

Activist Picket Against Water Crisis

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The 24th Khanya College winter school which consists of 56 activists from 26 organisation around South Africa organised a silent picket outside Constitution Court at Constitutional Hill, Johannesburg. This picket formed part of the different organising strategies, including demonstration and a picket. This picket was raising awareness about the ongoing water crises affecting working class communities.

The silent picket was fuelled by inaccessible clean water in marginalised community. The silent picket symbolised the non-violent approach when organising and demanding basic needs written in the constitution. The picket began at Khanya College House of Movements; and moved through the streets of Johannesburg CBD making its way to The Constitutional Court. The demonstration sparked debates amongst many people who were going about their business in the CBD, those in solidarity with the campaign raised their fists supporting the demands. The picket also demanded gender equality, as the consequences of water shortage often fall on women and children. “The society has dumped domestic responsibility on women, and men need to take a stand to alleviate women from this burden”, said Nkosinathi Sikakane from Ikageng.

The picket took centre stage at the Constitutional Hill, “we chose to picket at Con court because it’s the highest Court that stands as a guardian of constitutional rights in South Africa, explained Comrade Maria a director at Khanya College. The South African constitution states that everyone has a right to access basic water supply and sanitation, but that is not the case in working class communities. The Constitutional Court is a public space, because of its history, but that is not the case. The picketers were met with hostility by the security and management of Constitutional Hill. This historic place has been commercialised and made only accessible to wealthy tourists and not the working-class community that also deserves to visit such a place. This non-violent picket revealed how unjust the Constitution of South Africa is. As part of the picketing, the Khanya College winter school participants performed a theatre piece that highlighted the plight of water crises in working class communities.

Despite the picket being non-violent and silent, the security called the police. Another thing this picket raise is how spaces like Constitution Court have been privatised and not accessible to the public. The tour fees of R120 and R180 respectively for the different tours means that the space is not accessible to the working class.

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