people, many in informal settlements – to run out of water, after a sustained drought over preceding years. Level 5 water restrictions were already in place and mass migration and political chaos at unprecedented levels, was expected.

A central problem is that with global warming comes increasing drought – and with drought, comes famine and death. Water is a key essential to life – people will die far more quickly without water, than without food. The life estimate for humans is three days or so for water, three weeks or so for food. And, without water, no food can be grown. Water is thus key to both ‘food security’ and immediate survival.

Given these contingencies, access to water is fundamental for all humans. So ‘ownership,’ or human access to water is crucial. And, if ownership is insisted upon, who owns water, owns life.

At the turn of the century, in a town called Cochabamba in Bolivia, South America, the opening salvo of what is emerging as one of the twenty first century’s most hidden, yet crucial human conflicts, the so-called ‘Water Wars,’ was fired (Shiva, 2002; Subramaniam, 2018). The town’s water supply was privatized (sold) to a company called Semapa.

The company drastically raised water costs when suppliers further down the line claimed delivery costs would rise, to accommodate the building of a new dam. A community coalition rose in protest at unaffordable prices for so many, the group known as ‘Coordination in Defence of Water and Life.’

There was, of course, a swift and brutal response, including police killing a protestor. However, on 10th April 2000, the national government reached an agreement with the community activist group, to reverse the privatization and reduce water costs and improve access.

And then, these largely hidden Water Wars moved closer to home. Water stress is when demand outstrips available supply and, with increasing rapid

urbanisation in South Africa this century, inadequate and failing infrastructure resulted in the death of at least three (maybe up to fifteen) babies, drinking sewage infected water in Bloemhof and Motlhung, near Pretoria. Following resident protests about their lack of access to clean water, there were police shootings and the death of several protestors (Nicolson & Lekgowa, 2014).

Finally, even in one of the richest countries in the world, the United States of America, the Water Wars there are most vividly seen in the Flint Water Crisis (from 2012 onwards) whereby the state of Michigan, whilst supplying water in tandem with companies to the poorest communities, sought to maximise profits by neglecting treatment on dangerous and outdated supply pipes from the Flint River. Toxic amounts of lead entered the water system, leading to birth defects and brain damage, particularly in children within the African American population.

Two private companies profiteering off water and several state officials responsible (who also tried to cover up the crisis) were charged. Report findings indicated systemic racism was at play in decisions made by complicit companies (CNN, 2019), just one deadly thread in the enduring structural racism that led to the latest murder in the US of George Floyd.

In these Water Wars stories, the poorest citizens always pay the heaviest price, for companies profiteering off water, or states not ensuring access to clean water. As we remember those who protested in the struggle for freedom and democracy, so too let us remember that one of those hard won rights is stated in our precious **Constitution: Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.**

**Nick** is a South African-British clinical psychologist and Science Fiction (SF) writer, with published short stories collected in Learning Monkey and Crocodile (Luna Press, 2019). Nick’s latest SF novel is *Water Must Fall* (NewCon Press, 2020). Nick can be found [here](#).

*This article was contributed by a guest blogger. This blog entry does not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Amnesty International South Africa.*

WATCH. THIS. SPACE.

COMING TO YOU IN

AUGUST 2020.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON

OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS AND ON YOUR EMAIL INBOX.



#ENOUGHISENOUGH

TELL @GOVERNMENTZA TO  
INCREASE ITS EFFORTS TO  
PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS.  
NOW, AND ALWAYS.



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COVID-19 SHOULD GUARANTEE THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Authorities in Sub-Saharan Africa must ensure their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic include specific protections for the rights of women and girls, Amnesty International, Women's Link Worldwide and the International Planned Parenthood Federation Africa Region (IPPFAR) said in a [joint report](#).

The document provides a roadmap for governments and regional organisations for taking the necessary measures to protect the rights of women and girls, who are often disproportionately affected in crisis situations. It highlights states' obligations to guarantee the right to live free from discrimination and violence and calls on governments to ensure access to essential sexual and reproductive health services, commodities and information during the pandemic.

"The current COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerability of women and girls. Their health and wellbeing is not only negatively impacted by the disruption of essential sexual and reproductive services such as contraceptives counselling, maternal and newborn health, gender-based violence (GBV), and testing and treatment for HIV and sexually transmitted infections, but also their livelihoods and even their lives are threatened when sexually based crimes go invisible and stay unpunished," says Marie-Evelyne Petrus-Barry, the IPPF Africa Regional Director.

"This is why the African Union, regional economic commissions, governments and women rights defenders must redouble their efforts in ensuring that the sexual reproductive health and rights of women and girls are protected and upheld

and violations of these rights are documented dealt with by justice systems."

The organisations are calling for governments to take urgent action to protect the rights of women and girls, highlighting the specific gender risks which the COVID-19 pandemic poses. Example highlighted in the report includes the right to live free of violence and any form of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment.

"During times of crisis and turmoil such as the one we are living in, women and girls face an increased risk of suffering violations of their rights. This is especially true for women already living in marginalized situations. For this reason, it is urgent that we work to ensure that their rights are respected and guaranteed," said Viviana Waisman, President & CEO of Women's Link Worldwide.

