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## **Police action at Lonmin mine reminiscent of Sharpeville massacre**

The South African Institute of Race Relations calls for the immediate suspension of all police officers involved in the shooting at Lonmin yesterday pending charges of murder and/or culpable homicide.

There is clear evidence, the Institute said, that policemen randomly shot into the crowd with rifles and handguns. "There is also evidence of their continuing to shoot after a number of bodies can be seen dropping and others turning to run. This is reminiscent of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

"It would also appear as if they were not properly equipped to control a crowd. Rifles are a no-no in such a situation.

"In our view," the Institute said, "what happened at Lonmin is completely unacceptable. We hold no brief for the use of violence in labour or any other disputes. But even if the police were provoked or shot at during yesterday's incident, or were angry at the killing of two police officers in the days before, no disciplined and properly trained policeman would shoot into a crowd. Yesterday's incident was a disaster waiting to happen.

"In April last year, in an open letter to the minister of police after the killing of Andries Tatane at Ficksburg, we warned against unlawful police behaviour," the Institute said. "That warning has been vindicated on television screens across the world."

"The use of violence in strikes or as a form of protest or political expression has tragically become routine, rather than exceptional, in recent years," the Chief Executive of the Institute, John Kane-Berman, said. "This presents the police with a formidable challenge. All the more reason why they should long since have been trained to handle such situations lawfully, intelligently, and with restraint."

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