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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE MUST STOP! UNIVERSITIES SA

Universities South Africa condemns in the strongest possible terms, the murder of a female student in what appears to have been gender-based violence at one of our member institutions this week.

Even though the circumstances surrounding this heinous crime are being unravelled in a court of law, a gun attack in a space that is supposed to be a safe learning environment is deeply concerning. Universities are spaces for intellectual exchange. Staff and students must feel unquestionably safe on our campuses for 365 days a year, if they are to effectively teach and learn in conducive environments.

“We therefore call on all South Africans to unite in the condemnation of this atrocity,” Dr Berene Kramer, Acting Chief Executive Officer at USAf said this afternoon. “We applaud that a criminal process is already underway and that the law is now taking its course.”

Dr Kramer went on to say that it is unfortunate that youngsters are resorting to violence – including femicide – to resolve conflicts. “It is alarming that the gender-based violence in the broader South African society, is now making its way onto our university campuses. This must stop.

“We live in a patriarchal society that needs to confront the culture of coercion – especially towards women. We need to teach conflict management to our children and the power of restraint. We need to engage in open dialogue and learn as society, to intervene when conflict unfolds in our midst. Collectively, we can deter violent crime and make South Africa a better place for all.”

To empower women about their health and against gender-based violence, the Higher Education and Training Health, Wellness and Development Centre (HEAIDS) runs a Women's Health and Empowerment Programme that also addresses matters of gender-based violence in institutions of higher learning. HEAIDS is a programme of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) that was established by USAf and is now functioning independently.

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