

Working Class Day of Action

On 1 August 2020, more than 200 protesters gathered at Library Garden Square, adjacent the Gauteng Legislature building, in Johannesburg. There was a heavy police and army presence and different organisations hosted the Working Class Day of Action March.

There were many organisations who attended the protest march to the Legislature including the Simunye Workers Forum, Young Nurses Indaba Trade Union (YNITU), Sivuseni EPWP Workers, General Industry Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA), Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), Right to Know (R2K), Singobe Movement, Marxist Workers Party, and the MEGA Housing Development Project.

“Nurses Safety first!” “Working Class Got Retrenched for TERS UIF money stolen by corona bosses”, “ANC OUT! WORKERS GOVERNMENT IN!”, read some of the messages on protestors’ posters. And there were many more: “Stop Corruption in COVID-19!”, “Freedom from Eviction”, and “Our Government must stop giving cleaning tenders to friends and families.”

Protesters defied the heavy presence of the police and army who tried to limit the size of the gathering but still followed COVID-19 protocols of social distancing. “Social distancing cannot work [in our townships and communities]”, said Edgar Matume, the chief marshal of the demonstration. “Too many of us are already dead in our shacks and matchbox houses.”

Some of the Sivuseni EPWP workers at the protest were dismissed in March by government after they received SMS’s that they must not report to work. The workers said they have worked for more than six years and earned R2 500,00 per month. They were not given reasons why they were dismissed, said the workers.

“This is very painful considering I’ve got children to feed. I had taken furniture at a retail store; I don’t know how I’m going to pay them,” said one woman. They have not been registered for Unemployment Insurance Fund benefits (UIF) either.

One of the student representative said, they do not have accommodation and food because the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) did not fund them. The government is looting money meant to assist citizens.

This article was submitted on 1 August 2020. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.