

## **Pupils refuse to resume classes after lightning killed 2 pupils [Zimbabwe]**

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The government has intervened and pleaded with learners at Chinatsa Secondary School in Marondera to resume classes after a bolt of lightning struck and killed two pupils, injuring 83 others, during a school assembly last week.

The traumatised pupils and their teachers are reportedly refusing to return to school fearing a recurrence of the incident.

Primary and Secondary Education deputy minister Paul Mavhima yesterday met parents of the affected children and teachers in a bid to convince them to resume lessons, as Chief Svosve pledged to perform rites to exorcise the institution.

Mavhima was accompanied by permanent secretary Sylvia Utete-Masango, Mashonaland East provincial education director, Christopher Chihota and a team of government counsellors.

"We are sorry for what transpired here. We lost two lives and a lot were injured. However, we are here to urge each other to look into the future," Mavhima said.

"Such incidents do happen, but we do not have to give up. We need to go forward. The recent incident is a thing of the past. Parents, teachers and students, please come back to our home, our school, so that we build the future of our learners.

"There are three things that are going to happen as we try to bring sanity to this school. Firstly, we have church leaders, who are going to do what they know, then come the traditional leaders, who will also perform their rites.

We have brought counsellors from our ministry, as well as clinical psychologists from the ministry of Health and Child Care, and I hope this will assist in us to rectify the current situation."

The government delegation later visited 12 of the 25 pupils still admitted at Marondera Provincial Hospital after sustaining serious burns in the incident. Chihota said he expects the students to resume lessons soon.

"We are here so that we engage both the parents and students and urge the parents to allow their children to return to school. We hope that after the meeting the school will re-open anytime from now," he said. Chief Svosve said traditional healers were ready to perform traditional rites to cleanse the school, and were just awaiting a government nod.