



**STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH
AB AHLALI BASEM JONDOL O:
SOUTH AFRICA'S SHACK DWELLERS' MOVEMENT**

OCTOBER 2009

In 2008, delegates from 33 countries gathered in Durban to address the growing population of individuals and families living in slums and shacks around the world. Governments, non-profit organizations and shack dwellers came together to propose a partnership in favor of all poverty-trapped individuals in these circumstances. Just one year later, in September 2009, Durban experienced some of the most troubling acts of discrimination against the very individuals who were at the heart of this meeting in 2008: Abahlali baseMjondolo, South Africa's Shack Dwellers Movement, based at Kennedy Road. The recent violence against Abahlali is a grim reminder of the structural edifice that millions of the world's citizens confront in their daily struggles with poverty and deprivation.

Since 2005, Abahlali has lifted the voices of the thousands of people living in shacks along Kennedy Road and throughout Durban in the struggle to prevent these communities' further impoverishment and homelessness. Abahlali has spoken out against forced eviction, unclean drinking water and living conditions incongruous with the inherent dignity of all humanity. In doing so, they were claiming their right to participate in decisions impacting their lives, eloquently stating that nothing is for them without them. CiViSOL met two of Abahlali's inspiring leaders at the Poverty Initiative's Poverty Scholars' Leadership School in August 2009 and know them to be deeply committed to the tens of thousands of people in Durban whose right to rights have been compromised for too long.

The violence Abahlali has suffered since late September 2009 – and which has forced its leadership into hiding – is an attack on their safety, security and more troubling, their dignity as human beings. The injury, death, imprisonment and displacement that have resulted highlight the isolation that engulfs Abahlali and the shack-dwellers of Durban. They are so far removed from the public politic that their basic human rights, enshrined in South Africa's great Constitution, are no longer recognized or protected. Indeed, the structural inequalities that have manifested in these events show just how the poor are made more vulnerable through the very mechanisms that are charged with their protection.

Abahlali is not only fighting for the rights of the shack-dwellers in Durban, but for the rights of all individuals who have remained invisible and voiceless for too long. CiViSOL stands with Abahlali in this struggle and bears witness to the events on Kennedy Road.

In solidarity with our bothers and sisters in Abahlali baseMjondolo,

CiViSOL

Bogota, Cali, New York

The CiViSOL Foundation is dedicated to building civism and solidarity to advance systemic change from the inside out and bottom up. Please visit www.civisol.org for more information on how to get involved with CiViSOL and its various initiatives.