

# Lonmin-myners staak vreedsaam

Duisende mynwerkers gistermiddag by die Wonderkop-stadion op die perseel van die Lonmin-myn by Marikana.

Foto: FELIX DLANGAMANDLA

**Hilda Fourie en  
Jan de Lange**

Met stokke, knopkieries, takke en heiningpale van staal in die hand het duisende mynwerkers gister buite die Lonmin-myn in Marikana gesing en gedans.

Anders as in Augustus verlede jaar, toe 34 mynwerkers daar doodgeskiet is, was die mynwerkers vreedsaam.

Minstens 1 500 mynwerkers het eers op die koppie waar die slagting verlede jaar plaasgevind het, bymekaargekom voordat hulle al singende na die Wonderkop-stadion, wat ook op Lonmin se perseel is, gestap het.

Die getal het vinnig tot meer as 5 000 mense aangegroei soos wat busse mense by die stadion afgelaai het.

Terwyl van hulle op die paviljoen en ander op die gras gesit het, het groot groepe om die veld gestap, gedans, gesing en die stokke, knopkieries, takke en heiningpale in die lug gehou.

Lonmin het gesê geeneen van

sy 13 skagte was gister in bedryf nie.

Die werkers het opgedaag, maar by al die skagte geweier om ondergronds te gaan.

Hulle is omgekrap oor die moord op Steven Kokile, Amcu se streekverteenwoordiger in

die platinumgordel van Rustenburg, in wat na 'n sluipmoord lyk.

Kokile, voormalige takvoorsitter van die National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) by Lonmin se Karee-skag, was is in 'n groot mate daarvoor verant-

woordelik dat Amcu die afgelope jaar die grootste vakbond by platinummyne geword het.

Daarby wil die stakers hê die NUM se kantore op Lonmin se perseel moet gesluit word.

Amcu-verteenwoordigers het met die bestuur van die myn

gepraat, wat nie aan hul eise wil toegee nie.

Dié boodskap is aan die mynwerkers oorgedra wat aangedui het hulle gaan nie werk totdat die myn na hulle luister en aan hul eise voldoen nie.

Ondanks die groot getal mense daar, was daar gister 'n kleiner polisie teenwoordigheid as verlede jaar tydens die onluste.

Twee Njalas, 'n waterkanon en 'n paar voertuie het die stadion op 'n afstand dopgehou.

Brig. Thulani Ngubane, kommunikasiehoof van die polisie in Noordwes, het gisteraand gesê nadat die leiers die mynwerkers toegesprek het, het almal huis toe gegaan.

Geen voorvalle van geweld is aangemeld nie.

Amcu se leiers was teen druktyd gisteraand in vergaderings by Lonmin en kon nie vir kommentaar bereik word nie.

Lonmin en Amcu het verlede week aangekondig dat Amcu nou meer as 70% van die 28 000 werkers by die groep verteenwoordig.

# ‘NUM out,’ says Amcu, as mine war simmers

*Lonmin shuts shafts amid tense  
standoff between rival unions*

NATASHA MARRIAN,  
ALLAN SECCOMBE  
and SAMUEL MUNGADZE

WORKERS on a wildcat strike brought platinum miner Lonmin to a halt yesterday, as members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) began a final push to shut the rival National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) out of the volatile sector.

The standoff threatened a rerun of the rivalry between the two unions that brought the mining sector to its knees last year, tarnishing SA’s image as a major mining investment destination.

In scenes reminiscent of last year’s explosion of violence, which culminated in police shooting 34 miners at Marikana, workers again gathered at the site’s koppie in preparation for the battle against the NUM.

Workers, some carrying branches and sticks, chanted “Down with NUM, we will destroy it today” and marched to the koppie, where they were addressed by Amcu leaders who said the action would continue until the NUM had shut its offices at the mine.

Amcu members “are demanding that the NUM’s offices be shut because one of their own has died”, said NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka.

The trigger for yesterday’s strike appeared to be the killing of Amcu member Mawethu Joseph

Stevens at a tavern near Rustenburg at the weekend.

“Stevens was meant to appear before the Marikana inquiry, as he was involved in the mining protests that took place ahead of the Marikana tragedy last year,” said Amcu general secretary Jeff Mphahlele.

Lonmin announced last week that Amcu was now the majority union, but reaching a “demo-

cratic, multi-union” framework had been “difficult” and the matter had been referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

Workers from 13 Lonmin shafts yesterday walked off the job and made their way to the Wonderkop Stadium during the wildcat strike.

They handed over a memorandum of “informal” demands to

management, calling for the closure of the NUM offices, an immediate recognition agreement with Amcu mirroring that which the NUM had enjoyed, and for NUM shop stewards to immediately return to their jobs underground and give up the offices they occupied, said Lonmin

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David Gleason: page 12

# ‘NUM out,’ says Amcu

spokeswoman Sue Lindsell-Stewart. Workers had not reported for the night shift by late yesterday.

Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa yesterday said workers had taken matters into their own hands.

He registered his concern over the “preferential treatment” he believed the NUM was receiving from mining companies in terms of the recognition agreement.

Amcu had surpassed the NUM in membership numbers at Lonmin, but the company refused to grant it the same rights the former dominant union had enjoyed, he said.

Mr Mathunjwa blamed the NUM’s political ties to African National Congress deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa — a former Lon-

min board member — for management’s alleged preference for the union.

“The NUM are not supposed to have any organisational rights ... but the company is still paying their subscriptions, they have offices.” He accused management of colluding with the NUM and jeopardising workers’ right to freely associate.

