

Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statements and Memoranda

Volume Four

2018–2021





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4 October 2005 – 4 October 2026 · Twenty-one years of struggle

This is one of eight volumes that together collect the statements, memoranda, speeches and writings of Abahlali baseMjondolo, from the struggles that led to its founding on 4 October 2005 to its twenty-first anniversary on 4 October 2026.

This volume collects the press statements and memoranda of Abahlali baseMjondolo, together with a small number of letters and other documents issued by the movement, compiled from the archive at abahlali.org. They are reproduced as they were issued, in the order of their dates.

Telephone numbers and email addresses given for contact have been omitted, as has material added when the documents were posted online, such as links, updates and picture captions.

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3 JANUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Justice for Nqobile Nzuza

Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer on a road blockade in Cato Crest on 30 September 2013. She was seventeen years old and doing her matric. She joined the road blockade in protest against the brutal attacks on the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Manor by the eThekweni Municipality.

When impoverished people struggle for land and housing we are taken as criminals, as people who are beneath the law. We are treated as people who do not count, as people whose homes and property can be destroyed, and as people who can be subject to slander, assault, torture and murder with impunity.

The eThekweni Municipality continued to demolish people's homes in the Marikana Land Occupation even though there was a court order in place that prevented the Municipality from destroying people's homes. Many comrades were injured during this occupation. This is the same area where the chairperson of the local branch, Nkululeko Gwala, was murdered.

After a long struggle there was an arrest, a trial and a conviction for the murder of Nqobile. The police officer who was found guilty of the murder will finally be sentenced at the Durban Magistrate's court on 4 January 2018. Even though the conviction and sentence will not bring Nqobile back the movement and the family will find some closure in that justice will finally be served. It is also very important that we always struggle to resist the impunity that is usually granted to our oppressors. We have to insist that our lives must count the same as all other lives.

Today there is another land occupation, eNkanini in Cato Manor, which is being subject to illegal and violent evictions by the eThekweni Municipality. On the 24th of this month the movement will be going to court to hold both the Mayor and the City Manager personally liable for the continuous illegal and violent evictions in this land occupation.

Land is at the centre of our struggle. Land comes before housing. We cannot enjoy the right to the city unless we have access to well-located land. Since our

movement was formed in 2005 we have struggled for land from below and demanded that the state expropriate land in the interests of justice. We continue to support the expropriation of land in the interests of justice. However we do not believe that taking land from the white elite and giving it to a black elite will solve the problem of land.

Land is a basic need that all must have access to. It is a resource that is essential for people to live, to build and to produce food. Land is a question of life, a question of dignity and a question of justice. Land should not be bought and sold. It should be distributed on the basis of social need. A government that does not implement proper land reform is not a government that has taken the side of the people and the side of justice. A government that allows land to be bought and sold is an oppressive government.

We are calling on all progressive organisations and individuals that support the struggle to restore the land to the people to join the movement outside the Durban Magistrate's Court on 4 January as the police officer who murdered Nqobile is sentenced. We hope that the justice system will not let the country and militants around the country down. We hope that the sentence that will be given to this police officer will send a clear message to all those who continue to defame, assault, torture and murder people who are struggling for land from below that our lives count as all other lives count and that we cannot be oppressed with impunity.

In November last year a devastating fire ripped through the Foreman Road settlement leaving three people dead. On New Year's Eve the settlement burnt again. Around 80 homes were destroyed. We continue to be left to burn because we do not count as human beings to this society.

The struggle continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
George Bonono

12 JANUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Another Comrade Has Fallen in the Struggle for Land

Our movement has been facing a lot of brutality in the last three months. On 19 November our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation in Lamontville, Sibonelo Mpeku, was kidnapped and murdered. On 17 December 2017 Soyiso Nkqayini and Smanga Mkhize, were shot by unknown men in the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor. Comrade Smanga was seriously injured and Comrade Soyiso passed away.

Yesterday a young man, Sandile Biyela, was killed while escaping a brutal police attack on the Solomon Mahlangu land occupation.

The Anti Land Invasion Unit has been illegally and violently demolishing people's homes in this branch for months. The community decided to barricade the N2 so that they can be heard. The barricade took place yesterday. The comrades from our Solomon Mahlangu branch were supported in this action by comrades for our nearby Chris Hani and eNsimbini branches.

Instead of listening to the community the Municipality sent armed men, security guards and police officers, to attack them. Sandile was killed while running for his life from the police who were shooting at the protestors, and other people in the community, with live ammunition. The government has his body and we don't yet have the results of the autopsy. But we know for sure that he died while trying escape police officers firing live ammunition.

This government constantly talks about returning the land to the people but when we insist on our dignity and occupy land we are killed like dogs. Our lives do not count to this government.

On Monday we are returning to the High Court for the sentencing of the police officer who murdered Nqobile Nzuza (17) on a road blockade in Cato Crest in 2013. The sentencing of this police officer will send a clear message to those police officers who work for the politicians instead of the people that they will not enjoy impunity for their crimes. We call on all those who support the

struggle of the impoverished for land, dignity and an end to impoverishment to come and support the movement and the family on this day.

The movement hopes that on Monday justice will be served for the Nzuza family. This matter has dragged for too long and it has been a devastating time for both the movement and the family.

Thapelo Mohapi
George Bonono
Zandile Nsibande
Phumlani Magali

15 JANUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Police Officer Sentenced to Ten Years Imprisonment for the Murder of Our Comrade, Nqobile Nzuza

Today Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA came in numbers to the Durban Magistrate's Court to witness as Phulani Ndlovu, the police officer who murdered our 17 year old comrade, Nqobile Nzuza, in 2013 was sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

Leave to appeal was granted but the Magistrate refused to give bail. The police officer does not show any remorse and he maintained his innocence even though ballistic results proved that it was his gun that shot Nqobile from behind.

