

// INTERNATIONALES //

Message of solidarity with the students protest for free education in South Africa

The German Education Union (GEW) supports the students of South Africa in their struggle for free education and the abolishment of study fees. Tuition fees lead to the privatisation of education and to increasing inequalities in the educational system. When access to education depends on an individual's capacity to pay, working class and poor students are deprived of the possibility to enhance their education. In contrast, we demand that education is a public good which is publicly funded, works for the benefit of all and contributes to the creation of a more equal society. In 2006 in Germany, when most of the states had started to introduce study fees, students took the streets for several months, receiving broad support by the labour movement and other civil society organisations. Through joint struggles we were able to turn the tables with the effect that fees have fallen throughout Germany. To us it was an example of what solidarity in practice can achieve.

We congratulate the students' movement in South Africa on their important victory of a zero per cent increase in study fees for 2016 as announced by president Jacob Zuma on the 23rd of October 2015, which can be regarded as a first step on the way towards a more equal educational system without tuition fees. We are concerned though about the massive intervention of the police force, the criminalisation of the protests and the arrest of students. We call for all students to be released and for charges to be withdrawn.

The demands raised by the students, supported by many academics in South Africa, are also fully shared by our trade union, which organises more than 280,000 teachers, educators, and academics in Germany. Besides the demand for free education, the student movement in South Africa has also called for a fundamental transformation of universities towards the realisation of inclusiveness and equality. Accordingly, students are fighting for the hiring of black academics, against systemic racism and an end to the outsourcing of services at universities. We call on the heads of the universities as well as the government to seriously engage with the student movement on their legitimate demands.

Adopted by GEW Executive Board
27 October 2015