#FeesMustFall students dismiss suggestion government has met their demands

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UNIVERSITY students in the Western Cape are still considering a call from the ANC-aligned Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) to end protests and return to class. The alliance, which consists of the South African Students Congress, the Young Communist League and the ANC Youth League, has said there was no reason for strikes to continue because the “government had addressed all relevant and immediate concerns.” The alliance further warned against “dark forces” attempting to hijack student concerns to facilitate regime change. However, students involved in the #FeesMustFall campaign said they did not get their mandate from the alliance, but from students on campus. UCT student activist Chuma Mazi measured. “We are in consultation with students. Students will decide what happens next. We will not even respond to the PYA.” His views were echoed by UWC #FeesMustFall member Lizzolo Billie. She said: “At the moment we are busy with exams, so there is no mandate from students as yet.” The alliance statement was not in the best interest of poor students, she added. “They are comfortable where they are; that’s why they can afford to make such statements.”

A CPUT student leader, who did not want to be named, said their attention was on finishing exams and dealing with the court appearances of 78 students arrested during protests. He said the matter, being heard at the Wellington Magistrate’s Court, where students appeared on Thursday, had been postponed for further investigation. Student activist Simone Cupido, of Stellenbosch University, said students had agreed to take the case against racism forward. She said it was not in students’ interest to boycott registration. However, they were concerned about first-year students who could not afford registration.

Recently, Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande met student representatives and university vice-chancellors about fees. Students demanded debt in all students who qualified for the National Students Financial Aid Scheme to be cleared and that students should not be required to pay the upfront registration fee. Nzimande’s spokesman said substantial progress had been made to ensure no student was financially excluded. R4.5 billion dedicated to eradicating debt and R2.9bn to dealing with the no-fee increase announced last year.

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