"These guidelines are a roadmap to allow us to carry out this monitoring and advocacy work and demand that governments comply with their obligations and maintain their commitment to the rights and lives of women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic."

According to the report, the implementation of measures such as curfews, lockdowns or travel restrictions may lead to police brutality and violence which ultimately poses a risk for women and girls to being subjected to sexual violence. There are also concerns of increase in teenage pregnancies, as previously observed in Sierra Leone following the lockdown imposed to halt the spread of the Ebola epidemic. Governments should put safeguards in place to ensure women and girls are protected from



sexual violence and have access to sexual and reproductive health services and commodities.

The organisations also call for better protections for refugee and migrant women. Africa hosts more than 25.2 million refugees and internally displaced people and houses four of the world's six largest refugee camps in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Refugee camps in the region usually provide inadequate and overcrowded living arrangements that present a severe health risk to inhabitants.

"As COVID-19 spreads across the region women and girls have reportedly already faced an increase in domestic violence. Restrictions on movement, social isolation and lockdowns can make it even harder for women to access essential services like sexual and reproductive healthcare and protection from domestic violence," said Samira Daoud, Amnesty International West and Central Africa regional director. "We call on governments in the region to act urgently to prevent gender gaps increasing. Any measures taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic must respect and protect women's rights, including the right to live free of violence and torture and other ill-treatment, and the right to access justice."

### About the organisations

**Amnesty International:** Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 8 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

**IPPFAR:** The International Planned Parenthood Federation Africa Region (IPPFAR) as the leading sexual and reproductive health (SRH) service delivery organization in Africa, and the leading sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy voice in the region.

**Women's Link Worldwide:** Women's Link Worldwide is an international nonprofit organization that uses the power of the law to promote social change that advances the human rights of women and girls, especially those facing multiple inequalities.

**TAKE ACTION [HERE](#) AND TELL THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS. NOW AND ALWAYS.**

## STOP GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE THIS YOUTH DAY

As South Africa marked Youth Day today, Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa said:

"Usually on Youth Day, South Africa remembers the sacrifices made for the right to education for all. But this Youth Day is different as it comes after a surge in horrific murders of women and girls across the country.

Enough is enough. South Africa's war on women must be stopped, and crucial to making this happen is immediate and significant government action to protect women and girls. The government must tackle gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) with the same zeal and coordinated effort as demonstrated with COVID-19."

Amnesty International South Africa is demanding justice for victims and their families by calling on the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, to:

- Ensure police are gathering evidence in a meticulous manner and are accountable in accordance with the law.
- Ensure police follow timely and due process during investigations.
- Ensure there is no further impunity for cases of femicide or gender-based violence.
- Ensure that corruption of police, also in cases of femicide and gender-based violence, is no longer tolerated.
- Ensure that police are trained to sensitively and objectively investigate incidents of gender-based violence.

Shenilla Mohamed added: "Further delays cannot be tolerated. If future generations, the youth of our country, are to have a chance at thriving, GBVF must stop. So, let's make this Youth Day the day that the tide turned."

# DESPITE COVID-19, OUR CHAPTERS CONTINUE TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN!



## UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

These past two months (specifically in the months of May and June 2020) Amnesty International Wits (AIW) decided to turn our hurt, disappointment, frustration, anger and hopefulness into action. We decided to take it upon ourselves to contribute to the creation of a world that we would be proud to live in. A world that equally, justly and rightfully serves everyone. We decided to act on very few recent human rights injustices that have and/or are still persisting around the world. We had campaigns that focused on educating people on what mental health is; sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); Black Lives Matter (BLM); Pride month and the rights of people one the LGBTQI+ community; we decided to purchase a few grocery vouchers to give to those that use our Communal Kitchen and fight against student hunger.

## UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

“Enough is enough, we are #choking.” Amnesty UKZN chapter, stands and fights to #interrupt the status quo that victimizes and threatens the safety of women in this country. We had a webinar on GBV and racism; as well as; a link to a petition in our bio that asked people to take action.

## UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

In May 2020, we had an Amnestea on the lockdown as well as well as one on the quality of education during COVID-19. Our posts covered themes around self-care during COVID-19 and we also had webinars on the following topics: Access to healthcare in a South African context, as well as another webinar on what is deemed constitutional and unconstitutional per the South African Constitution.

## WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY

As this was a month with many purposes, we made sure to participate in all of them. We wished the youth well as this is their month. We thanked all the fathers out there who are responsible hence Father’s Day on the 21st of June. Of all the we did, our most important work and work that we are very proud of was raising awareness about gender-based violence as the statistics have skyrocketed since beginning of lockdown. This were the first of many projects to be done and we are excited for the future.

## UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

Due to the constraints and restriction caused by the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the activities that we had this quarter were restricted to social media. This resulted in campaigns around adherence to the lockdown regulations; the #knowyourqueers campaign; 60cyclesproject to raise money for sanitary towels in April. We had a webinar on the right to education in May. And in June, we worked on GBV as well as the #BlackLivesMatter campaign.

## UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Amnesty International University of Pretoria has, subsequent to the COVID-19 lockdown, been continuing with the work of human rights through the use of discussions that are facilitated in a #OpeNight session where a variety of societal issues are tackled such as rape culture, feminism, refugees and asylum seekers and many other issues. Furthermore, it has also commenced with its own newsletter named SocJus (Social Justice) where it furthers tackles issues in detail, gives different individuals a platform to write their own articles and poems etc. and continues to raise awareness on the water crisis in South Africa.

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DURBAN

Amnesty Durban continued to provide support on other chapter campaigns on their personal social media pages, namely raising awareness when the lockdown started; mental health; water as well as GBV.

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VAAL

Amnesty Vaal ran awareness raising campaigns including how to keep a healthy mind and body during lockdown. The chapter also focused on maternal health rights awareness raising, as well as the rights of LGBTQI+ people.

## UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

As the Fort Hare chapter, we focused on two campaigns in the last quarter, the Water Campaign as well as the Gender-Based Violence Campaign. The water campaign was based on the issue faced by people living in rural areas without access to sufficient water during the COVID-19 pandemic and attempting to assist them through contacted the Department of Water and Sanitation. This was a major issue to us because even during this time of crises people’s rights to access adequate water as per the Constitution has not been realised. The gender-based violence campaign was for the chapter to create a platform for those that are facing dangers of being abused during the lockdown through our #LetYourselfBeHeard #HowMuchMore #SpeakForOthers. This was meant to be a free and safe space for informative discussions around the matter.

## NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

Our Pride Month virtual art competition ran throughout the month of June where entries of all artforms (visual, written, performance) were eligible to enter and win the competition, called “Show Your Pride”. This quarter we began finalising our academic assistance, bringing us closer to launching it to the public. This was done together with the UKZN chapter. Donation scheme for Duku Hall ran throughout the first month of the national lockdown which encouraged donations of essential goods to the shelter. We also created an online bookshelf where we shared books with new supporters.

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAPE TOWN

The Cape Town Community Chapter (AICTCC) cancelled their events as the national lockdown commenced. Upon re-strategising, the team embarked upon online activism by first supporting Amnesty’s supporters. They achieved this by creating and sharing posts and resources aimed at the physical and mental well-being of all during the national disaster period. The team thereafter while supporting AISA’s as well as other Chapter’s activities, set about campaigning against police brutality. The AICTCC remains a strong, inspired and motivated team and will continue to support each other as well as their community during these uncertain times.

## THE NEW YOU(TH)

*Shayna van Vuren*

Against a backdrop of hope, determination and promise that emerged in the struggle against Apartheid, the South African youth established themselves as a bold and brave catalyst for change in our new democracy. It is disappointing then, that over the years “the youth” in South Africa has turned into a bitter buzz word, branded by apathy, disillusionment and recklessness.

With June 16 and the celebration of Youth Day having happened, we remember the collective spirit and vigour with which young people fought for equality, education and freedom – especially during the Soweto Uprising on June 16, 1976. On this day, thousands of black students participating in a peaceful protest against the restrictions of Bantu Education were met with fierce and fatal police brutality. Now, we celebrate their courage and resilience in the face of undeserved adversity. The aftermath of the Soweto Uprising not only propelled the African National Congress (ANC) to the foreground of the anti-Apartheid struggle, but also inspired mass student-led movements to participate in the eradication of the unjust bureaucratic system of Apartheid.

What, then, is the socio-political role of the youth today in bringing about change and supporting basic human rights? Student-led movements are eminent and essential in the battle for more accessible higher education, and over the last few years it seems that this is the realm where the bold and the brave seek to make their mark. Still, even their voices are becoming increasingly silenced – not only by the government but by those among them whose violent and selfish behaviour undermines the ultimate goal and dominates the narrative.

The Soweto Uprising proves the power and potential of young voices, and when the youth today is met with demoralising neglect from those in power, who once fought alongside them and indeed made meaningful change, the disillusionment and despondence that has developed is understandable. 2019 marked a momentous time for young, first-time voters, but the common prevailing attitude was one of apathy and disappointment towards the deterioration of our democratic electoral process.

Young people are concerned about a range of issues – higher education, unemployment, land reform and service delivery, to name a few – and

moreover how seriously the government actually takes these issues. The apathy and disappointment we feel becomes only further embedded when young voices and the concerns they raise are used as political perfunctory tools during the various election campaigns, and not carried out when it matters most. In a parliament where the average age hovers around 50 – despite the inclusion of a few young MPs – it will be interesting to see how much weight this minority youth voice will actually hold in the upper tiers of the decision-making process.

Youth Day is an occasion to remember how far we’ve come, but we cannot ignore how far we still need to go. The indifference and cynicism of the youth that has developed over the years as a result of being excluded from key issues that affect us is neither surprising nor unjustified. In fact, this exclusion undermines the democratic values that are supposed to form the basis of South Africa’s all-inclusive and non-discriminatory society. It is clear, from the Soweto Uprising, that the youth have the potential to shape the future, but going forward we need to be given the space, respectfully and legitimately, to do so.