NUM general secretary Frans Baleni said Amcu was violating a peace accord signed last year, which promoted workers’ rights to associate with any union.

“We have never said Amcu offices must be closed.

We have never fought Amcu. We are on the receiving end. We are a 30-year-old union.

We are not intimidated but we can’t compete with violence and intimidation.” *With Reuters, Bloomberg*

# Mine labour strife likely to lead to further downgrades, writes Mariam Isa

## SA rating under threat from unrest

RENEWED unrest in the mining sector could take a toll on SA's export earnings, deter capital inflows and tarnish investor perceptions of the country, raising the spectre of further credit rating downgrades.

The three top global ratings agencies — Standard & Poor's (S&P's), Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings — all cited last year's wave of strikes and social unrest as one of the main reasons behind their decisions to downgrade SA.

Credit ratings are important as they help determine a country's cost of borrowing and often affect foreign demand for local shares and bonds, which in turn has an effect on the volatile rand.

A wildcat strike at platinum miner Lonmin yesterday halted production at all its mines and fanned concern that there could be more stoppages in the sector, which could spread to other industries.

"I think it really speaks to the broader uncertainty about SA's long-term growth potential, and its ability to attract and retain foreign direct investment as well as resolve underlying problems," Carmen Altenkirch, the director for Sub-Saharan Africa at Fitch, said yesterday.

"Although in isolation strikes aren't likely to have an impact on the rating ... they continue to highlight the concerns we have about SA. If this isn't resolved and other problems creep up, it will weigh on the rating."

Fitch downgraded its sovereign rating for SA by one notch to BBB in January, warning of the negative effects of "deteriorating economic growth" on both public finances and on social and political tensions.

But it gave the rating a "stable" outlook. When Standard & Poor's (S&P) downgraded SA to BBB last October, it put a negative outlook on the rating.

Moody's rating for SA is one notch higher than the other two, with a negative outlook. S&P is historically more negative about SA than the other ratings agencies and is seen as most likely to downgrade the country again.

Nomura emerging markets economist Peter Attard Montalto said yesterday that the fall in corporate tax revenues as a result of the mining sector unrest would lead to some "slippage" in SA's budget deficit targets and slow economic growth. Further, it would put pressure on the deficit on the current account, its broadest measure

of trade in goods and services. This is financed mainly by foreign purchases of local shares and bonds, which are vulnerable to swings in sentiment towards SA.

"All the boxes are ticked for an S&P downgrade at the end of the year or start of the next, in our view," Mr Montalto said in a research note. "(But) more deterioration in domestic security surrounding the mining sector could lead to an earlier downgrade."

The Treasury said last year that strikes and stoppages in the mining sector cost the economy R15.3bn in lost production. The sector accounts for just 5% of SA's overall economic output, but more than half of its export earnings.

Rand Merchant Bank economist Carmen Nel said if labour unrest led

to a moderation of capital inflows the rand would weaken and bond yields would rise, pushing up SA's cost of borrowing. "If industrial action has an impact that feeds through to growth there are downside risks to revenue and upside risks to the debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio, which credit rating agencies look at.

"We think there is a material risk of a rating downgrade."

Moody's warned in a report yesterday that high wage rises and productivity losses linked to strikes were the main risks to the credit ratings of South African miners in the coming 12 months. "This is because wage negotiations with trade unions in SA are taking place at a time when the industry has recently experienced an uptick in strikes and changes have occurred in the representation of unions involved in the wage negotiation process, which are introducing an element of unpredictability."

Moody's was referring to the hostility between the militant Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Amcu dislodged the NUM as the dominant union at SA's platinum mines. A top Amcu organiser was shot and killed on Saturday while a NUM shop steward and his brother died in a shooting incident on Sunday.

Analysts say there is a risk there could be strikes in the coal and gold mining industries when they begin wage talks next month. "Contagion in the wider economy remains more of a risk now than it was in the second half of last year because of the timing of the wage round," Mr Montalto said.

isam@bdfm.co.za

# Minister warns violent protesters

**Craig Dodds and Sapa**

“THE EYE of the nation is watching.” This was the warning to violent protesters from State Security Minister Siyabonga Cwele yesterday.

Presenting his department’s budget to Parliament, he said the security cluster had heeded President Jacob Zuma’s call in his State of the Nation address for a crack-down on unlawful behaviour during protests.

“We now have a plan and are ready to deploy the full capacity of the democratic state to identify, prevent or arrest and swiftly prosecute those who undermine our bill of rights by engaging in acts of violence,” Cwele said.

This comes amid a growing wave of service delivery protests and strike action around the country, sometimes accompanied by intimidation, violence and destruction of property.

With the wage negotiation season in the mining sector set to open, there are fears of a repeat of violent industrial action that brought the platinum sector to a standstill last year. Operations at Lonmin mines – the site of the industrial standoff that culminated in the killing by police of 34 striking mineworkers at Marikana – were disrupted yesterday as workers went on a wild-cat strike, demanding the shutdown of the National Union of Mineworkers’ (NUM) office at the mine.

Three officials of rival unions the NUM and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union have been murdered over the past few days.

Opposition MPs said the intelligence agencies had been shown up by events like the killing of 13 SANDF troops in the Central African Republic and the landing of a private jet at Waterkloof Air Force Base, a national key point.

The DA’s Dirk Stubbe said if “Guptagate”, when a planeload of wedding guests of the politically connected Gupta family landed at Waterkloof, had happened anywhere else, “such an aircraft would have been shot down if no pre-flight clearance were given”.

There had also been media reports suggesting that al-Qaeda operatives were running training camps in South Africa while the security establishment stood idly by.