This matter has dragged on for too long and the family and the movement were going through a tough time.

The movement welcomes the fact that a sentence has been handed down however we do not feel that it pays proper respect to the life of Nqobile.

We continue to struggle for land and dignity, and to struggle against all attempts by all the forces of oppression to make our lives disposable.

We hope that the sentencing of this police officer will send a clear message to all hooligan police officers who see shack dwellers as criminals who are supposed to be shot at. Police officers must understand that if they accept to work for the politicians against the people they will not be protected. Justice may be slow but when there is a powerful movement justice will come.

This conviction and sentence will be celebrated by all the progressive movements struggling for the dignity of the impoverished.

Land, wealth and power must be shared. Impoverishment must be ended. The culture of contempt that results in impunity for those that vandalise our dignity and destroy our homes and lives must be ended. We will never compromise on the struggle to ensure that our lives count that same as all other lives.

Nqobile Nzuza's life and courage will not be forgotten in our movement. We will honour her life as we honour the lives of all our fallen comrades.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
George Bonono

23 JANUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Return to the High Court Tomorrow as Repression & Intimidation Continue

On 27 July last year our movement obtained a court order from the Durban High Court. It prevented the ANC led municipality from continuing with illegal and brutal evictions in seven land occupations. However the municipality continued with evictions in Cato Manor and New City, violating the court interdict because the middle classes did not want impoverished people living near to them. Many people were injured as a result of being shot at by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit.

Tomorrow we return to court to hold the Mayor and City Manager of the Municipality personally accountable for these illegal and violent evictions, carried out in direct violation of an order of the court.

Despite ongoing armed attacks on our land occupations from the Municipality our members have continued to occupy and to resist. However repression does not only come from the formal structures of armed power like the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, security guards and the police. It also comes directly from the structures of the ruling party, structures that are also often armed.

In the Foreman Road settlement the ANC continues with its repression of Abahlali members. In June last year the community took to the streets and protested for the provision of electricity, a lifesaving basic service. The police responded with violent brutality and a two-week-old baby, Jayden Khoza, lost his life when the police attacked people inside the settlement. Following this there have been a number of devastating shack fires, and more lives have been lost.

As a direct result of a long struggle by our movement over more than ten years electricity is now being installed in the settlement. However as usual the victories of our struggles are denied to us and the local ANC has captured this project for its own purposes.

Our Foreman Road chairperson Mqapheli Bonono is currently receiving death threats from the ANC after he raised questions about the lack of democratic inclusion and consultation with regard to this project. Comrade Bonono is currently in hiding fearing for his life. We wish to make it very clear that if anything happens to our comrade we will hold the ANC directly responsible.

We call upon all popular movements and progressive forces to support us in these trying times where we are faced with an arrogant and violent Municipality that has no respect for our lives, for our rights under the law or for basic democratic commitments. We are not deterred even though we are facing these attacks. We will be coming out in numbers tomorrow at the Durban High Court at 09:00 am.

The struggle continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

31 JANUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Death Threats at the eNkanini Land Occupation in Cato Manor

We continue to face serious intimidation and repression in our land occupations in Durban. Yesterday men driving Metro police vehicles, but not wearing police uniforms, arrived at the eNkanini Land Occupation in Cato Manor. They issued clear death threats.

The men were targeting our chairperson in the branch. They called his name and when he came out they told him that he will not last. They said that he needs to be killed in order to stop the occupation.

We are currently engaging the provincial Human Settlement Department to see if we can try and work towards an amicable solution in this matter. All our branches, across all the occupations in the city, will stand together against repression.

The intimidation that is taking place in Cato Manor is a tactic by the ANC led government to frighten impoverished people from occupying land in the city. Under the rule of the ANC the price of land for impoverished people is paid in blood.

We continue to take the view that the social value of land must be placed before its commercial value, and that democratically organised land occupations in the cities are a form of grassroots urban planning.

We will hold the land. We will defend our right to the city. We will stand firm with all our comrades facing repression.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Mlungisi Mokoena

4 FEBRUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

First General Assembly for 2018

Today, the 4th of February, the movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo will hold our first General Assembly of the year at the Prince Edward Hall, also known as the Surat Hindoo Association Hall.

The first Assembly of the year will discuss and plan the way forward for year ahead. This last three months of 2017 were tough for the movement. In Solomon Mahlangu Sandile Biyela died while running away from the police. Two comrades were murdered: S'bonelo Mpeku, the chairperson of Sisonke Village and member of the Provincial Council of KwaZulu-Natal, and Soyiso Nkqayini, the Youth league organiser of the new land occupation in eNkanini in Cato Manor.

We are seeing the fruits of our struggle in eNkanini. The provincial Departments of Human Settlements is intervening in the matter in eNkanini. We are currently engaging the Department on the interim services to be put in place in the settlement. They now recognise the settlement as legal.

The murders of S'bonelo and Soyiso were not the only killings of our members in 2017. In the same year Samuel Hloele was brutally murdered by the Anti Land Invasion Unit's security guards in the eKukhanyeni land occupation. In the Foreman Road Settlement a two week old baby Jayden Khoza died as a result of a vicious police on the community who were protesting for electricity. After more than ten years of struggle the electrification of the settlement has finally been won. But something is seriously wrong with a society in which the price for every advance for the impoverished must be paid in blood. We stand for life against the ANC's politic of death.

The strength of our movement and our struggle is rooted in the unity, organisation, determination and courage of the oppressed. We continue to expand our movement across Durban, and across South Africa, and to build alliances with comrades around the world. We have an established relationship with the MST, the movement of the rural landless, in Brazil and are very happy to currently be hosting the MTST, the movement of the urban landless in Brazil. They

are visiting our branches and we are discussing how we can join our struggles together, and organise and mobilise together.