**Shayna** is currently studying Political Studies and English Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand. She loves writing and engaging with human rights issues just as much as she loves her dog Stevie, which is a lot.



*This article was contributed by a guest blogger. This blog entry does not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Amnesty International South Africa.*

## YOUTH AND LEGACY BUILDING

*Boniswa Dineka*

There is a common saying that “the youth are the future of our nation”. Though I am not one to argue with ancient wisdom, the truth is that the youth are not only the future but also the present. This begs the question: what will coming generations say of this generation? What is our legacy?

Three of the biggest social justice and human rights issues of our time are: poverty due to unemployment, gender inequality and access to quality education. If we as the youth want to build an impactful legacy that will benefit generations to come, I believe these social injustices should be our starting point.

The current COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has shone a light on a number of social problems. Chief among these is youth unemployment. South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates globally, which is due to grave mismanagement on the part of our decision-makers.

It has since become incumbent on the youth to find a way around such obstacles for ourselves and for future generations. Entrepreneurship is a pathway to upliftment, as through innovation and creativity young people can energise the country’s economy whilst providing solutions to everyday problems – from eco-friendly and sustainable living to responsible and inclusive media.

Abuse of women has also been brought to the fore during this lockdown period, but femicide and child abduction rates were already alarmingly high prior to the lockdown. However, the restriction of movement, coupled with many places of employment being closed, led to an increase in domestic violence and kidnappings. I believe that it is necessary for our generation to put gender equality at the forefront of the problem-solving process, and not treat it as an afterthought as generations prior to ours have done.

With schools reopening in June for Matriculants and Grade 7 learners, questions around the safety and security of learners have been raised, as well as how the academic year can be saved. Some schools are able to adapt easily to e-learning, whilst for others, the lack of access to online learning resources and materials has made the transition very difficult. This situation has emphasised the inequalities that exist in the education system, which itself is really a symptom of the country’s socio-economic inequality.

Though this generation is faced with seemingly

insurmountable odds, we are also living through a transitional period where the whole world is becoming increasingly digitised due to the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). This can be a threat to a country as unequal as South Africa and could further widen the gap between tax brackets... but only if we allow it. 4IR presents an opportunity for young people to come up with interesting new solutions to social, economic and technological issues through sports, art, agriculture, hospitality and tourism, to name a few.

These sectors and industries are often overlooked, but they are key to youth empowerment and economic growth. The STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) fields are usually given priority, which makes sense in a global context, but not in a local one. South Africa has the human capital, talent and scenery to thrive and boost our resources to exist on the same competitive level as other countries. The role of the youth in this process must be underscored.

In conclusion, my point is not to invalidate the very real complaints and dissatisfaction of the youth with the current economic and social system, or our leadership’s seeming unwillingness to change it. My point is to encourage us to focus collectively on the areas in which we can achieve change and move the country forward, not only for ourselves but also for future generations.

**Boniswa** is known as Bonny Khalalelo on all the socials. Bonny is a freelance writer and community activist, with a vested interest in the movement for achieving gender equality, racial equality and the end of discrimination and abuse against LGBTIQ+ individuals. Bonny is also the chair of the Amnesty International Vaal chapter.



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# YOUNG DEMOCRACY, OLD LEADERSHIP? WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP?

*In conversation with Lehlogonolo Muthevhuli, Amnesty International Global Youth Collective Representative*

## Why is leadership important?

For me in simple terms, leadership is the act of leading people towards achieving a set goal. Education and leadership are interlinked as the one complements the other. Even though it's said that "people are natural born leaders", education assists in providing the skill set and knowledge needed for leadership to flourish. As a leader, one's reasoning must be constructive, and one must accept that there can be different ways of solving a problem. Leadership is also the act of sharing the skills and knowledge you have with others. However, being a leader isn't always glamorous as one is often forced to make unpopular decisions to ensure that the set goal is met.

## Do you think the old leadership in power puts people and their human rights first? If not, what needs to change?

Yes and no. The reason why I agree is because the old leadership has worked to ensure that, post-apartheid, South Africans are governed by a fair, democratic Constitution that protects the rights of all its citizens. But at the same time, the older leadership are the same people who do not implement these laws and regulations. For example, we live in a country where gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide rates are extremely high, yet not enough is done to the perpetrators and little protection is given to victims. We often hear about how the police do not take cases reported seriously and how docket "go missing". There are punishable laws put in place which, on paper, are set to protect human rights but, in practice, the implementation of these laws is inadequate.

## Where does the responsibility lie?

That being said, the responsibility of putting human rights first does not lie solely with the government. Citizens also have to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions.

During the lockdown, there have been many reported cases of schools that have been broken into and vandalized. The Constitution states that every child has the right to basic education but children are being stripped of this basic human right by

others. Human rights come with responsibility, and each and every one of us has a duty to help protect these rights, and to show leadership.

