

26 September 2010

Embargo: For Immediate Release

To: All Media

Attention: News Editors, Reporters, Political Reporters

RE: KwaZulu-Natal Legislature to hold a Senior Citizen's Parliament

It is often said that senior citizens do not contribute to society. Many are ridiculed, discriminated against, abused or regarded as a burden.

The majority, especially the rural poor, suffer poor health which is compounded by access barriers to health care and persistent violation of their rights.

Most are lonely and their old age pensions are mainly utilised as an income for the entire families.

Elderly women, especially in rural areas, are linked to witchcraft and as a result they are brutally murdered on the basis of those suspicions.

For example last month, an 85-year old woman – Masilenge Bambusiba and her four grandchildren – Lwazi (17), Lwando (10), Vela (9) and Ezile were brutally murdered apparently because Masilenge was suspected of witchcraft.

They were attacked at their homestead in the Ngqeleni village in the Eastern Cape.

Some elderly citizens are neglected and left to die a lonely and agonising deaths.

Following are the recent examples of tragic accidents in which senior citizens died very cruel deaths:

- In August this year, 18 elderly people were burned to death when their home – Pieter Wessels in Johannesburg – accidentally caught fire.
- In May this year, three elderly citizens who were staying at Rusthof old age home in Paarl in the Western Cape were burned to death when their old age home also caught fire.
- In November 2007, 16 elderly residents of KwaBadala Hostel in Inkandla were also burned to death when their old age home caught fire.

Some have contracted HIV/Aids while caring for their sick children, relatives or neighbours.

On the eve of the International Day of Older Persons, which is on the 1st of October, KwaZulu-Natal Legislature will be holding a Senior Citizens Parliament on the south coast of the province.

“We would like all Senior Citizens, from all walks of life to come in their numbers to their parliament so that they will have an opportunity to raise issues that are of interest to them and also enable us as government to know what interventions we need to make to alleviate their plight,” said KwaZulu-Natal Legislature Speaker, Honourable Neliswa Nkonyeni MPL.

It is at this sitting where senior citizens will discuss and debate issues that are of interest to them and even get a chance to ask Members of the Provincial Executive questions.

The media is invited to attend the sitting and report accordingly. The details are as follows:

Date: 29 and 30 September 2010

Time: 10am to 4pm

Venue: Gamalakhe FET College

For more information please contact Wonder Hlongwa, KwaZulu-Natal Legislature Spokesperson at 0829083532.