

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY
City Manager
Dr Michael Sutcliffe

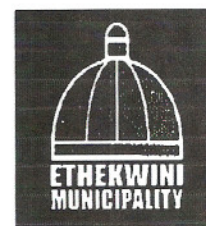
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Our Ref

Your Ref

Enquiries

12 October 2007

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions

ATTENTION: Jean du Plessis
Deputy Director

(033) 347 2306 fax

Urgent housing concerns and recent events in Durban.

Your letter dated 3 October 2007 refers.

Contrary to information brought to your attention that the eThekwin Municipality has been evading attempts to engage with the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement, the Municipality has in fact held several meetings with the movement. These meetings have not only been attended by senior officials but also by the Mayor himself.

What appears to be the root problem to the movement's current attitude towards the Municipality is that of distrust and suspicion. We can assure COHRE that this is merely the perception and is far from reality. The Municipality is open to discussion with the movement and deeply sympathetic of their plight along with the plight of hundreds of other communities residing in informal settlements within the Municipality. If we were guilty of not delivering on the housing mandate how is it possible that we have had the highest housing delivery rate over the past few years compared to other cities as well as managed to win numerous housing awards. The successful Slums Clearance Project initiated jointly with the Provincial Department of Housing bears testimony to the Municipality's proactive attempts to provide a better quality of life for those residents who were residing in high risk areas.

It should also be noted that we were the first municipality in the country to create a dedicated housing unit and a dedicated fund to assist with the implementation of projects. The Municipality has the interests of all its



"We care, we belong, we serve"

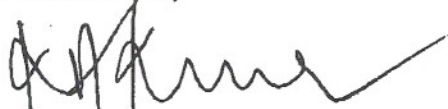
citizens residing in informal settlements at heart through the implementation of integrated and sustainable plans and will not be allowed to be held ransom by the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement which only represents a small proportion of the total informal community in the City.

Nevertheless the Municipality is committed to addressing the concerns of the movement and has already briefed an independent and local development agency to facilitate dialogue between the City and the movement. It is worth noting that the movement has also approached the very same agency for assistance. It is time that a developmental approach to this engagement rather than one of hidden agendas is pursued. We are confident that through this initiative we can jointly resolve concerns raised by the movement and move towards identifying practical and viable projects which will benefit the affected communities at large.

On the issue of the police response to the recent gatherings of the movement, according to reliable witnesses it was in fact the unruly behaviour of some of the marchers who provoked the police to respond in the manner that they did.

With regards to declaring a moratorium on evictions, the Municipality cannot accede to this. It will operate within the law and within the parameters of National and Provincial legislation. By sanctioning new shacks to develop in the City simply undermines due planning and budgeting processes and furthermore severely jeopardises the chances of those informal communities who have patiently waited for development to reach them.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michael Sutcliffe
City Manager

