



Publication: Witness - Main

Title: PROTESTS IN 2023 LEFT A DEVASTATING TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

Publish date: 04 Jan 2024

Page: 2

Reach: 6180

AVE: R 14461.92

Author: Ntombizethu Ngcobo

PROTESTS IN 2023 LEFT A DEVASTATING TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

NTOMBIZETHU NGCOBO

In 2023, numerous protests unfolded, and arguably one of the most severe incidents was the torching of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's William O'Brien (WOB) Lecture Hall.

In August, *The Witness* reported on a violent protest at the university's Pietermaritzburg campus, which led to the WOB lecture hall being set alight.

This came amid student protests over the new direct payment platform

called Tenet Technology, which has been adopted by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (Nsfas).

In September, security guards at Grey's Hospital had closed off all roads leading into the hospital. The protesters claimed that their security company has not been meeting their salary allocation demands. They prevented hospital staff members who were working the previous night from leaving the hospital, while staff members who were supposed to be working in

the morning were not allowed to enter.

Mbutshane residents in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg, embarked on a strike in July complaining about the state of the D2069 road that had been left incomplete for years. They blocked Dennis Shepstone Road with stones and lit fires. The residents said they had been waiting for the road to be completed for about five years.

Contract workers in the Pietermaritzburg region of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

in October gathered for two days at the Department of Transport's head office. On the first day, they submitted a memorandum because they want to be employed permanently by the Department of Transport.

Yet another protest took place in July over a blown transformer, near the Nhlalakahle camp, in Bombay Road, Pietermaritzburg. Residents blocked the road with burning tyres and stoned vehicles the night before. They said they had not had electricity for two

weeks and were promised that the problem would be resolved.

In another incident, pupils from Sukuma Secondary School in Imbali Unit 1 blockaded FJ Sithole Road with burning tyres and old furniture.

The pupils said their electricity had been disconnected after the Department of Education allegedly failed to pay Eskom.

The pupils, who are borders, had also been without food since they returned to school in October.