## If you had to leave us with one thought, what would it be?

My final point is that political leaders are elected by us, the public. Therefore, we must elect leaders who will take responsibility as well as be accountable, and govern the country fairly. Should they fail to do so we, the public, have the power to remove them from their posts and elect someone else to do the job.

In conclusion, leadership and education can be drivers of change in South Africa as long as the skills are developed amongst the youth. With that in mind, future elections present an opportunity to put young people in office who will be responsible and who we can trust to bring a new and fresh perspective to govern our country, and putting human rights first.

**Lehlogonolo** started her activism at the Wits University. She was then selected to join Amnesty International South Africa's Transitional Advisory Group where she was the youngest member. She recently completed her internship with Amnesty International South Africa which allowed her to work closely with the youth in South Africa. She furthers her activism by continuing her membership with the Global Youth Collective where she is working on strategies that will help shape the future direction of Amnesty International.



# HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE? JOIN HUMAN WRITES AND START... WRITING!



## Your words can inspire, educate and raise awareness.

Your experiences, opinions and stories can help reimagine a post-COVID-19 South Africa. There is power in opinion, lived experience and courage.

If you have something to say, get involved with Human Writes, a platform that aims to challenge the status quo, whether through a blog, piece of poetry or a visual story.

Human Writes is a youth blog that encourages thought pieces, innovation, stories, and

solution-oriented approaches to tackle some of today's biggest human rights challenges. From the right to quality education, the climate crisis and gender-based violence we need a diversity of voices to shine the light on these injustices and find ways we can work together to prevail as humanity.

**Together, our collective words, voices can be an antidote to hate, violence and discrimination. #TakeInjusticePersonally #StandWithHumanity**

Reach out to us [here](#).

# AN EDUCATED LEADER FUELS AN EMPATHETIC AND COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY

Nelvia Rawheath

The role of education, at its foundation, is to open oneself to the possibilities of the world.

It serves as the building blocks used to provide the theory and evidence that shapes our society, the information which broadens or restricts our minds and challenges our perspectives. Furthermore, it creates the opportunity for even more discovery to take place.

However, it is my firm belief that in order to cultivate leadership in our community, education needs to extend beyond the realms of our structured school systems.

My vision for cultivating leadership is to establish programmes that seek to extend the natural intellect of the youth by adopting a holistic approach to sharing knowledge and experiences.

This includes enriching young people through multi-ethnic and culturally diverse activities.

This entails connecting young people to the lived experiences of each other.

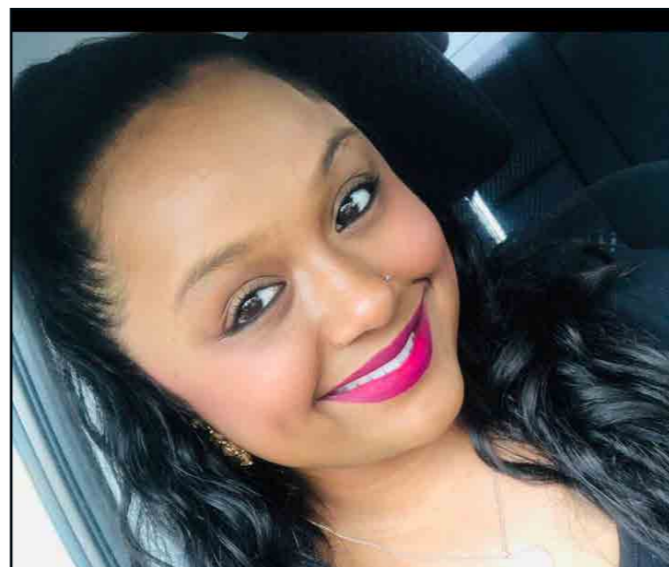
By cultivating spaces where the youth are encouraged to engage and learn from one another, a sense of trust, comradery, and understanding can be developed. With understanding follows the ability to think critically about the realities of others and in turn allows authentic communication to take place.

When we are able to connect with the humanity within others, we are able to connect with the humanity within ourselves.

In turn, when we occupy positions of leadership, we have ingrained in our thinking and actions, the ability to consider the community as a collective through the lens of compassion and empathy.

Nelvia works for Activate Change Drivers, whose objective is to equip young people of South Africa to be innovative active citizens and influence and provoke positive change for the global good.

She is also an Amnesty International Durban Group Volunteer and a trained youth development facilitator.



*This article was contributed by a guest blogger. This blog entry does not necessarily represent the position or opinion of Amnesty International South Africa.*

DO YOU WANT TO SEE AN END TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?  
YOU CAN ADD YOUR VOICE. CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.  
TAKE ACTION [HERE](#) AND TELL THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS.  
NOW AND ALWAYS.

# GOVERNMENT MUST PROTECT JOBS TO FORGE A NEW ECONOMY

In response to Minister Tito Mboweni’s Supplementary Budget Speech today, Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa, said:

“With the unemployment rate at 30.1% and the economy expected to contract by 7.2%, the government must now, more than ever, put human rights first and make every Rand count.