# Protest halts work at Rustenburg mine

MINING operations at Lonmin's platinum mine in Rustenburg, in North West, had been suspended yesterday, the company said.

"We can confirm there is a stoppage. Workers arrived for work, but did not go underground. The reason for them not going underground is unclear," said spokeswoman Sue Vey.

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) regional co-ordinator Mxhasi Sithethi said: "People are singing outside our office, demanding the closure of the NUM office... It is tense."

He said the protesters were members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu).

It was not clear whether the protest was related to the death of Amcu North West organiser Mawethu Steven.

Steven was shot by four men at a tavern in Photsaneng, in the informal settlement of Nkaneng on Saturday.

On Monday, Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa appealed for "calm" following the shooting.

Twin brothers were also shot dead by a gang at Nkaneng, in Wonderkop, on Saturday.

Sithethi said one of them had been a NUM shop steward.

Two women were also wounded. – Sapa

# Marikana at boiling point

## Mogomotsi Magome

THE National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has warned that any violence arising from its rivalry with the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) in Rustenburg would be worse than the Marikana shootings last year.

Spokesman Lesiba Seshoka said NUM members had “learnt Amcu’s ways” last year and would not stand by if they were attacked.

This was a reference to the unprotected strike by miners at Marikana, North West, during which 45 people died, last year.

Tension remained high at Marikana yesterday as Amcu-affiliated mineworkers vowed not to return to work until NUM’s offices had been closed.

Workers downed tools yesterday and abandoned their shifts as the rivalry between NUM and Amcu reached new heights following the murder of an Amcu organiser.

Mawethu Steven, Amcu’s

regional organiser for North West, was shot four times by three men as he sat in a tavern in the Nkaneng informal settlement on Saturday.

His death was followed by those of two brothers – one of whom is believed to have been a NUM supporter – when men wearing blankets and balaclavas stormed their shack, demanding to know the whereabouts of another NUM member.

Police increased their presence in Marikana yesterday as workers downed tools and gath-

ered near the site where 34 striking miners died when police opened fire last year.

Officers were out in force at the Wonderkop Stadium, where the mineworkers had gathered to be addressed by branch leaders following a meeting between Lonmin, Amcu and NUM representatives.

The mineworkers, who have openly displayed their hostility to NUM, have accused the union of garnering fake members.

Among the workers’ de-

mands is that Lonmin sign a recognition agreement soon with Amcu as it has signed up 70 percent of mineworkers at the company, compared with NUM’s 20 percent.

Seshoka said last night that Amcu’s hostility was growing, creating an unsafe environment for anyone associated with NUM.

“What will happen in there will be worse than Marikana. We are very worried for the safety of our members and officials,” he said.

“We know that after what happened last year, our members will not just watch as they are being attacked.

“Amcu leaders are promoting hostility towards NUM.”

Seshoka said Amcu’s demand that NUM offices be closed was nonsense.

“We were there before Amcu and we will be there long after Amcu is gone,” he said.

Amcu’s allegation that Steven was killed by the NUM was far-fetched and baseless, he said. “NUM had nothing to do

with the killing of Mawethu Steven. If anybody has any evidence to the contrary they must present it to the police.”

Speaking in Marikana yesterday, Amcu branch chairman Jubo Bartman said talks with NUM and Lonmin had been fruitless. He asked for a fresh mandate from the workers.

Lonmin had refused Amcu’s demands to shut down the NUM offices; asked for further deliberation over Amcu’s claims that NUM had fraudulently increased its member-

ship at Lonmin; and not agreed to the union’s demand for the speedy signing of a recognition agreement with Amcu.

The consensus by Amcu leaders in Marikana yesterday was that tools would remain down until Lonmin accepted Amcu’s demands.

A leader from the Lonmin Karee shaft said Lonmin was clearly “in bed” with NUM and would not back down unless strikers shut down all its shafts. Attempts to contact Lonmin were unsuccessful.

# Marikana at boiling point

## NUM, Amcu rivalry skyrockets after 3 deaths

### MOGOMOTSI MAGOME

THE National Union of Mineworkers yesterday warned that the violence as a result of its rivalry with Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) in Rustenburg would be worse than the Marikana shootings last year.

Spokesman Lesiba Seshoka said NUM members had “learnt Amcu’s ways” from last year’s tragedy – when 34 mineworkers were killed by the police during a violent illegal strike – and would not stand by while they were being attacked.

Tension remained high in Marikana yesterday as Amcu-affiliated mineworkers vowed not to return to work until the offices of NUM had been shut down.

The workers downed tools yesterday and abandoned their shifts as the rivalry between NUM and Amcu reached new heights after the death of an Amcu leader the past weekend.

Amcu North West regional organiser Mawethu Steven was shot

dead at a tavern at Nkaneng informal settlement when three men stormed the tavern and shot him four times.

His death was followed by the death of two brothers – one of whom is believed to have been a NUM supporter – when men wearing blankets and balaclavas stormed their shack demanding to know the whereabouts of another NUM member.

Amcu has blamed NUM for Steven’s killing, but the police have yet to make any arrests related to any of the three killings.

The police increased their presence in Marikana yesterday as the workers downed tools and gathered near the site where 34 miners were shot dead last year.

Officers kept a high presence at the Wonderkop Stadium where the mineworkers had gathered to be addressed by branch leaders following a meeting between Lonmin, Amcu and NUM representatives.

The mineworkers, who have been openly displaying their hostility towards NUM, have accused the union of garnering false member-

ship. Among the workers’ demands is the speedy signing of a recognition agreement between Amcu and Lonmin as the union now has 70 percent membership at the mining firm, compared with NUM’s 20 percent.