Our struggle is rooted in the land occupations, the settlements and the streets. But we continue to explore all avenues for opposing oppression and keeping the space open to organise, occupy and resist. Last year the General Secretary of the movement attended the 30th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights held in Banjul, Gambia. We were able to tell the world about how ANC led municipality in Durban continues to kill the impoverished with impunity. We can confirm that the Special Rapporteur on human rights has written to president Jacob Zuma to answer about the killing of Abahlali in Durban.

We will continue to confront those who continue to murder our member with impunity. We will continue to fight for the impoverished people of this country, to organise, occupy and resist. Land, wealth and power must be shared. Dignity must be respected. We will speak the truth where it is not told. We are prepared to lay our lives for this course.

Our movement has achieved a lot in the past year. We are looking forward to further progress in 2018.

Thapelo Mohapi
George Bonono
Khunjuzwa

9 FEBRUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Launch a New Branch in Gauteng Province

The movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo will launch another new branch in Gauteng tomorrow. The new branch is in Tembisa, in the community of Vusimuzi. The launch will begin at 10 am.

Despite serious repression the movement has grown immensely in the last few years, and continues to grow rapidly.

As always the launch will include a strong political education programme. The political education is based on our living politics of Ubuhlalism, which is the movement's ideology that speaks to the fact that we are not poor but we that we are impoverished. It is a politic that speaks to the fact that we do not have water, and electricity and houses, and that land, wealth and power must be shared. It is a politic that starts from the fact that we still live like pigs in the mud in shacks of indignity in post-apartheid South Africa. It is a politic rooted in the capacity of the oppressed to build democratic organisation from below. It is a politic that understands that inkani will open the road towards popular democratic power and justice.

In the state that the country is in there is a great demand for our movement because the impoverished remain neglected, exploited and oppressed. We will also visit another branch in Johannesburg where a political education session will be held.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Mzwakhe Mdlalose
Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande

28 FEBRUARY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Good Hope Settlement in Germiston is Ready to Occupy if We Continue to be Ignored

Our movement now has five branches on the East Rand in Gauteng. We will be launching a sixth branch soon.

The Good Hope Settlement in Germiston is now twenty-two years old. Some people have lived their whole lives in the settlement waiting for the promises of land and housing to be fulfilled.

On the 8th of November last year residents of the Good Hope Settlement attended the Land Summit called by Gauteng MEC of Human Settlements Paul Mashatile. He told us that we must identify available land and that his Department would then sit and talk with us with a view to acquiring that land. The media report on the Land Summit said that:

Gauteng MEC of human settlements Paul Mashatile says the programme of giving people serviced stands where they can build for themselves will help address the problem of land invasion in the province.

Speaking at a media briefing during a land summit in Johannesburg on Tuesday, Mashatile said the allocation of serviced stands is an initiative to be run concurrently with other housing initiatives like RDP and mixed housing developments.

Mashatile called the summit to present his plan on serviced stands and get input from representatives of communities in Gauteng. He said giving people land would ease the pressure of providing a fully built house from government by sharing the responsibilities with people building their houses.

This, he added, would help curb land invasions. “I believe this approach will help us prevent land invasion because communities will see that we have a plan. That is why we invited community leaders to the summit.

We had already identified the available land that will be good for us as part of our programme of grassroots urban planning. After the Land Summit the MEC’s office mandated a delegation to work with us. On 22 November we met

with people from the Provincial Department of Human Settlements. Officials visited the land that we have identified. The geo-tech has been done and it has been confirmed that the land is good for housing.

However the officials have all gone silent now. The Province says that the problem is the Municipality. We have contacted Paul Mashatile directly but he has not responded to us.

We have been waiting for land and housing for twenty-two years. We have tried to engage the government at different levels but now all we are getting are delays, excuses and silence.

Everyone is ready to occupy now. If we do not get clarity on a process to access the land that we have identified by 15 March we will occupy that land.

Luyanda
Siyambusa
Nomnikelo

2 MARCH 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo to hold Solidarity Meeting in Durban

Our movement will be hosting a solidarity meeting in Durban with comrades from other organisations from 9:30 am till 6:30 pm on Saturday. The organisations that will be part of this meeting include the Housing Assembly in Cape Town, Ubunye bamaHostela in Durban and Abahlali baseMjondolo branches in Gauteng.

The main purpose of the meeting is to form a strong working alliance with comrades who are in the same struggle. We will also be discussing the land issue as it is suddenly on the national agenda these days. We note, as a starting point, that the ANC is now talking about expropriating land but since they came to power they have been repressing impoverished people who have occupied land. Our members have been assaulted, jailed, tortured and murdered by the ANC in the struggle for land. If this is not just more empty talk to get votes we have important questions about who land reform will benefit, what expropriated land will be used for, and how expropriated land will be managed.

The comrades from other organisations will visit two land occupations – the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest and the eNkanini Land Occupation in Cato Manor. They will also join us in our monthly General Assembly, which will run from 10:00 am till 2:00 pm on Sunday, and see how Abahlali practice democracy from below. Our General Assembly is a space where our membership is able to discuss issues facing our branches and build solidarity between branches.

Twenty-four years after apartheid millions of our people remain without land and housing. We continue to face serious repression when we organise ourselves to occupy land and take our place in the cities. That repression includes brutal evictions. The so called democratic government today does exactly what the apartheid and colonial governments did in the past. We do not

see that a democratic resolution of the land question is possible in rural or urban areas without a radical political project to build the democratic power of impoverished people from below.

Our movement will continue to encourage those who do not have land to occupy land, and to engage in grassroots urban planning and direct action to realise our right to the cities. This has been and will continue to be the expropriation of land from below. While the ANC led government is discussing the matter in Parliament we will continue to occupy and we will continue to struggle to hold the land that we have occupied.

