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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGAL AID SA ENSURES JUSTICE PREVAILS FOR UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE STUDENTS

Legal Aid South Africa's Bloemfontein Justice Centre Executive (JCE), Mr Machini Motloung and Candidate Attorney, Mr Thapelo Modisane are on record as legal representatives of seven students that were arrested for public violence at the University of the Free State. These students were initially arrested along with 12 others on 25 February 2016 but were later released with a warning in order to allow for further investigations. Charges against the other 12 students were withdrawn, whereas the nine students represented by Legal Aid SA are now facing charges of contravention of interdict and public violence.

On 31 March 2016, the case was postponed to allow the State, through the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Free State, to acquire and analyse the video footage of the protest incident. Yesterday, the State Prosecutor asked for a further three weeks' postponement of the case to allow the State to make a decision on whether they will withdraw the charges or transfer the matter to the Bloemfontein Regional Court.

The defense team, which included Bloemfontein JCE Mr Motloung, strongly objected to the application for the remand of the case. Mr Motloung expressed disappointment with the State for not dealing with the case expeditiously, especially since the case involves students who have academic responsibilities. He was also unconvinced by the reasons to warrant further postponement of the case.

"Legal Aid South Africa's role in this matter is to fulfil our mandate as per section 35 of the Constitution, which impels us to ensure that every person who is arrested, detained or accused has a right to a fair trial, and further, to ensure that the rights of the accused are not violated, but protected. We will continue being resolute to defend the rights of our clients hence we argued that the case be removed from the court roll as continued postponements severely prejudice our clients," explained Mr Motloung.

After the strong argument by the defense team, the Magistrate agreed that justice delayed is justice denied and added that justice must always be seen to be done. The Magistrate then postponed the matter for a final time in terms of Section 342A of the Criminal Procedure Act to Friday 29 April 2016. This is to allow the State through either the National or Provincial (Free State) Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide on the matter.

-Ends-

Issued by the Communications Department of Legal Aid South Africa. For more information, please contact the National Spokesperson Lesleigh Timothy on 011 877 2204 or FSNW Regional Communication Practitioner Thabo Koole on 051 412 8050

Visit our website at www.legal-aid.co.za or call the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110

Please be reminded that the name of our organisation **Legal Aid South Africa** is correctly abbreviated as **Legal Aid SA** and not as LASA. We respectfully request that you use the correct abbreviation **Legal Aid SA** which is representative of our mission to deliver quality **legal aid** services to the poor and vulnerable in South Africa.