Call for policing over crimes on campuses

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STUDENT leaders want universities to build better relations with the police to ensure the safety of students in the wake of violent crimes committed against students in and around campuses.

This comes after three students were raped near the University of Cape Town (UCT) and another at Stellenbosch University.

The incident prompted Stellenbosch University to appoint a task team on alleged sexual offences “to urgently look into the matter” of a “rape culture” at the campus and make recommendations.

“There are complaints of a general culture of disrespect and harassment of women students, and that this is regarded as normal. This should also be seen in the context of challenges in this regard in society as a whole,” the university said in a statement.

Following the three rapes at UCT, a 35-year-old man was arrested on Saturday. The man is linked to the rape of a 23-year-old student, who was attacked near Rhodes Memorial near UCT’s main campus.

In a more recent attack, another student was raped last Tuesday, also near the Rhodes Memorial area.

After the rape, the university announced that it was offering a R100 000 reward for any information that would lead to an arrest before the man was nabbed.

The university said it was worried that female students were unable to move freely in a society where they should be safe.

“Yet, in the light of the fact that these assaults are happening and the violence of the assaults seems to be increasing, we again ask all students and staff (and women in particular) to avoid walking or running alone at all costs,” UCT said.

SA Congress of Students president Thabo Moloja said: “What is happening at campuses is shocking and students continue to be easy targets of criminals.”

Moloja said it was of serious concern that unlike in communities where there are community police forums and neighbourhood watches, campuses don’t have such.

“We need to establish similar structures based on our institutions that will be linked to nearby police stations to ensure that we take the fight on student rapes and other violent crimes seriously,” he said.

Moloja said universities can also use the initiative used by schools of adopting a cop.

EFF Student Command president Mpho Morolane said there needs to be a conversation between the university community, police and parents on how best the violent crimes can be resolved.

“At UCT the three incidences happened in the same vicinity and such cannot be allowed; students are in danger,” Morolane said.

The spate of rapes at UCT and Stellenbosch University came after three students were found murdered at the Vaal University of Technology.

Two students, who were roommates, were found dead at their off-campus residence, and another was found dead in her room on campus.