

# Marikana: presenting four sides to the story

DUDU DUBE

THE Marikana Commission of Inquiry resumes this morning with all parties involved expected to present their closing arguments after two years of leading evidence.

The main parties, which are the South African Police Service, the mineworkers, the employer Lonmin Mine, rival unions NUM and Amcu and the families of the 45 people who died during the seven-day wage strike, have all called witnesses and presented evidence at the commission.

Commission chairperson judge Ian Farlam is expected to in the end make findings as to who was responsible for the deaths, the destruction and the strike getting out of hand after which he will make recommendations on whether someone should be prosecuted.

The past two years saw all parties playing the blame game with the SAPS pinning everything on the miners, the miners blaming Lonmin and the police and the unions taking opposite sides with Amcu siding with the miners and the NUM appearing to be on the side of the police.

**The SAPS case**  
Police shot, using live ammunition, at the miners in self-defence. They claim the miners were charging at them with traditional weapons and had planned to kill them.  
Police have maintained that when



**HUMILED:** Dali Mpotfu. PICTURES: TIMARU/INDEPENDENT

they went to Wonderkop hill where about 3 000 mineworkers were gathered on August 16, 2012, their aim was to disarm and disperse the large group.

They submitted that they had been informed by the union leader Joseph Mathunjwa that the miners had agreed to surrender their traditional weapons but when the police prepared to move in, they were attacked by the armed crowd.

The police called Mr X, a miner who was at the hill on the day of the shooting, to support their case.

Mr X told the commission that it had been discussed at the hill that police would be killed on that day and that miners really did charge at police with traditional weapons because they believed they were immune to gunshots after a



**STRIKING:** Joseph Mathunjwa.

traditional healer, Alton Joja, performed rituals on them. Joja was assassinated early last year while police were still trying to call him as a witness.

**The miners' case**  
Mineworker Mzoxolo Magdiwana was among those who testified about the events of the Marikana massacre. He was shot numerous times and was left paralysed.

Magdiwana, like all miners who survived, denied they were charging at police, instead he says they were trying to run away to the nearby informal settlement after police had closed them in with barbed wire and surrounded the area.

He said they realised then they were going to be shot and tried to break



**FINDING OUT:** Ian Farlam.

through the barbed wire to escape.

The miners also claim that after the first shooting by the police which killed 17 people, the police went to find those who were injured and finished them off.

"There was firing of tear gas and water from behind us. This was followed by gunshots aimed in our direction. When it became clear that the Nyala had blocked the way, we ran around and behind the kraal to access the road from the other side of the kraal. This was the only gap open to us.

"As soon as we emerged on the other side of the kraal, we were met with more rapid gunfire.

"I was hit in my left leg. I stumbled and fell behind the other workers who

had been shot. The gunfire stopped for a while. Shortly thereafter, I could hear voices of policemen approaching the place where most of us had fallen.

"When they got to me, I was shot again several times from close range while I was on the ground."

Organisations that sympathise with the miners, including the Legal Resources Centre argue that police had planned earlier to shoot the miners and they did so out of anger because two days earlier, the miners had hacked two policemen to death.

**Amcu's case**  
Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa blamed Lonmin for the strike escalating to violence, saying its failure to negotiate with the miners was a contributing factor.

Mathunjwa testified that he personally went to the hill to ask the miners what they wanted, which they said was a representative from the employer. He then went back to relate the message to Lonmin management but was unsuccessful in convincing them.

**Lonmin's case**  
Lonmin's argument at the commission that the strike turning violent was as a result of rivalry between the two unions. Its explanation for not going to negotiate with the employers at the hill was that the strike was illegal and had become a criminal act instead of a labour dispute.