While the politicians are busy being hypocrites in parliament the movement will continue to occupy and to hold land.

Occupy.

Resist.

Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Thembelani Maqwazima
George Bonono

8 MARCH 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo are under attack in eKukhanyeni

Abahlali baseMjondolo are once again under attack in eKukhanyeni in Marianridge. Our members decided to go to the eThekweni Municipality's department in numbers and demanded that they are provided with electricity. When they came back from that protest they found that their houses were being demolished by a private security company. When challenged a white man named Christopher who owns factories in the area claimed that the security company had been hired by the Land Bank.

Furthermore, three members of the movement were attacked by men driving in two unmarked vehicles. These comrades were seriously injured and are currently in hospital.

Abahlali decided to blockade a nearby road to show their anger at the government who does not respond to their needs, the actions of the security company and the men in the unmarked vehicles and who ever sent the security company and these men.

Until now it is still unknown who were the men who attacked our members and why 27 people were illegally rendered homeless. We are aware that the ward councillor in the area is very hostile to Abahlali and has vowed to ensure that the movement does not exist in his ward as long as he's still a ward councillor. Over the years many ward councillors have made similar statements. Two of them are now in prison and others have been removed from office. Our movement continues to grow in numbers and strength.

The reality is that we have people who are critically injured and families that have been rendered homeless by people who have no regard for the poor. We will get to the bottom of this matter and organise our strength to confront and repel this attack.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
George Bonono
Mr Ngcobo

13 MARCH 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Land Occupations are Urban Land Reform from Below but Sale of Land is Criminal

Abahlali are pleased to announce that there has been remarkable progress in the eNkanini settlement in Cato Manor over the past two weeks. The MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal Mr. Ravi Pillay has intervened in the brutal evictions and violation of a court interdict by eThekweni Land Invasion Unit. After several discussions with the Provincial government Abahlali has reached an agreement with the Province that violence cannot build our city, our province and our country. What has in fact been lacking is proper leadership on the side of the eThekweni Municipality. They believe in violence and disregard of the rule of law. As a result many activists have been injured, tortured, arrested and even killed despite the court interdict protecting 241 families that our movement has secured from the Durban High Court.

We have reached an agreement that the evictions in the eNkanini Land Occupation will be stopped. We have both negotiated in good faith to an extent that we began a registration process of all residents of eNkanini and that process has been concluded. We were very happy with this process because all families participated and no one was left out. We have also agreed that interim services such as water and sanitation will soon be installed in this settlement.

A Mr. Zondi has been caught by police selling piece of land in and around Cato Manor. We have heard that he has claimed to be part of Abahlali baseMjondolo. We do know Zondi. He approached us for assistance some time ago when the Land Invasion Unit was illegally destroying homes in Cato Manor. However we were later told that he had left back to his rural home in Msinga and that he had a house in Bonela. He has not been to any of our meetings since and we have had no further contact with him. He is not a resident of the eNkanini Land Occupation. His name does not appear on the list of people cited in the court order.

Our chairperson in eNkanini remembers that on the day that he was shot by the Land Invasion Unit, 17 April 2017, Zondi was holding a meeting elsewhere in Cato Manor and asking people to pay R200 to get the support of the movement. Zondi also told people that he has a relative in the Municipality that would ensure that people got help in exchange for a bribe. We have since heard of Zondi running meetings in different settlements claiming to be part of Abahlali and charging people money for pieces of land. We have made it clear to our members that he does not represent our movement and that he is engaging in dishonest and corrupt activities.

From the outset our movement has been militantly opposed to corruption. That includes all forms of corruption from above, such as the selling of government houses, something that has been rampant in Cato Manor. But it also includes corruption from below, such as selling access to land.

We do not believe that land should be bought and sold and we hold firm to our position that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. It is especially outrageous when people try to exploit the desperation of impoverished people by selling land to them. Our ongoing membership audit is not complete but, so far, it shows that we have currently have 44 294 members in good standing in 47 branches in good standing. All of our members and branches are made aware of our political positions when branches are launched, when we hold political education meetings and in branch meetings, assemblies, camps etc. Those positions include a clear rejection of the commodification of land and a clear rejection of all forms of corruption.

We have a democratically elected and legitimate branch of our movement in good standing in eNkanini and Zondi is not part of it. He has no claim to represent our movement and we reject his actions as firmly as those of the Municipal and party officials engaged in corruption. We welcome his arrest and hope that there will also be an effective prosecution and a conviction.

This is not the first time that individuals have falsely claimed to represent our movement. As we have noted before there have been cases in which NGOs have employed people and sent them to all kinds of meetings, including international meetings, while claiming that they are members of our movement whereas in fact they have never held membership in our movement.

We are also happy to hear that a police investigation may lead to the arrests of more people involved in this act of corruption. We remain committed

to the principle that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. Occupation, which is expropriation from below, is the organised de-commodification of land. Corruption that results in the selling of land and housing, whether from above or below, is the informal recommodification of land.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Smallboy Mokoena, eNkanini Chairperson

20 MARCH 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ANC Continues to Encourage Tribalism

Our movement is built from the unity of families, neighbours and communities in struggle. If you live in a land occupation you are from that land occupation irrespective of what language you speak, or the province or country in which you were born.

However the ANC continues to try and weaken the power of impoverished people by attempting to divide us according to the provinces and countries where we were born. The ANC constantly encourages tribalism and xenophobia, especially at the local level. In Durban it is normal for Ward Councillors in the eThekweni Municipality to openly discriminate against people from the Eastern Cape. There are many examples of this.