Seshoka said last night that Amcu’s hostility was escalating, creating an unsafe environment for anybody associated with NUM.

“What will happen in there will be worse than Marikana. We are very worried about the safety of our members and officials. We know that after what happened last year, our members will not just watch as they are being attacked.

“What is going to happen there will be worse than Marikana. More so because there is no leadership in Amcu. Instead of providing leadership, Amcu leaders are promoting hostility towards NUM,” he said.

Seshoka added that Amcu’s demand that NUM offices be closed down was nonsense as they had failed to give sufficient reasons for this. “The demand is absolute nonsense, close our offices, for what? We were there before Amcu and we will be there long after Amcu is gone,” said Seshoka.

Amcu’s allegation that Steven was killed by the NUM was far fetched and baseless, he said. “For

the past 30 years NUM has never gone to recruit members at taverns.

“We recruit in the shafts and in the offices where proper union work is done. NUM had nothing to do with the killing of Mawethu Steven.

“If anybody has any evidence to the contrary they must present it to the police so they can do their work.”

Speaking in Marikana yesterday, Amcu branch chairman Jubo Bartman, said talks with NUM and Lonmin had been fruitless, and asked for a fresh mandate from the workers. Lonmin had refused Amcu’s demands to shut down the NUM offices; asked for further delibera-

tion over Amcu’s claims that NUM had fraudulently increased its membership at Lonmin; and not agreed to the union’s demand for the speedy signing of a recognition agreement with Amcu.

“We were in serious arguments in that boardroom, Bartman said.

“They say they will set a time for further discussions around the membership and recognition issues.

“Those were two of the very important points in the mandate given to us by the workers, including the issues of the closing down of NUM offices and the use of dangerous weapons by the NUM at shaft level,” said Bartman.

The consensus by various Amcu leaders in Marikana yesterday was that tools would remain down until Lonmin accepted Amcu’s demands.

Another leader from the Lonmin Karee shaft told workers that Lonmin was clearly “in bed” with NUM and it would not back down unless workers shut down all its shafts until their demands had been met.

The only people keen on working were those affiliated to NUM, he said, and threatened to violently remove them from the shafts. Late yesterday it was not clear how long the impasse would continue, with attempts to reach Lonmin proving unsuccessful.



# Battle for soul of mineworker

As the Marikana commission of inquiry continues, so does bloodshed. The body count is rising as fear spreads through the platinum belt. And the violence looks unlikely to abate soon, write **Greg Marinovich** and **Thapelo Lekgowa**

**E**VERYONE just called him Steve. Mawethu Joseph Steven, widely known as Steve Khululekile was a cautious guy, some thought paranoid.

When he went to hotels, he took his own skaf'tin, or lunchbox.

He feared being poisoned.

The last time grassroots activist Chris Molebatse saw him, they were both travelling in the same minibus taxi.

Steve was seated at the back.

They nodded a greeting.

Despite Steve being the regional organiser for the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu), who now rule the roost in the platinum sector, he preferred not to drive.

"Why should I buy my own coffin?" he would respond, when people tried to convince him to get a car.

When the taxi stopped at Ga-Pitse village in Bleskop mining area outside Rustenburg, Steve made his way out, greeting Molebatse with a "Sharp, comrade."

Steve preferred to drink at taverns where there were people he knew, miners who would watch his back.

Billy's Tavern was one such place, where Steve felt secure.

He walked in past the butchery and the buy-and-braai area. It was lunchtime on Saturday, and the place was busy.

Towards the bottom of the stand was the tavern, a large rectangular building with two signs above the door: no one under 18 was welcome, and neither were firearms.

Steve bought two Castle Lagers, which he put down on one of the large communal tables, then went to put money on the side of the pool table to book the next game.

He returned to his beer, and the soccer match on the television.

Witnesses say they saw a man dressed in a blue two-piece worker's overall. They noticed him, because he was a stranger. He left. Shortly thereafter, another similarly dressed man entered briefly before leaving.

Steve had his back to the entrance and

did not notice them.

Within minutes, the two men were back, accompanied by a third who was also dressed in overalls. One of them swiftly approached Steve from the rear and fired four shots with a pistol into his back.

The patrons ducked or ran for cover at the sound of the gunshots, and the four men escaped through a gate set in the fence at the rear of the property.

Steve, the regional organiser for Amcu on the platinum belt, was dead.

He rose to prominence in the mid 2000s when he was a general worker at Lonmin's Karee mine.

He was elected as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) shop steward and from there he rose in prominence.

He made his comrades at NUM uncomfortable. He was troublesome and belligerent and did not care for a united front with the rest of the elected NUM officials.

He was clear that he represented the interests of the miners who elected him. Period.

He might well have been arrogant, but Steve had power across all Lonmin's mines, and not just at Karee.

Even if the shop stewards representing more than 50 percent of the 28 000 workers across all Lonmin shafts agreed on a certain subject and Steve disagreed, the motion would not fly.

Steve would call a meeting of all NUM members and they would always back him.

He was extremely powerful, solid on the ground, and a thorn in the side of NUM.

Many of the workers believed the NUM leadership, except Steve, to have been co-opted by management.

It was during the local branch elections at Lonmin in 2011 that things came to a head.

At the NUM regional conference that preceded it, Steve told the branch that there was no need for elections as he and his team would be re-elected.

NUM said "no way", that was unacceptable, unconstitutional. Steve then called for a mass meeting to get a popular mandate

from the Karee mine, where he was chairman.

