



### **FAKE NEWS ALERT: Death of a lesbian in Mamelodi not verified**

It has come to our attention that a story has been circulating on social media and some local radio stations, alleging that a lesbian woman was raped multiple times, and later died, after being put into a cell with 19 men at the Mamelodi Police Station in Gauteng.

Iranti has been unable to verify this story, and after investigating the claims we have concluded that it is “fake news”. Michael Mbewe, Head of Communications at SAPS has stated that no such event took place at either Mamelodi East or West police stations. There is also no protest action against SAPS in the area to our knowledge.

We urge everyone to not share the story and enflame the situation, as it could hurt our cause in future. Lesbian and transgender women face disproportionate violence in township and rural settings, being raped, assaulted or murdered simply for their gender identity or sexual orientation. SAPS have a track record, too, of not taking reports of such crimes seriously, and of placing transgender women in harm’s way by making them share jail cells with cisgender men.

To give time and energy to misinformation, “fake news”, means that when real violations against our community do occur, they are increasingly doubted by the authorities and the public. Our work, and the work of many brave activists on the ground, is undermined by stories such as this one, and we firmly stand against it and those who started it.

We will be investigating the source of this story and ensure that the truth is always prioritised. We will also be sending formal letters of complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa regarding any news agencies that shared the story without verifying it. We urge all journalists and media-makers to practice ethical, responsible reporting and to verify the stories they put out.

We at Iranti pride ourselves on speaking the truth and informing the public. This “fake news” is an insult then to everything we stand for. We urge you to join us in defending truth.

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