As Minister Mboweni said, unemployment is one of our greatest challenges. With R6.1 billion and R19.6 billion set aside for job creation and protection initiatives, it’s vital that the government is transparent, accountable and progressive in its plans to safeguard jobs. The government must ensure that plans are concrete, have clear timelines and are

non-discriminatory. Furthermore, the government must employ a zero-tolerance approach to corruption, with impact measured and made public.

Failing to do this will see inequality, poverty and suffering increase. Workers have kept the cogs of society turning as the world has held its breath and, if we want to forge a new economy in a new global reality, the government must defend workers’ livelihoods, now and always.”

### Background

South African Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, delivered the Supplementary Budget Speech on Wednesday, 24 June 2020, tabling an adjusted budget in order to adapt to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

HUMAN RIGHTS AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE.

How do you envision the world

post-COVID-19?

Empower yourself and take our course [here](#).

Change is possible.

## THE RECKONING OF RIGHTS DURING COVID-19

Priyanka Naik

On the 21st of April, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, spoke of how COVID-19 is a “public health emergency – that is fast becoming a human rights crisis”. Mr. Guterres went on to release a report on COVID-19 and human rights. In this report he stated that human rights are key in shaping the response to the pandemic by governments globally – this is because human rights issues affect the most vulnerable. While it is clear COVID-19 does not discriminate, the impacts of the pandemic do.

COVID-19 has had both economic and social impacts on countries, communities and people on an unprecedented scale. South Africa, along with other nation states in Africa, has experienced the pandemic only for a few months, yet the impact is already staggering. According to the International Labour Organisation, lockdowns that have been implemented by countries globally, including South Africa, have affected 2.7 billion workers and resulted in job losses for millions.

Every society is in part made up of people who have been marginalised, especially people who have difficulty accessing public information, healthcare and other basic human rights. These people experience numerous challenges in their day-to-day lives and are now some of the most severely affected by COVID-19. The pandemic is quickly revealing how certain groups of people are disproportionately affected.

Whilst the news headlines highlight the impact of coronavirus on economies all over the world and focus on the looming economic catastrophe, I believe it is important to draw attention to those in the informal sectors who make up a large percentage of the South African population: the person who trades on the side of the street and the womxn who is often underpaid and exploited, to name a few.

For these marginalised groups, COVID-19 has led to a loss of jobs and in turn, a loss of livelihood. This has an impact on society beyond just the economy; it has an impact on the social fabric and family structures.

### Militarisation during lockdown

Many countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, India, Thailand and Lesotho, have turned to the armed forces in their countries to enforce lockdown measures. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the positive organisational aspect of

this, it is also necessary to highlight the use of excessive and unjust force on citizens who disobey the lockdown rules. Yes, here one must reprimand the illegal actions of a small number of citizens who act in an unruly manner, but it is possible to maintain peace without being oppressive and draconian. What is more, the effects of militarisation bring to light the slow erosion of individual democratic freedoms – indeed, the excessive use of armed forces during the COVID-19 pandemic poses a liability to democracy in some ways, and excusing dysfunctional patterns of power will only further encroach on the right to freedom for citizens.

The after-effects of COVID-19 are already unfolding as we speak, and whilst dealing with the pandemic’s tragedies is new terrain, these consequences have been anticipated for some time. It is not new. COVID-19 is the wreckage of a vehicle that has been moving slowly on the road for years.

The pandemic brings to light many societal issues and raises contentious questions about human rights. For example, does the deployment of the military not echo the apartheid era of public policing? Why are marginalised groups in particular so badly treated by this form of policing? Why are their economic, mental, and emotional states not prioritised, or at least acknowledged? These are important questions, as it seems that the magnitude of their suffering has not mattered.

Lockdown has illuminated a range of issues that may have not been at the forefront of people’s minds before. As businesses shut down and the wealthy and middle-class retreat to their neighborhoods, people are made to confront a lot more than just the pandemic.

**Priyanka** is a UCT, ia member of the Resilient 40, a group of youth from across Africa, who are working with the British government to promote climate resilience in Africa. She is also an AISA intern.



## MAPPING POLICE VIOLENCE ACROSS THE USA

Police forces across the United States have committed widespread and egregious human rights violations in response to largely peaceful assemblies protesting systemic racism and police violence, including the killing of Black people.

Amnesty International documented 125 separate incidents of police violence against protesters in 40 states and the District of Columbia between 26 May and 5 June 2020.

These acts of excessive force were committed by members of state and local police departments, as well as by National Guard troops and security force personnel from several federal agencies.

Among the abuses documented are beatings, the misuse of tear gas and pepper spray, and the inappropriate and, at times, indiscriminate firing of less-lethal projectiles, such as sponge rounds and rubber bullets.

### Our open source investigation

To evaluate these incidents, Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab gathered nearly 500 videos of protests from social media platforms.

This digital content was then verified, geolocated, and analyzed by investigators with expertise in weapons, police tactics, and international and US law governing the use of force.

In some cases, researchers were also able to interview victims or confirm police conduct using local police department statements.

These human rights violations by US police against peaceful protesters – which were neither proportionate nor necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement objective – are particularly egregious as they have occurred at demonstrations denouncing just such police behavior.