At the mass meeting, a miner from KwaZulu-Natal – Bongani – put himself forward to contest for the position of chair-

man. Steve addressed the crowd and said: "Comrades, you said that anybody who tried to contest my position is a spy. And now there is someone showing: you must deal with him."

“

Comrades, you said that anybody who tried to contest my position is a spy. Now there is someone showing: you must deal with him.

**Steve Khululekile**

The elections did not go ahead.

After the meeting, a crowd followed Bongani to his room. He was stoned to death. Nobody was arrested.

Intra-union violence is a fact of life between competing candidates, and there have been several murders of candidates or people belonging to rival factions over the years.

The NUM regional power structure insisted there had to be an election. Officials went to the Karee branch and said there should be an election. The branch members stoned the regional officials and the meeting was abandoned.

Steve said: "I am the man, no one is going to take over from me as chairman."

The situation continued to simmer and in May of 2011, NUM suspended Steve and secretary Dan Moeketsi.

Steve went back to the members and asked them to decide what they wanted to do about it. The next day, May 18, 2011, the entire mine went on an unprotected strike. Within days, Lonmin management (with NUM's approval) agreed to fire all 9 000 striking workers.

Management invited all workers to re-apply for employment. Most were re-hired but some 1 400 were not. They were the ones deemed to be troublemakers – Steve's most fervent supporters.

Steve would never again work for Lonmin. Neither would the other non-rehired workers. The anger against NUM was mas-

sive, and even though the 50 percent plus one rule at Lonmin meant that Steve could not enter the mine, his former members at the mine told him to find them another union. They would follow Steve anywhere.

That is how Amcu entered the picture, and with Steve's popularity, it swiftly displaced NUM at Lonmin.

With Steve at the helm, it is little wonder that Amcu signed up 70 percent of Lonmin's workforce, as announced by Lonmin weeks before his death.

Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa said Lonmin accused Steve of being behind the terrible violence of last year's strike. He was due to be called as a witness at Marikana hearings to be cross-examined on this by Lonmin's counsel.

His foes did not forget him and Mathunjwa said Steve received death threats, without specifying from whom.

Steve was a powerful leader as well as a divisive force. He told confidants that he was contesting the position of deputy president at Amcu, a post held by Mathunjwa's right-hand man, Jimmy Gama.

An Amcu elective conference set for earlier this year was cancelled after the union said it was not ready for it.

Mathunjwa denies this, saying that as an official in the union he was not eligible to stand for any elected office bearer position, not even shop steward.

Steve, it seems, had no shortage of adversaries. It is little wonder that he was so careful of anything from being poisoned to being attacked. Yet last Saturday, as he was watching soccer and drinking a beer while waiting for his turn at the pool table, assassins got to him.

As fear spreads throughout the platinum belt, real and imagined enemies strike terror into the hearts of mineworkers and their families. The fear provokes paranoid assumptions and acts of revenge and even pre-emptive action against their adversaries. In such an environment, suspicion is cast on any possible enemy.

● *This article first appeared in the Daily Maverick*

# Miners wage dirty war underground

**GRAEME HOSKEN**

A DEADLY silent war is being waged kilometres underground in mines that have become battlegrounds in the turf war between rival unions.

As tensions intensify above ground in the stand-off in North West between the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, and the National Union of Mineworkers, the body count and injury toll below ground are rising.

Police have confirmed that they are investigating five suspicious deaths on mines in the platinum belt in North West and Limpopo.

In February, four such deaths were reported to the police,

## Police investigate five suspicious shaft deaths

resulting in detectives from the national forensic laboratory spending days underground searching for clues.

Those deaths followed the rape and murder of 27-year-old Binkie Mosiana, who was found underground at Amplats' Khomanani mine last year.

Sources in companies that provide security services to the mines say that, in the past two months, at least three other deaths have occurred under "questionable" circumstances.

No arrests have been made. The deaths — which have all

been labelled "industrial accidents" — are believed to be linked to inter-union rivalry, and possibly the massacre by police of 34 striking miners at Marikana on August

**'We find weapons and take our own to protect ourselves'**

16. The police shootings, which are being investigated by the Farlam Commission of Inquiry, followed the killings of 10 people, including two police officers, on or around the Lonmin platinum mine.

The Marikana violence has been blamed on a bitter war for membership between the NUM and Amcu, which has ousted the NUM to become the majority union at Lonmin, and at other mines in the platinum belt.

Amcu brought operations at Lonmin's Marikana operations to a halt yesterday, demanding that the NUM offices at the mine be shut. The union called on the police to find and confiscate weapons stashed underground.

On Saturday, Mawethu Joseph Steven, Amcu's North West organiser, was shot and killed in a tavern

near Rustenburg. On Sunday, two brothers, one of whom was believed to be a NUM member, were killed in their shack in Nkaneng informal settlement, in Wonderkop, near the Marikana mine.

The three killings are believed to have led to the wildcat strike at Marikana yesterday.

No arrests have been reported. Claims have also been made that "hit squads" are planning attacks — both above and below ground — at several Free State gold mines.

Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa last night said that at least 10 "non-miners" had been smuggled

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into hostels at several Orkney gold mines.

“These men have been tasked with eliminating our branch members. They are responsible for the killings around the country.

“We know they have brought guns with them, which we believe they are stashing underground.”

Police investigations into the underground deaths remain stalled.

A forensic investigator said in February that two NUM members were killed in suspicious circum-

# Turf war taken to bowels of the earth

stances in what were said to have been industrial accidents.

“It was clear that these were not industrial accidents. One miner allegedly died when a ventilation pipe fell on him while another was hit by a runaway train. Yet their injuries were not consistent with the [stated] cause of death.