For instance people have been living in inhuman conditions in the Barcelona 2 ‘transit camp’ since 2007. When they were moved into the ‘transit camp’ they were promised houses in a nearby housing project. The promises made to them turned out to be lies and more than ten years later they remain stuck in terrible indignity. The ward councillor in the area does not recognise them. She has called them “AmaMpondo” and said that they are not entitled to benefit from housing projects that are meant for the Zulu community. She continues to say that they deserve to live like pigs in a pig sty because they do not belong in Kwazulu-Natal. Houses that were promised to the people of Barcelona are now occupied by the Umkhonto we Sizwe veterans and members of SANCO.

This is not unusual. For example in New City Ward 15 the Ward Councillor has openly said that those who come from the Eastern Cape must go back to their province because they are not entitled to any land in Kwazulu-Natal. Recently another the ANC ward councillor has blamed people from the Eastern Cape for the escalation in the number of shacks in the municipality.

These kinds of statements are also made by senior people in the ANC. There have been a number of occasions when this has been reported in the media. For example in 2013 the senior leadership of the ANC in the region accused the chairperson of Abahlali in Cato Crest of bringing people from the Eastern Cape

to occupy land in the province and blamed the government's failure to provide land and housing on people from the Eastern Cape moving into the Province. When the movement was attacked in 2009 in Kennedy Road the movement was accused of bringing people from the Eastern Cape into Durban. Highly discriminatory statements were made against people from the Eastern Cape by a senior leader in the party.

In Kennedy Road in 2009 local and more senior ANC leaders actively conspired to support violence against our movement that was justified in the language of tribalism. This continues. In November last year our branch chairperson was murdered in Sisonke Village in violence encouraged by the local ANC leadership. Today the community lives in fear as there are ANC people who go around saying that they are going to get rid of the "AmaMpondo" once and for all.

The ANC claims to be committed to the Freedom Charter which clearly states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it." Yet no action is taken against the many ANC leaders that openly try and encourage xenophobia and tribalism in order to divide and weaken impoverished people, and to blame impoverished people from other countries and provinces for their failures as the government.

People in Durban are not impoverished, and living without land and housing, because their neighbour was born in a different country or province. People are impoverished and denied land and housing because of a long history of oppression that is now being continued by the ANC.

Tribalism is a form of oppression and control. Unity is the foundation of our power and our capacity for resistance.

We are very concerned by the continuous perpetration of tribal violence that is encouraged by the ANC leadership in the municipality. We call on the ANC to clearly distance itself from tribalism. We have resisted the attempt to control and divide us via xenophobia and tribalism for more than ten years and we will continue to do so by building unity in struggle.

South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
George Bonono
Blessing Nyuswa

21 MARCH 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Brutal and Illegal Evictions Continue to Undermine our Human Rights in New City, Marianridge

Abahlali in New City in Marianridge are under attack following the City's continuous violation of a Durban High Court interdict. On Monday, 19 March, at about 17pm, the Isambulo security guards illegally and brutally evicted four families who are protected by the court order. This act angered residents who were then forced to resist. Three activists were seriously injured when the protest intensified during the whole day yesterday.

Sisi Nonhlanhla Zungu broke her leg while fleeing the police. Sibusiso Mngonyolo was shot with rubber bullets and sustained serious injuries. A one month old baby Dimpo Mohale inhaled tear gas as the police attacked activists in their homes (and not in the road where protest took place). The baby was admitted to hospital too. We remember last year that we lost baby Jayden Khoza as a result of police attack on activists in their homes in the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate. Comrade Noloyiso Ziyunguma was arrested and still in custody.

The protest continues today. Now as we speak as comrades are demanding the release of comrade Noloyiso. Her only crime has been to demand umhlaba wokuhlala "land for living".

Today, is supposed to be Human Right day on which we celebrate the achievement of Human Rights for all. The Human Rights written into the laws only exist on paper for people who are black and impoverished. In reality we are impoverished, our homes are destroyed, we are beaten, shot at, tortured, jailed and killed Today we are supposed to be celebrating the sacrifices made by many fallen heroes of our country. But the reality is that the ANC government has decided to continue where the apartheid state finished. We continue to be oppressed.

The ANC have decided that this Human Right day should be dedicated to its members, its volunteers and to the elites. It is most unfortunate that after twenty four years of democracy we are still hunted as wild animals. After twenty four year of democracy we have no land and we have no decent housing. After twenty four year of democracy we remain locked in shacks and in 'transit camps'. Clearly there are no human rights for the impoverished in this country. This day is now characterised by protests in many part of this country.

We note with great sadness that workers remain in deep poverty and are still struggling for a living wage while working hard for this country. Now new labour laws aim to undermine workers and strengthen the position of the bosses. We stand in solidarity with struggling workers today as they march in Johannesburg in search for decent and fair labour practice. We join their call and we say "scrap the new labour bills". We also stand in solidarity with our comrades from the Social Justice Coalition, Reclaim the City and many more who are currently marching in Cape Town for "land for living". They march for "umhlaba wokuhlala". We are saying your struggle is our struggle. We are aware that the system that confront us will require us to unite across different sections of our society. It will require the impoverished and working class to build revolutionary democracy and popular democratic power from below.

The Human Rights written on paper will not become a living reality without communities, movements and unions uniting to build a powerful and democratic mass movement from below for a just, equal and peaceful South Africa. Human dignity must be placed before profit.

Mqapheli Bonono
Dudu (New City Chairperson)
S'bu Zikode

8 APRIL 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ANC Government Forcefully Removes People in Tembisa

The community of Vusimuzi in Tembisa, Johannesburg, is facing a forced development by the Ekurhuleni municipality. The municipality is currently demolishing people's houses in the name of development. The reblocking project that is underway has been forced on the community. There has never been any consultation with the community with regard to this so-called 'development'. This is government thuggery against impoverished people. When a community is vandalised in this manner there is no chance for democracy. Is this the freedom which our people fought for? Is this how the ANC honour the struggle icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela?

