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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGAL AID SOUTH AFRICA ENSURES VICTORY FOR UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE STUDENTS

Legal Aid South Africa has welcomed the decision by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to withdraw the charges against seven of the nine University of the Free State students who were arrested on 25 February 2016 for public violence and contravention of the court order. These students were later released with a warning in order to allow for further investigations.

Legal Aid South Africa's Bloemfontein Justice Centre Executive Machini Motlounge, Principal Attorney Moeketsi Moeketsi and Candidate Attorney Thapelo Modisane were on record as legal representatives of the nine students.

The case was supposed to be heard at the Bloemfontein Regional Court on Friday 10 June 2016. However, prior to the court date, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Chief Prosecutor had several separate meetings with the University, the South African Police Service, the Human Rights Commission and the Legal Aid South Africa lawyers representing the students with a view to address the matter through mediation.

Following this, seven of the nine students represented by the Legal Aid South Africa lawyers agreed to the terms and conditions of the mediation agreement. One of the students who did not agree to the terms of the mediation agreement will appear at the Bloemfontein Regional Court on the trial date determined by the NPA Free State. The other student was not at court and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The mediation agreement remains confidential as the University of the Free State's internal processes are still underway.

"We welcome the NPA's decision to withdraw the charges against the students. We are also very pleased that the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Free State, Advocate Xolisile Khanyile, agreed with us in dropping the charges against the students with the view to allow them to focus on their studies. We have achieved Legal Aid South Africa's 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. In this instance, we have achieved that and have also gone further in ensuring that justice is seen to be done, especially to a vulnerable group such as students,” explains Machini Motlounge.

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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 Region 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.