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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**ATTENTION: EDITOR**

**RE: CORRUPT METRO POLICE OFFICERS BUSTED TAKING MONEY FROM HAWKERS**

The Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET) have noted with appreciation the recent media coverage highlighting the plight of informal traders around Johannesburg. Of particular interest, was an exposé on the Johannesburg metro police officers who were caught in the act taking bribes from desperate street traders' in return for their impounded goods. The ensuing suspension of the four scoundrels is thus applauded.

ESSET, as an ecumenical organisation that has been accompanying informal traders in their struggles in the inner city and surrounding areas, feels vindicated by the exposé on crook metro police officers.

When informal traders approached ESSET and asked that it walk with them in the struggles they encounter in their sector, we observed with distress the conditions under which they operated. This prompted the requisite to commission a factual survey on the conditions in which street traders conduct their business within the inner city and surrounding areas. The survey was thus conducted and its findings shared with traders and members of the public.

Featuring prominently in the findings of the survey report were: unbecoming behaviour of law enforcers against the street traders, which often led to clashes between metro police and the street traders; superfluous confiscation of stock by metro police; unavailability of trading sites; corruption of metro police; ambiguous trade regulations and their arbitrary enforcement as well as disregard for street traders to give inputs to policies that affect them.

The concern of the traders around harassment and maltreatment by law enforcers was not only related to confiscation of their stock, but also the manner in which this was done. The traders said when the police impound their stock, they are not to be kept secure and in hygienic places.

Issues of corruption are also a cause for concern, as one of the traders cries out "What is also worrying to us is that the police do not confiscate goods belonging to some street traders (mostly foreigners) because they get bribes from them and in return, they issue them with permits and licenses to continue to sell".

ESSET, is an ecumenical organisation based in Johannesburg committed to working for socio-economic justice