“There were clear signs of assault ... yet when we examined documents on the deaths they were listed as ‘occupational deaths’,” the investigator said.

Another officer involved in the cases, which occurred at two platinum mines in Thabazimbi, Limpopo, said the deaths had been “covered up”.

“The implications for the mines are immense ... if a death occurs all work has to stop ... this costs money.

“In another case, in March, a miner miraculously survived his attack but he was reluctant to talk. Something very sinister is going on that warrants investigation at a

much higher level.

“Deaths are occurring. Equipment is being sabotaged, killings masked as accidents, intimidation is rife — but no one takes responsibility.

“We are told the deaths are accidents but the pathology reports show something far different.

“With the little we have, our task is virtually impossible. How do you identify a suspect from 5 000 workers, none of whom saw

anything?”

A Lonmin miner, who declined to reveal his union affiliation, said things were so bad that, when they worked underground, at least two miners were put on “guard duty”.

“Their job is to warn of impending attacks and inspect for sabotage. We constantly find weapons and take our own to protect ourselves. If we don’t, we die.”

Mathunjwa said the threats of violence were increasing.

“This is precisely why one of our demands was that mine managers ensure proper searches for weapons stashes both above and below ground.

“Police call this a silent war but it is not ... there are deadly engagements underground.”

Mxhasi Sithethi, NUM’s Rustenburg coordinator, said his union’s members were working in constant fear.

“The mines, especially around Thabazimbi and Northam, are particularly bad when it comes to assaults, intimidation and deaths.

“On a daily basis we receive reports of attacks.

“Our members work looking over their shoulders. There are so many weapons underground ... guns, improvised weapons ... it is all there.”

Limpopo police spokesman Colonel Ronel Otto confirmed that several deaths underground at mines were being investigated.

North West police spokesman Brigadier Thulani Ngubane confirmed the investigation into Mosiana’s rape and murder.

“No arrests have been made ... the case is extremely difficult, with lots of forensic work.”

Amplats and AngloGold spokesman Mpumi Sithole said they had received no reports of violence underground.

“We had an incident in February where 15 people were attacked, but it was above ground,” she said.

Lonmin spokesman Sue Vey had failed to respond to questions at the time of going to press.

# Strife amid Marikana hearings

**NEW TURBULENCE** at Lonmin's Marikana mine outside Rustenburg in North West may indirectly affect public hearings into last year's wage-related unrest, the Farlam Commission heard yesterday.

Dali Mpofo, for the injured and arrested miners, said a group of miners who usually attended the proceedings using buses had raised concerns.

"They say they are now identifiable and they are on the witness list," said Mpofo.

He said he would meet with the group during the lunch break to discuss a way forward.

Commission chairman, retired Judge Ian Farlam, said protection would be made available for them if necessary.

"Witness protection (just like in court cases) is available for those involved," he said.

Mining operations at Lonmin's Marikana mine were suspended yesterday because of a wildcat strike.

Company spokeswoman Sue Vey said workers arrived for work but did not go underground.

National Union of Mineworkers regional co-ordinator Mxhasi Sithethi said the situation was tense at the mine.

Mpofo told the commission that Lonmin workers were gathering at a koppie near the mine yesterday morning.

"As we speak, we hear that 10 000 people are gathered at the koppie," he said.

The gathering follows the murder of an Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union official who was recently shot dead in Marikana. – Sapa

# NUM losing members in battle between unions

THE NATIONAL Union of Mineworkers is under pressure as the battle for union members intensifies.

But, experts believe, with its experience, NUM could make a U-turn and recommit to workers' issues and revive its formerly dominant stature.

This is while the rising star the Association of Mine-workers and Construction Union (Amcu) continues to make inroads into the membership of NUM and other unions.

Amcu came into the picture last year as a less popular union in the platinum belt of Rustenburg, where it took over the Karee mines at Lon-

weekend has sparked fresh violence in the Marikana area.

Amcu may not have an organisational website or an official spokesperson, and has its head office in Witbank, but the union's popularity continued to rise despite all that.

Labour law expert Michael Bagraim believes Amcu is winning more members from NUM because the newcomer is very close to its members at grassroots level while NUM has lost contact and focused on politics instead.

The Labour Relations Act allows workers to belong to a union of their choice. However, it is the union's duty to prove to their potential and

existing members that they are worth it.

There is a lot that comes with membership for unions, with NUM and Amcu collecting a percentage of each member's salary in membership fees.

When asked to quantify his union's loss in the platinum belt so far, NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka said it was about 25 000 members.

NUM has been Cosatu's biggest union, with more than 310 000 members but this is expected to drop when the new figures are released.

Big membership means large income.

Dwindling membership

will also see NUM's bargaining and representation power being weakened.

NUM is now on a big campaign to restore relations with its members.

Its losses have meant huge gains for Amcu. The union said this week its overall membership had grown to over 100 000. At an average R50 monthly membership fee, Amcu will be raking in more than R5 million a month.

Bagraim said: "People want a union that listens to them, and Amcu is coming with new energy." He said they were focused on issues on the shop floor and were not worried about politics.

**ANALYSIS BY  
POLOKO TAU**

min after expelled NUM branch leader Mawethu Steven migrated to Amcu, taking a huge following with him. Steven's murder at the



# Lonmin strikers issue ultimatum

**LEBOGANG SEALE**

lebogang.seale@inl.co.za

**L**ONMIN platinum mine bosses were issued an ultimatum yesterday choose between productivity or the National Union of Mineworkers.

“If NUM vacate their offices on July 3, we will go back to work on July 4... And the employer must choose between productivity and NUM.”