We have always said that we do not oppose development in our communities. In fact, one of our slogans is 'Occupy. Resist. Develop'. However, we stand for participatory development, for radical democracy. Development must be a democratic project and not a top down project by government, local party structures, NGOs and experts.

Attempts to engage the Councillor in the area have failed. He has made it clear that he does not recognise our movement. The leadership in the area has also written to the Speaker in the Municipality requesting a meeting to resolve this matter. However there has never been any response from the Speaker as to whether she is prepared to discuss this matter with the community.

On Friday the Municipality continued to demolish people's structures without their permission. This is not 'development'. It is another state organised attack on impoverished people.

The community, assisted by comrades from another Abahlali, branch managed to resist these vicious attacks. If the attacks continue this week we will continue to resist.

Our lives, homes and communities continue to be vandalised by the very government that claims to want to return the land to the people. We must ask an

important question: who is counted as being part of 'the people', and who is not? It is clear to us that impoverished people are not included in this understanding of 'the people'. The very government that claims to restore the dignity of black people continues to attack and kill us when we occupy land for living.

We reject any so-called freedom when our lives, homes and communities are vandalised by the government in this manner. We reject any freedom when we still do not count as part of the people, or even as human beings, in the eyes of the government.

The ANC are our new oppressors. The struggle for land and dignity continues. We will continue to build democratic popular power from below, and to expropriate land from below. Our dignity is not negotiable.

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Thapelo Mohapi

11 APRIL 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Forced Development, Demolitions, Flooding & Threats in Vusimuzi, Tembisa

Councillor Seloane in Ward 90 has forcibly imposed a reblocking project in the Vusimuzi settlement in Tembisa. This settlement has been seriously neglected by the state for years and years. People are living in inhuman and dangerous conditions. There are not enough toilets and taps, no drainage and uncollected refuse everywhere. People have to make their own electricity connections. The place is infested with rats.

But instead of the government working with the community, in a democratic and participatory way, to develop the settlement into a safe and well organised community Cllr Seloane has forcibly imposed a top down form of development that has divided the community, destroyed some people's homes and possessions, and left many homes flooded in the recent rains.

Vusimuzi settlement was founded in 1995. There are thousands of shacks here, with up to 8 people living in each shack. In November last year people were forced to agree to the reblocking project. They were told that if they didn't sign they will be taken and left homeless on the street. This is intimidation, not participatory and democratic development. All of our letters to various officials and all our attempts to meet with the Councillor have been ignored.

The demolitions started in January. The demolishing of homes, as well as toilets, continued last week. Homes are not only being demolished to open space for roads. Sections of homes are also being demolished when they are said to be 'too big'. People have been told that the Councillor will open the space to new people. It is rumoured that the new people have paid the Councillor, or his followers, for this space. It has also been rumoured that access to the nearby RDP houses was allocated on a corrupt basis.

A total of 174 shacks, as well as a number of toilets, have already been demolished as a result of this project. As well as losing their homes, or parts of their homes, people have also had their property damaged. The demolitions

have also resulted in many homes being flooded as the water now runs where walls, homes or toilets have been destroyed. Some people have been told to rebuild, in much smaller spaces, over toilet holes left where toilets were demolished.

Gogo Ndebele has lived in Vusimuzi for 23 years. She came here from Bergville in KwaZulu-Natal. She works one day a week at a funeral company and looks after five grandchildren. Over the years she had slowly built a six-room shack with cement floors. The Councillor told her that her house is 'too big', that she has 'too much money' and that she 'must go and buy a house'. Four of the rooms in her home were demolished. She had to sleep outside for seven days. Since the demolition she is having heart pains and struggles to breathe sometimes. She can't sleep at night. She doesn't know who her new neighbours will be.

Ntombifuthi Nxumalo also had her home demolished. The construction workers trespassed in her yard and when she called the Councillor he said that he 'is not an informal settlements Councillor'. She refused the construction workers to destruct her shack but they promised to call the police. They gave her a smaller space. She went to Cash Build to buy rafters, zincs and nails but now it is raining and her washing machine and other stuffs are outside.

Nobubele Nkanga had her space reduced and three unknown people brought into her yard. They opened a street behind her yard and water has rushed in to her home. She has nowhere to keep her stuff, like her washing machine. Her daughter has had to move out of her shack due to lack of space. Families are being separated.

On Friday they attempted to continue with the demolitions. The Councillor, a representative from Human Settlements, a construction company and the police were present. Although there is no court order and so these demolitions are illegal the police intimidate people and threaten to arrest anyone who resists the demolition of their home and damage to their property. We mobilised to the stop the demolitions. Our mobilisation including closing the roads and burning tyres.

A community meeting was called on Sunday but the Councillor refused to engage with people at the meeting saying that people were signing, and that he couldn't address a meeting if Abahlali baseMjondolo were present. This is

not democracy. Yesterday, and on Monday, we marched on the Councillor. He refused to engage us.

They have threatened to return today to continue the demolitions. We estimate that around 200 homes are at risk. If they do return we will oppose the demolitions with direct action. We are also seeking legal support.

We are human beings, not dogs. We insist that all development must be participatory, democratic and free from corruption. If there is a good reason why people must move then this must be discussed and decided democratically and not imposed from above with threats and intimidation. People who need to move must be given alternative land with basic services including water, electricity and sanitation. Those who have had their homes demolished and their property destroyed must be compensated. Development that is carried out at gunpoint is oppressive and not democratic.

