

TO ALL MEDIA/ NEWS EDITORS

JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG

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## **NYDA STANDS WITH STUDENTS, CALLS FOR CALM AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AT UFS**

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) expresses deep concern over the ongoing student protests at the University of the Free State (UFS), where tensions around the discontinuation of provisional registration have resulted in campus closures, disruptions to learning, and the arrest of students.

As an agency established to advance the socio-economic participation of young people, the NYDA can no longer remain silent while students continue to fight for inclusion in an education system that should guarantee opportunity, not exclusion. Access to higher education remains one of the most powerful tools to break cycles of poverty and inequality, and it must not be compromised by financial barriers or policy decisions that marginalise the poor and working class.

The Agency therefore calls for the immediate calm and restoration of order across all affected campuses, accompanied by constructive engagement between student leadership, university management, and the Department of Higher Education and Training to find a sustainable and inclusive solution. Furthermore, the NYDA urges an urgent review of registration and fee policies to ensure that no student is left out of the 2026 academic year because of affordability constraints or delayed NSFAS payments.

The NYDA believes that provisional registration has been a lifeline for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which has been a mechanism that ensured access while funding or payment arrangements were being finalised. Its abrupt discontinuation risks reversing hard-won gains in youth access to education.

“Provisional registration is a bridge between poverty and sustainable livelihoods,” said Dr. Sunshine Myende, Executive Chairperson of the NYDA. “To take that bridge away without an inclusive alternative is to close the gates of learning to the very youth whose dreams democracy promised to serve. As the NYDA, we cannot stand by when young people are forced to choose between poverty and higher learning. We stand with them.

In their call for access, dignity, and justice. However, we also call for peace and dialogue, because this struggle must not destroy the very institutions meant to empower us.”

The NYDA reiterates that higher education is not a privilege. Furthermore, the Agency calls on the Department of Higher Education and Training, NSFAS, universities, student formations, and relevant stakeholders to co-create a model of financial inclusion that upholds the constitutional right to education while ensuring institutional sustainability.

**END**

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