



Press Statement

23 March 2026

Campaign for Free Expression condemns assault on *The Witness* journalists, calls for urgent police action

The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) condemns the assault, robbery, and intimidation of *The Witness* reporter Shorné Bennie and photographer Moeketsi Mamane by Msunduzi municipality workers on 18 February 2026, and calls on the South African Police Service to conclude its investigation and bring those responsible to account without further delay.

Bennie and Mamane were covering a workers' protest outside Msunduzi municipal offices in Pietermaritzburg when protesters threw a rock at them and threatened them with violence. Mamane's camera was seized and he was lured onto the premises, where he was surrounded, physically assaulted, and coerced into deleting his photographs. His camera was damaged. *The Witness* filed a criminal case at Pietermaritzburg Central Police Station on 25 February, with video footage provided. More than three weeks later, no arrests have been made.

The attack on Bennie and Mamane was a deliberate effort to stop journalists from doing their jobs, and to destroy the record of what had occurred. CFE calls on the SAPS to proceed with appropriate swiftness with its investigation and with prosecution.

It further calls on the Msunduzi municipality to ensure its internal investigation reaches concrete outcomes and on the South African municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) and on COSATU to publicly condemn the conduct of its members and cooperate fully with law enforcement.

Media enquiries:

Nicole Fritz
Executive Director
Communications@freeexpression.org.za.