Coalition denies setting fire to building at Stellies

Carlo Petersen

A COALITION of Stellenbosch University (SU) workers and students – led by student activist movement Open Stellenbosch (OS) – denied yesterday that they had caused a fire at the university’s administration building.

This comes after SU has indirectly blamed former workers of companies contracted to the university for the fire, which caused more than R300 000 damage.

The coalition had been protesting at the university prior to the fire on Thursday in an ongoing #EndOutsourcing campaign at SU.

Following the fire on Thursday night, SU management issued OS and nine of its members with an interdict, which prevents them from unlawfully occupying and partaking in unlawful activities at the university.

OS members on the interdict list are Athini Mzayiya, Mathew Bergsteedt, Thando Jako, Hlumelo Ngobeni, Jodi Williams, Sikhulekile Duma, Bryan Bergsteedt, Lwazi Phakade and Bongimpilo Mondlane.

OS spokesperson Mzayiya said the movement found it strange that the university blamed workers for the administration building fire yet punished SU students with an interdict.

Mzayiya said the protest had been organised after more than 150 workers were fired for alleged involvement in protests at the university last year.

“’It’s ludicrous that the university has blamed workers for the fire. In the same breath they have interdicted the movement and nine students for their involvement in the protest.

“We are calling for the 158 workers to be reinstated so that end outsourcing talks can continue,” he said.

Mzayiya said 88 G4S security guards and 70 landscapers were fired in November last year.

SU spokesperson Martin Viljoen confirmed the interdict and that a case of arson and damage to property had been opened.

“Unconfirmed reports are that the perpetrators are former workers of companies contracted to the university that protested on campus on Thursday,” he said.

Viljoen said a student’s car parked in front of the building was also set alight.

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