Mr. Mkhonto, Deputy Chairperson, Vusimuzi, Thembisa
 Mr. Moloi, Addittional Member, Vusimuzi, Thembisa
 Ms. Mangcobo, Treasurer, Vusimuzi, Thembisa
 Nomnikelo Sigenu, Secretary, Good Hope, Germiston
 Siyambusa Mpolase, Deputy Secretary, Germiston
 Thapelo Mohapi, General Secretary, National

20 APRIL 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

UnFreedom Day 2018

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will hold its annual Unfreedom Day Rally on 22 April 2018 at the Springfield Park Sports Ground from 10:00 a.m.

We reject any so-called ‘freedom’ without access to land; the right to the cities; basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity; decent housing; accessible quality education; safe and affordable public transport; proper health care; safety in the streets and in our homes; and the right to participate in all decision making that affects our lives and communities. For as long as we, the majority of black people, are still living below the breadline we are not free. Land and wealth must be shared fairly.

For as long as we remain excluded from decision making we are not free. Democracy must be extended into everyday life – into communities, workplaces and political organisations. Repression must be stopped and everyone must be able to organise and speak freely everywhere.

For as long as the ruling party actively encourages discrimination based on where people were born, and what languages they speak, we are not free. A neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade without regard to the province or country in which they were born, or the language that they speak.

For as long as women are not safe and respected, whether in the streets, at work or in their homes, we are not free. For as long as women are excluded from decision making we are not free. We are committed to building women’s power in struggle.

For as long as workers are exploited we are not free. We need to build a progressive bloc that can unite organised workers, communities and movements in struggle.

We cannot lie to ourselves and say that we are free when those who are occupying land in order to live are tortured, harassed and murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, the Red Ants and Law Enforcement, as well as the ruling party. We must be honest. In 2018 we are still oppressed. We are still being

murdered in the struggle for land and dignity. Our lives still count for nothing in the eyes of the state.

We first called for the expropriation of land in 2005. Since then we have occupied and held land in numerous occupations at great cost. Our members know that the cost of land for impoverished black people is paid in suffering, blood and life. Knowing this our members continue to occupy and to hold land.

Today the ruling party speaks the language of Expropriation of Land without Compensation. But there are no clear answers to all the questions that arise: Who is doing the expropriation? Which land is going to be expropriated? Who will be given the land that is expropriated? Will it be politicians, the rich, traditional authority or impoverished people? What will the expropriated land be used for? How will the expropriated land be governed?

Private property was imposed by colonial conquest. Will there be a redistribution of private property from white to black owners? Will land be placed under the authority of chiefs who are no longer chiefs by the people but are now oppressors of the people? Or will land be placed under democratic and collective forms of ownership?

Our members have repeatedly stated and shown that they are willing to die for land. Yet the same people who are willing to suffer and to sacrifice their lives in the struggle for land, the same people who are actually occupying land, are not included in this new discussion about land.

We reject the new position that has been taken on the land question by the ANC as a lie to lure votes, a lie by an oppressive ruling party that has lost credibility among impoverished black people. If the ANC want to be seen as being on the side of the people they must immediately stop their on-going repression of land occupations and recognise that the land occupations in the cities are a form of urban planning from below. They must recognise that justice requires that the social value of land, land for living, is placed before its commercial value. They must support land occupations.

We will continue to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below. We will continue to build women's power in the democratic movement from below. We will continue to make alliances with other popular organisations and struggles in South Africa and internationally to build a powerful and democratic movement from below for real freedom. We will continue to occupy land for living and survival.

We will make two major announcements that will be of interest to the media during UnFreedom Day. We have now concluded a long process, involving thousands of people in numerous discussions over many months, to arrive at a collective position on the land question. We will announce our position on the land question during UnFreedom Day. We have also been undertaking a membership audit. We will also announce the audited figure of our members in good standing.

Freedom without dignity is meaningless. Therefore Freedom Without Land Means Nothing.

Revolutionary democracy will make the path that will take us forward.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

24 APRIL 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Continues to Grow and to Occupy and Hold Land

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA held a successful UnFreedom Day Rally in Durban on Sunday. Abahlali came in their numbers to mourn the freedom that was fought for so hard by millions of impoverished and working class people and yet now serves a small elite, including a few people who are connected to the ruling party.

UnFreedom Day is a call to government and the general public that many South Africans, including shack dwellers, remain in crushing impoverishment and unemployment in a deeply unjust society. In his opening speech Abahlali President S'bu Zikode recognised and saluted those who came before us in struggle, and those who paid the ultimate price for freedom for all.

On the day which brought together more than 5 000 Abahlali and other activists two important announcements were made by the President of the movement. The first announcement was that Abahlali membership has grown immensely in the past years. Our membership audit is not complete and there are still more than ten branches that have not yet been audited. But our audited membership has now reached 50 000 members in good standing. Women have always been in the forefront of our struggle for dignity and the membership audit has confirmed that 60% of our members are women. The movement's strength has meant that even those who did not want to recognise us in the beginning now respect us.

The second announcement was on the movement's stance on the land issue. In recent months hundreds of Abahlali members have participated in various discussions that have been held at branch level for us to formulate a collective position from below on the land question. We know that when political parties talk about "expropriation of land without compensation" they only mean land to make profit, they mean agricultural or farm land to make money for themselves. They mean land for mining, industries, mines and mega projects

like malls etc. They do not mean land to build houses for the homeless and the impoverished. And of course they say nothing about land for living (umhlaba wokuphila). Therefore, our stance as a movement is that land is a precious gift from God and must be shared equally. We believe that land must be used by all to live, survive and thrive. We believe that the re-emergence of the land question is a political agenda by the ruling party to campaign for votes in the 2019 elections. The ANC has lost credibility with millions of people. Now they want to regain that lost credibility by re-introducing the land question, something they should have discussed 24 years ago. We know that the new talk about expropriating land is about taking land from the white elites and giving it to black elites. Impoverished people are still being brutally driven off urban land occupations. The movement has been occupying and using land for living since 2005. Our principle is that the Social Value of land must come before its Commercial Value. Land must be collectively owned and democratically managed.