Most of these protests have been peaceful, but in some a minority of protesters have committed unlawful acts, including acts of violence. In such cases, security forces have routinely used disproportionate and indiscriminate force against entire demonstrations – without distinguishing, as legally required, between peaceful protesters and individuals committing unlawful acts.

In order to prevent impunity and the repetition of abuses, authorities in the US must investigate, prosecute, and punish the unlawful use of force by police or others, and provide full reparations to the victims of such violence.

To date, there is little indication that these obligations have been taken seriously across the USA.

Launch the map and read more [here](#).

## TOXIC TRADE IN TEAR GAS FUELS POLICE ABUSES

The shadowy and poorly regulated global trade of tear gas is fuelling police human rights violations against peaceful protesters on a global scale, Amnesty International said as it launched a new resource analyzing the misuse of the riot control agent around the world.

**Tear Gas: An investigation** is the organization’s interactive, multimedia site looking into what tear gas is, how it is used and documenting scores of cases of its misuse by security forces worldwide, often resulting in severe injuries or death.

“Security forces often lead us to believe tear gas is a ‘safe’ way to disperse violent crowds, avoiding having to resort to more harmful weaponry. But our analysis proves that police forces are misusing it on a massive scale,” said Sam Dubberley, Head of the Evidence Lab on Amnesty International’s Crisis Response Programme.

### Open source investigation

Over the past year, Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab has been researching tear gas misuse around the world, primarily through videos posted to social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

Using open source investigation methods, the organization verified close to 500 videos and highlighted almost 80 events in 22 countries and territories where tear gas has been misused, confirming the location, date, and validity.

The analysis was carried out by Amnesty International’s **Digital Verification Corps** – a network of students at six universities on four continents trained in sourcing and verifying content from social media.

Click [here](#) to read more.

# CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO COLLINS KHOSA'S DEATH

Shenilla Mohamed



The past few weeks have seen the world rocked by yet another senseless killing of an unarmed black man at the hands of police. People across the world watched for nine minutes as George Floyd's life was choked out of him on a Minnesota street. The pain and frustration of African Americans transcended borders and found solidarity here in South Africa. The use of excessive force by police in South Africa is nothing new. The apartheid regime regularly used its security forces as a blunt instrument to quell resistance to whites-only rule.

But even in a democratic South Africa, law enforcement has done little to shed its brutal reputation.

Police watchdog, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), recorded 393 cases of deaths as a result of police action, and 214 cases of deaths in police custody, in its 2018/19 annual report.

Most recently, outrage was sparked at the death of Alexandra resident Collins Khosa, who died after being allegedly assaulted by members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) while members of the Johannesburg Metro Police (JMPD) looked on. This happened during the nationwide lockdown after the soldiers saw a half-consumed glass of beer in Khosa's yard.

The parallels between the death of Khosa in South Africa and that of George Floyd in the United States are clear: both were killed by law enforcement officials who used excessive, disproportionate and unnecessary force. In both cases, police stood by

and did nothing to stop the brutality.

The report released by IPID into the Collins Khosa case found that none of the JMPD or SAPS officers present took steps to prevent the assault of Khosa from taking place at the hands of the SANDF. Not only does the report highlight the details and extent of the horrific incident, but also contains reports of witnesses being threatened and abused by these officials.

What is clear from the IPID report, is that these officers need to be held accountable. We welcome IPID's recommendation that disciplinary steps be taken against the five JMPD and SAPS officers who were at the scene.

What is of particular concern, however, is the lack of independent oversight and complaints mechanisms for the SANDF. We are disappointed at the outcome of an SANDF report that clears the SANDF of any wrongdoing, noting that it directly contradicts a court judgment that Khosa was tortured and killed.

It is also concerning that the code of conduct for members of the SANDF involved in 'Operation Notlela' falls short of what is necessary to comply with that judgment and international human rights law. States should not use the military to carry out policing functions, except as a temporary measure in exceptionally serious circumstances where it is impossible for the authorities to rely solely on law enforcement agencies. When the deployment of the military becomes necessary, states must ensure that they comply with international laws and standards

on the use of force, including ensuring that when the armed forces are deployed, they are always under the command of civilian authorities.

In his ruling on the Khosa case, Judge Hans Fabricius highlighted the pervasive inequality in South Africa, and the challenges poor and marginalised communities faced in complying with the national lockdown regulations. In this time of crisis, it is vital that law enforcement officials show restraint in the exercising of their powers. An approach based on consent rather than coercion should be encouraged.

Furthermore, the SANDF code of conduct should be revised and accompanied by a commitment from SAPS and metro police leadership that security forces will be properly instructed, equipped and trained to carry out their function in a lawful, human rights-compliant manner.

While we are reassured by the president's recent commitment to "spare no efforts in ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice", we want to see an independent and impartial inquiry into the

killing of Collins Khosa, and that the SANDF and JMPD officers are brought to justice in accordance with their right to a fair trial. IPID must be fully supported and transparent, and must take national and international human rights laws and standards into account. Further to this, all investigative reports into similar incidents must be made available to the public.