This was the message to bosses of the mine in Marikana outside Rustenburg in North West by striking workers after their union gave them feedback from their

meeting with management.

The workers, mostly members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu), embarked on a wildcat strike yesterday, demanding that:

- NUM’s offices be shut down as the union was no longer the majority union on Rustenburg’s platinum mines.

- The implementation of the recognition agreement that would see Amcu being officially declared the majority union.

- An end to what they called fraudulent membership, as well as the carrying of dangerous weapons at all mines.

The workers also com-

plained that they had not been paid the 12.5 percent wage increase that was agreed to last year.

After waiting for almost the whole day, the feedback the miners received from their leaders was not what they had wanted to hear.

The meeting with management, the leaders said, had not been fruitful.

“Management say they can’t close NUM’s offices now. The employer is refusing and says the union had been given notice that they will end (their occupation of offices) on July 3,” said a voice from a loud-hailer.

The message was met with

jeers of protest.

“The employer is playing games. He must choose between production and NUM,” one of the workers said.

The workers resolved that they would intensify their strike action.

Thronges of miners, many sporting green T-shirts, had been moving in regiment-like, choreographed formations while chanting songs denouncing anyone who opposed their cause and their union.

The green Amcu T-shirts stood out in the winter sun, contrasting with the bright

yellow T-shirts emblazoned with the bold UDM (United Democratic Movement) letters and an imposing, almost larger-than-life, picture of the party’s leader, Bantu Holomisa.

Not a single T-shirt of the ANC or NUM was to be seen.

By the time the Amcu leaders arrived, the numbers had swelled to about 5 000.

Even before the leaders arrived to pronounce their demands, the members had aired their grievances in chants and songs.

“*Ubani lo bulelekhe uSteve*

*simthanda so* (who killed our beloved Steven)... The liars will create more problems for themselves, the murderers hate us and (ANC secretary-general Gwede (Mantashe) will regret (it).” they chanted.

The workers also chanted derogatory songs denouncing President Jacob Zuma.

Without mentioning NUM, the workers sang songs suggesting that they would rather pack their belongings and leave than be bullied or dictated to.

The gathering was attended by workers from

Lonmin’s three divisions of its Eastern, Western and Karee mines. The strike seemed to have taken the Lonmin mine management, who suspended all operations yesterday, by surprise.

Lonmin spokeswoman Sue Vey said operations at the mine’s 13 shafts had to be suspended after workers refused to go underground.

“Operations have been suspended because of an illegal strike. Our 13 shafts are not operational because the employees arrived for work but did not proceed under-

ground.” Vey said.

She added that management was meeting the various union leaders “as we do not know the reasons for the illegal strike. Our rules are clear about illegal strikes.”

But union leaders urged workers to go to their respective shafts to stage sit-ins and not to go underground.

A memorial service was expected to be held for murdered unionist Mawethu Khululekile Steven at the Karee Stadium tomorrow. He had been listed as a witness for the Farlam Commission.

# Strikers want NUM out

## MARIKANA: Workers accuses Lonmin of not recognising Amcu

**STEVEN TAU AND SAPA**

**STRIKING** Lonmin Mine workers in Marikana have vowed not to return to work until the employer closes down the local offices of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Workers refused to go underground yesterday, accusing Lonmin of failing to recognise the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) as the union holding the majority membership at the mine.

Workers accused Lonmin of being in bed with NUM and govern-

ment at the same time.

Asiyi emsebenzini (meaning we are not going back to work), was what workers said in one voice when they were briefed by Amcu's Marikana branch committee who had been in a day-long meeting with the employer and Num.

Disgruntled workers also accused NUM members of carrying dangerous weapons, at shaft level. Workers resolved to meet at the shafts today, but not to resume duty.

Dressed in green Amcu-branded T-shirts, workers initially gathered at the infamous koppie where 34 of

their colleagues were shot and killed in last year's violent labour unrest.

They sang liberation songs, demanding that the rival union vacate its offices.

A large number of police gathered at Wonderkop Stadium where Amcu members met yesterday afternoon. A water cannon, a number of police vans and Nyalas were parked outside the stadium.

Lonmin workers were bused in from all 13 shafts of the mine. Carrying knobkerries, sticks, and umbrellas they filed into the venue singing: "Police are dogs. They must

leave." Both Amcu and NUM's national leadership denied knowledge of yesterday's strike.

Fears were raised at the weekend that scenes reminiscent to last year's violent incidents would unfold following the murders of three people, one of them, confirmed as being an Amcu member.

Mawethu Steven was shot while watching a soccer match on Saturday, when four men stormed into Billy's tavern.

A memorial service in honour of Steven, is scheduled to be held tomorrow. – [stevent@citizen.co.za](mailto:stevent@citizen.co.za)

# More tension hits Marikana

## Hlengiwe Nhlabathi

Political Reporter

A HEIGHTENED sense of worry engulfed the Marikana commission of inquiry yesterday as unionised Lonmin workers spent the day protesting at a nearby koppie, leaving the Rustenburg Civic Centre almost empty.

This was reminiscent of the days leading to the Marikana massacre, when 34 men were killed by police during a wage dispute on August 16 last year.

Advocate Dali Mpofu, representing the survivors of the massacre, expressed worry that the protest could have an indirect effect on the commission.

Some of the witnesses had in fact not attended because they feared for their lives after the

deaths of their colleagues.

Three people were shot dead at the weekend – one was a regional chairman of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu), Mawethu Stevens.

Fingers are being pointed at its rival union, NUM, but the union has dismissed this charge.

