

Press Statement



A 22 year sentence for the rape and murder of a Lesbian. Is our justice system failing us?

On **30 July 2015** at the Pretoria North District Court, Judge Mokgosi handed a sentence of 22 years to Thabo Molefe for raping and murdering **Thembelihle “Lihle” Sokhela**. Lihle, a **lesbian woman** from Daveyton, East of Johannesburg was brutally killed by a man known to her.

Molefe has a **stream of other convictions**, going as far back as 1988 for: damage to property, theft and assault. In 2002, he was charged for indecency.

“This is **frustrating**; if you take someone’s life you must get a life sentence. Our justice system continues to fail women. I am too disappointed for words”, said Jade Madingwana, Community Liaison Officer from the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW).

On the first day of the trial, Monday, 27 July, Thabo Molefe (45) pleaded “not guilty” to both charges: of murder and of rape. In the accused’s statement, Molefe said he had no intention to kill Thembelihle. He claimed to have had a relationship with the deceased. He also said the couple often had a consensual sex, but on that day they didn’t. Initially, he claimed she was **not a lesbian**, but later revoked his statement.

Iris Qalekiso, the **mother of the accused** spoke bravely about discovering the body of slain Thembelihle. She had been **wrapped in a blanket** in her son’s room. She found her after being ordered by Thabo to make his bed. “I screamed when I saw a dead body in my house.”

Thabiso Monametsi, the owner of a local tavern spoke of his friendship with the deceased. According to him, Thembelihle was **openly lesbian** and spoke of her as “She was like us”, referring to her ‘manly’ dress code. Monametsi **expressed shock** when he learnt of Lihle’s passing. He had only ever seen her with girlfriends and not once had he seen or heard of her having a relationship with a man. “We both would talk about girlfriends not men, he said.”

Lihle’s girlfriend didn’t want to be mentioned by name. She also articulated the **sexual orientation** of the deceased saying she had never heard anything about Lihle having a relationship with the accused. “I know Lihle very well, she was a lesbian and she **only dated women** since she was young.”

“I am very angry. There is something very wrong with our justice system. First, the **police lose vital evidence** then three incompetent police from Daveyton police station do the worst job possible on this case. It is very hard to understand that Judge Mokgosi **failed to take account** of the victim’s **sexual orientation** into account”, said Jabu Pereira, Director of Iranti-org.

Iranti-org continues to document and report on hate crimes in South Africa.

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Thembelihle #Justice has failed us again Where is justice in South Africa, Who is #Justice?

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