**Impunity for crimes such as those committed against Collins Khosa and George Floyd cannot be tolerated. Excessive use of force by law enforcement officials cannot continue. It is high time South Africa ends this pattern of policing where black lives are under threat. No life should be taken recklessly, especially not by those who have sworn to protect and uphold the rights of all who live in South Africa.**

At a time when a global pandemic threatens the lives and liberties of so many, our human rights need to be protected at all costs, not least by those who are tasked with doing so.

This article first appeared in the [Daily Maverick](#) on 10 June 2020.

## GOVERNMENT MUST END FORCED EVICTIONS NOW

In response to reports and footage of a man in eThekweni, Khayelitsha, being forcibly evicted during operations of the City of Cape Town's Anti-Land Invasion Unit, Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa, said: "The incident once again highlights the brutality of forced evictions. Everyone has the right to housing, to dignity, and what was witnessed in eThekweni yesterday is inhumane. No human being should be treated in this way whatever the circumstances.

Amnesty International South Africa joins calls to the City of Cape Town to carry out an in-depth investigation immediately, to make the findings of this investigation public, and for the officers responsible to be held accountable. The government must also ensure that all those who are found to be victims of forced evictions and other human rights violations have access to effective remedy which includes compensation, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

Amnesty International South Africa reminds the government that forced evictions constitute a gross violation of human rights including the right to adequate housing and must be prohibited in law and practice. Furthermore, there have been several reports of forced evictions across the country that have continued through the lockdown. This, despite

the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing calling for all evictions to be halted, including from informal settlements and encampments, so that people are able to protect themselves from contracting COVID-19.

As articulated by the UN Special Rapporteur, **'housing has become the frontline defense against the coronavirus. Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation'**. South Africa's own Prevention of Illegal Eviction Act outlines that no person may be evicted without a court order. Further, under Lockdown Level 3 courts can hear eviction matters and grant eviction orders but eviction orders cannot be carried out.

The government has asked, and legislated for, people to 'stay home and stay safe'. While, this is based on the assumption that everyone has a home, which many people in South Africa do not, tearing down homes and making people homeless in the midst of the pandemic and winter, as the lockdown continues, is adding insult to injury. This must stop and it must stop now."

### Background

Reports of Bulelani Qolani being forcibly evicted from his home in eThekweni, near Empolweni, in Khayelitsha, on Wednesday, 1 July 2020, were received by Amnesty International South Africa.

## ALL ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES MUST BE PROTECTED DURING THE PANDEMIC



**W**orld African Heritage Day was marked on 5 May, Amnesty International South Africa called on the government to protect all asylum seekers and refugees as the pandemic continues.

“May is Africa Month and acts as a reminder that we are all connected and equal, whether a citizen, migrant, refugee or asylum seeker, and we must be treated as such whatever the circumstances,” said Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director, Amnesty International South Africa.

**“During the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and asylum seekers must be protected from immigration-related penalisation, arrest, detention and deportation, have access to social relief distress grants, healthcare services, food and be included in material relief responses as well as COVID-19 testing and screening, with or without documentation.**

Furthermore, there must be a moratorium on migration-related deportations and detention. If people were already in detention prior to the lockdown, the government must ensure that all detention facilities can observe physical distancing as well as hygiene, health and sanitation protocols.

When immigration detainees’ right to health cannot be upheld or when deportations cannot be carried out promptly, detainees should be released and the government must act to ensure people’s

access – free from discrimination – to essential services, care and safety, including adequate accommodation and healthcare.

Our report, [Living in Limbo: Rights of Asylum Seekers Denied](#), published in October last year, found that although South Africa has a strong legal and human rights framework on refugees and asylum seekers’ rights, the implementation of existing laws and policies is starkly lacking, and the asylum management system is failing those who need it the most.

We called on the Department of Home Affairs to publicly outline its plan on how it will strengthen the protection system for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants during – and after – the COVID-19 pandemic, including fixing the asylum management system.

We understand that these are uncertain times for all, but we remind the government that it is obligated by national and international human rights laws and standards to protect the human rights of refugee and asylum seekers, now and always.”

### Background

The month of May is recognised as Africa month – a time when the continent commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 – now the African Union.

## Glow

Glow and overflow.

Shine on the outside and inside.

Cleanse the mind.

Be kind.

Use your time.

Thankful of your life.

Glow and overflow.

Be free and grow.

Take care of the hair, the skin, the fro,

Condition and moisturize.

Wake up on time to dance with the sunrise.

Glow and overflow.

Learn to be alone.

To be bold.

To listen to yourself and to take hold.

Cry. Smile. Shout and let it all out – Then take a deep breath in and then out.

Glow and behold.

A shimmer in your walk

A glimmer in your talk.

An attitude of self-love.

A gratitude of body and soul.

An expression of the entire fulfilled human made whole.

Do your thang and Glo.

Poem by Blossom Matizirofa

Amnesty International South Africa Activist



**SOUTH AFRICA**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



***LESEDI***

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