

15 August 2016

Press Release: Justice for Lesley Makousa

On Saturday 6 August 2016, the police found the deserted body of 16 year old Lesley Makousa in a nearby field of Promosa, in the North West province. Lesley Makousa was a gay grade 10 learner at Promosa Secondary School. Lesley was found lying face down and his shoes neatly placed next his body. Lesley had been strangled to death with shoelaces.

On 11 August, Irantí attended Lesley's memorial service which was hosted by Promosa Secondary School. There was a high attendance from bereaved family, school mates and the broader community of Promosa. Lesley's teacher spoke highly of them and expressed a deep regret that they had passed on so soon. Moreover, his classmates remembered Lesley as a bubbly fun student who loved to take part in talent shows, debate and take part in modelling competitions.

Police Officer, Kelebogile Trom informed us that they have four eye witnesses (all minors) who have given police statements as to Lesley's whereabouts and who he was last seen with on the night of the 5 August. In recent developments, Lesley's autopsy has revealed that he was raped as well.

Furthermore the police have arrested one suspect who will appear at Porchefstroom magistrate court. The suspect was caught stealing a piece of furniture from Lesley's parents home using Lesley's house key. He appeared in court today for house breaking and appears in court tomorrow for the the murder of Lesley Makousa. We commend the police for their efficiency and progress regarding Lesley's unfortunate murder.

There is a growing concern within the LGBTI community regarding the sharp increase of hate crimes in South Africa despite our pro LGBTI constitution. Irantí documented



the murder case of Disebo Makau, a lesbian who was murdered in 2014 also in the North West. This year alone, Iranti has documented three murder cases here in the Guateng province of queer youth. This week, apart from Lesley's case, Iranti-org recieved a case of a *trans woman who was gang raped, beaten up within an inch of her life and currently critical in hospital. Clearly, South Africa is a violent place for those navigating the space as LGBTI. Despite this violence, South Africa still has no hate crimes legislation to guide the South African Police Services on how to identify and prosecture hate crimes. At this point, one has to rely on individual subjective understandings of what constitutes a hate crime therefore most cases are treated as just murder cases. With each passing month and every LGBTI life lost, Iranti-org is concerned about the safety of LGBTI persons and the lack of structures within Government to tackle hate crimes.

Iranti-org sends their deepest condolences to the Makousa family and will continue to follow up and put pressure on the police to ensure that justice is served for Lesley.

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