



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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Thousands of UCT staff and students march against crime

Several thousand students, academics, researchers and support staff joined forces during a march and rally at UCT on Wednesday to express their collective outrage at violent crime in South Africa.

Many academics marched in their academic gowns while protestors wore black arm bands and t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan: 'We say ENOUGH'.

Protestors waved posters calling for an end to rape and murder, while others carried posters commemorating UCT students and academics who have been victims of crime over the past few years.

The protest was organised to show UCT's outrage following the recent gang rape and murder of Anene Booysen and Ge-Audrey Green.

Protestors marched through campus and up the steps to Jameson plaza, where they were addressed by UCT Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price.

Dr Price called on the government to do far more to address crime.

"We want to say directly to those in authority that we feel you are failing us."

He appealed to government to put funding into implementing some of the preventive interventions that UCT's research has shown can break the intergenerational cycle of violence.

He's also called on government to set aside more money to create more social worker posts and to provide urgent and sustained funding to credible civil society organisations that support victims of sexual crimes.

Dr Price said students should also take responsibility by standing up against a culture of violence and sexual entitlement.

“Speak out when you hear others using coercion in order to have sex. Speak out when you hear people making sexually derogatory remarks about others,” he told the crowd.

Amongst other initiatives, Dr Price said UCT is to undertake a survey of the frequency of sexual harassment and rape on campus, particularly date rape.

The university’s Safety and Violence Initiative (SaVI) has been established to help find solutions to “this plague that is destroying South Africa,” he added.

President of the Student Representative Council (SRC), Lorne Hallendorff, called on students to continue initiatives against crime and violence by getting involved in youth development programmes, campaigns and organisations.

“The murder rate in South Africa is four and a half times the global average. Far too often women are abused at the hands of men. Far too often men believe they are entitled to that which they are not.”

Professor Shanaaz Mathews, director of UCT’s Children’s Institute, said the key was for people to recognise that they needed to change their own behaviour.

“We have a huge challenge facing us. We have to face our own behaviour. The challenge is also to open this dialogue among our student body.”

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Kemantha Govender

Media Liaison Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Welgelegen, Upper Chapel Road Extension
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5672 Fax (021) 650 5628
Cell: 084 737 6522
E-mail: kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za