

**Thursday 27 May 2010**

## **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CONDEMN BAN ON MARCH FOR QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION**

A wide cross-section of civil society -- unions, students organisations, faith based groups, community organisations and NGOs -- with a collective membership of over a million people, strongly condemn the decision taken by the authorities to ban a peaceful march for the right to a quality public education for all, planned for June 10th 2010.

This growing coalition of civil society has been brought together by our deep concern around the state of education. While children in South Africa have formal 'access' to schooling, the lack of quality of education is a crisis. South African education is deeply divided and not serving our children. The crisis in education puts our democracy under threat.

We have come together to take forward an education campaign calling for a "Quality Public Education for All". As a part of this campaign we have been organising a peaceful march on the 10th of June for quality education for all of our children. We have just been informed by Johannesburg Metro Police, without any substantive reasons, or legal basis, that all marches and gatherings, including ours, have been banned in South Africa for the whole of June until 15th July 2010. A scheduled meeting with the police to discuss the refusal was cancelled without adequate explanation.

We are deeply concerned by this suspension of our Constitutional right to assemble, protest and present petitions at this important moment in our history. This bodes ill for our democracy and we call on all to raise their voices against this violation of our rights.

Corresponding with an Education Summit announced by President Zuma for Heads of State during the Fifa World Cup, and motivated by the President's call for all citizens and world leaders to increase their commitment to quality education for all, this growing coalition had planned a public march to Constitutional Hill on the 10th of June, the day before the opening of the World Cup. The peaceful march for the children of Africa reflects the best of the history and future of South Africa -- where we can come together, across all differences, and protect and achieve human rights for all.

Meaningful public participation to address the crisis in education must be supported by the government. They should not pay lip-service to participation; the march for quality education should be encouraged and celebrated, not prohibited. Our hard won constitutional rights, for which we continue to struggle, cannot be taken away by the whim of police-officers or politicians.

The actions of the Metro Police and South African Police Services are unconstitutional. We are therefore intending to challenge it legally, and if necessary make an urgent application to the High Court. We will continue to actively organise for this peaceful march on the 10th of June, and continue to work tirelessly for quality and equal education for all. We also call on all concerned members of the public to raise their voices against

this violation of our civil rights and to send your names to [ppen.info@gmail.com](mailto:ppen.info@gmail.com) where they will be added to a petition.