The shooting brings to four the number of people killed since the start of the hearing. Two others have committed suicide.

Mpofu said he was advised by his clients, transported daily to the commission, that they feared for their lives as they are more vulnerable as an identifiable group.

“Most of those people are on the witness list and that is the reason why they come here,” said Mpofu.

Commission chairman Ian Farlam had on Monday expressed concern at what appeared to be assassinations of key witnesses. The killings at the weekend halted operations at 13 shafts at Lonmin's Marikana mines on Monday.

Stevens was due to give evidence to the commission investigating last

year's deaths – including that of 10 other people killed in the days leading up to the massacre.

Farlam reiterated that arrangements could be made to provide witnesses who feel vulnerable to a witness protection programme.

“That machinery and protection is available,” said Farlam.

Mpofu said: “If things get worse that kind of protection is required.”

Meanwhile, Mpofu took issue with the police's failure to take action against any official found at fault in respect of the Marikana incident, saying not doing so would have “disastrous consequences”. – *nhlabathih@sowetan.co.za*



# MARIKANA'S LONMIN ON THE KNIFE'S EDGE

**Lucas Ledwaba**

**THE mining strike “capital”, Marikana in North West, is on a knife’s edge yet again as union rivalry threatens to once again bring operations at platinum mining company Lonmin to a standstill.**

Yesterday, workers aligned to the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) vowed that they would today close down shafts to force the company to close down the offices of the rival National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The two unions have been embroiled in a bitter battle over control of Rustenburg’s volatile platinum mining belt region since last year.

The Amcu-aligned workers yesterday embarked on an unprotected strike, citing the

## **Amcu vows to close shafts until NUM vacates office**

failure by Lonmin to shut down NUM’s offices after Amcu recently overtook NUM as the majority union at the company.

The strike is due to occur against the backdrop of growing tensions in the region, following the killing at the weekend of Amcu office bearer Mawethu Steven Khulekile in Nkaneng near Bleskop, west of Marikana.

Khulekile was set to give testimony at the Marikana Commission of Inquiry, which is investigating the deaths of 44 people who were killed during an unprotected strike at the same mine in August last year.

Yesterday, a group of about 2 000 workers gathered at the

koppie near where 34 mineworkers were shot and killed by police on August 16.

They sang anti-NUM songs as police officers in armoured vehicles kept a close eye, albeit from a distance.

The gathering moved from the koppie to the Wonderkop Stadium near Lonmin’s Rowland Shaft in the late afternoon, where an Amcu delegation briefed the workers on their talks with Lonmin.

The workers resolved they would not return to work until Lonmin had ensured that NUM vacated the offices after the Amcu delegation had informed them that Lonmin had said that

the company had given the NUM until July to close down their offices.

The workers are demanding that Amcu leaders should address management on issues including fraudulent membership, the carrying of dangerous weapons at shaft level, the closure of the NUM offices and issues pertaining to the recognition agreement.

Lonmin said in a statement yesterday: “While this is an uncertain and evolving situation, management is in discussions with our recognised trade unions to ascertain the reasons for the stoppage and to encourage workers to return to work.”

# MARIKANA AT BOILING POINT!

## Unions deny calling for strike

By ELLEKIA DIRE

**THOUSANDS** of workers gathered on the small hill, now known as Scene 2 of the Marikana tragedy, yesterday morning.

They then marched to Wonderkop Stadium near Nkaneng kasi.

The workers from Lonmin Platinum Mine said they were protesting to make sure all shafts opened by NUM were completely shut down.

The protest is seen as a continuation of rivalry between NUM and Amcu.

The protesters accuse the mine of not recognising Amcu as a majority union and allowing an office for its operations in the area.

They want all NUM offices to be closed before they can return to work.

Before moving to Scene 2 the workers, armed with weapons, toy-

toyed outside the shaft entrance.

Heavily armed cops in Nyalas and other vehicles followed the workers as they made their way across the small town of Marikana.

The strikers marched to the hill, singing songs and asking who'd killed their leaders.

Amcu's regional organiser, Mawethu Steven (47), was gunned down near Photsaneng shaft number 2 last Saturday.

The regional organiser, who was instrumental in unseating NUM at the mine, died before testifying at the Marikana Commission of Inquiry.

Steven will be buried in Elliotdale in Eastern Cape on Saturday.

But both the unions denied calling for their members to embark on a strike.

# Marikana inquiry looks at witness safety

NEW turbulence in Marikana, North West, may indirectly affect public hearings into last year's wage-related unrest at Lonmin platinum mine, the Farlam Commission heard yesterday.

Dali Mpofu, for the injured and arrested miners, said a group of miners who usually attended the proceedings using buses, had raised concerns.

"They say they are now identifiable and they are on the witness list," Mpofu said.

Commission chairperson retired Judge Ian Farlam said protection would be made available for them if necessary. "Witness protection (just like in court cases) is available for those involved," Farlam said.

Mining operations at Lonmin were suspended yesterday morning because of a wildcat strike.

Company spokesperson Sue Vey said workers arrived for work but did not go underground.

National Union of Mineworkers regional coordinator Mxhasi Sithethi said the situation was tense at the mine.

Mpofu told the commission Lonmin workers were gathering at Wonderkop, a hill near the mine, yesterday morning.

"As we speak, we hear that 10 000 people are gathered at the koppie," he said. The gathering follows the murder of an Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union official who was shot dead in Marikana at the weekend.

The official, identified as Mawethu Khululekile Steven, was due to testify at the commission. Steven was one of several witnesses who have been killed in recent months. The commission is investigating the death of 41 people killed in Lonmin's wage-related unrest last August. - Sapa