

23 August 2012

President Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma  
President of the Republic of South Africa  
Private Bag X1000,  
PRETORIA, 0001

Dear President Zuma,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Institute of Employment Rights to express our deep sympathy on the tragic events at Marikana on Thursday 16 August 2012 as your country enters a week of national mourning.

The Australian Institute of Employment Rights (AIER) is an independent organisation that seeks to ensure fair and decent workplace rights for all. Informed by an expert panel of industrial relations practitioners, lawyers and academics, AIER works in the areas of legislation, research, education and advocacy to champion the fundamental rights and responsibilities of employers and workers, and to create positive workplaces.

Our Charter of Employment Rights owes much to the ILO Conventions. South Africa has shown leadership in being a country that is signatory to all of the Conventions. Unfortunately, Australia is not a signatory to all the Conventions.

Our work involves domestic matters concerning the Australian workplace. It is a matter of universal concern to all practitioners in the field that these events have occurred against the background of an industrial dispute and that the dead and injured appear to be workers who were engaged in a strike. We are aware that your personal background has involved time working in the trade union movement, so the Marikana tragedy must be particularly shocking for you.

The events of last week in Marikana are so profound and moving that we think it is important to take the time to write to you and let you know of our interest.

We have seen the media reports of your immediate action in setting up a national commission of inquiry. The Institute believes such a judicial inquiry is an important means of arriving at an understanding of the events of the past few weeks and identifying any necessary reforms. The inquiry will have international relevance for the conduct of industrial relations. We will be following developments and studying the report of the inquiry with great interest.

We wish you and your country all the best at this sad time.

Yours faithfully



Lisa Heap  
Executive Director