If the ANC government is serious about land reform they must best demonstrate that by transferring the land which shack dwellers have already occupied to the residents of those occupations and give some form of certificate as some form of tenure security. All evictions must come to an end.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the movements and organisations that supported us during the UnFreedom Day Rally. We are committed to building unity and solidarity with struggling communities and movements elsewhere.

However we would like to express our disappointment to some of the media who will only report on our struggles when we barricade roads, as if our struggle are a traffic issue, but do not see an open and legitimate public gathering of thousands of organised impoverished people as newsworthy. We will always support media freedom against the politicians but it is very disappointing that the lives, organisations and politics of impoverished black people continue to count for very little to most of the media.

We would like to express our solidarity to Amadiba Crisis Committee who were fighting for the land of their ancestors in Gauteng High Court. We know how much pain these comrades went through. We are glad that the spirit of comrade Bhazooka is still with them.

We are also in solidarity with the bus workers who are currently on strike as they are working under difficult conditions and are paid peanuts while their

employers are getting high cheques. And we are in solidarity with the national shut down tomorrow in protest at the new labour laws.

For as long as the rights of impoverished people – including shack dwellers, the unemployed, workers, farm dwellers, hostel dwellers and rural people – are still undermined, we will continue to organise and resist in defence of our dignity. It is not yet uhuru.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

12 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A New Land Occupation in Germiston

Last night more than two hundred people occupied unused land in Germiston, on the East Rand in Gauteng. We laid out our design for the occupation in the afternoon, built throughout the night and slept on the occupied land. Around 350 stands have been marked out via a democratic and carefully planned process. The new occupation has been named the Zikode Extension in honour of S'bu Zikode.

On the 8th of November last year residents of the Good Hope Settlement in Germiston attended the Land Summit called by Gauteng MEC of Human Settlements Paul Mashatile. He told us that we must identify available land and that his Department would then sit and talk with us with a view to acquiring that land.

We had already identified the available land that will be good for us as part of our programme of grassroots urban planning. After the Land Summit the MEC's office mandated a delegation to work with us. On 22 November we met with people from the Provincial Department of Human Settlements. Officials visited the land that we have identified. The geo-tech has been done and it has been confirmed that the land is good for housing.

But then the officials all went silent. We contacted Paul Mashatile directly but he did not respond to us. In February Abahlali baseGood Hope in Germiston issued a statement making it clear that we would occupy unused land if we continued to be ignored.

Despite numerous attempts to engage the politicians they have continued to ignore us. This is why we have now occupied.

The police arrived this morning with big guns and destroyed all the structures that had been erected during the night. They stole our zincs and burnt our poles. They also threw some children's school bags containing food and phones into the fires. Some of the police officers were very rude to us, swearing at us and insulting us. One white police officer called one of our comrades a 'baboon'.

A journalist was pushed around and threatened. We marched behind the police truck until they left.

After the police left a few young men in EFF regalia arrived. They told us that we must go because they want this land. We are not going anywhere.

We occupied because we are sick and tired. We are sick and tired of being ignored. We are sick and tired of living in dirty, overcrowded conditions, with rats and in shacks that flood every summer. Some of us have lived in these terrible conditions in the Good Hope settlement for more than twenty years. We cannot rent our whole lives. We cannot live in such unhealthy and dangerous conditions, and without electricity and toilets, for our whole lives. We want our children to be healthy and safe. We want to live with dignity. We want land and housing. Some of us have lived in the city our whole lives, and are no longer young, and yet we have never owned a piece of land. We don't want to die without leaving something for our children.

We are sick and tired of getting food parcels and lies from the politicians at election time. We want land and dignity.

After our shacks were destroyed by the police we decided to continue to resist by rebuilding. All the occupiers have given R10 each so that we can buy more materials and build one structure that we will all sleep in tonight. If the police continue to demolish we will continue to rebuild.

The politicians and the police take us as a joke. We take our lives seriously.

Some people are afraid of the Councillor and the ANC. But we have decided to use people power now. This is our long journey.

Siyawuthatha umhlaba!

Siyahlala kumhlaba!

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Siyambusa Mpolase

13 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali continue to resist on the Zikode Extension Land Occupation on the East Rand in Gauteng

Abahlali baseMjondolo in Gauteng who are currently in occupation of formerly unused land in the East Rand continue to resist in the midst of the continuous demolishing of their structures by the metro police. Today the metro police arrived at the occupation and demolished and burnt again.

We continue to resist. We will not move. We are demanding to be addressed by the premier David Makhura. We have been promised this land by the then MEC of Human Settlements in the province, Paul Mashatile. We are sick and tired of empty promises. We want to hold the Gauteng government accountable for the land that they have promised to us.

We know that our struggle for land has been reduced to criminality. We are not invaders, land grabbers or anarchists. We occupy land for our survival. We occupy land for living. For too long we have been living in shacks of indignity. For too long we have been living like pigs in the mud. For too long black people have been denied access to land by the colonial system. We were further deprived of the right to the cities by the apartheid system.

We have been patient for long enough. We have waited for the ANC led government to give us access to land and to democratise the cities since 1994. Now it is the time for us to occupy this land and to take our place in this city, because nothing will not be given to us. The ANC has clearly failed to distribute land to us.

When we occupy land we are encouraging a democratic urban planning process from below. We will continue to occupy vacant land for the benefit of the impoverished people of this country. Those who are in need of land must organise in democratic structures, build their power and occupy. We continue to believe in the principle that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. Those who are occupying land so that they can sell it or rent it

out do not represent us. We believe that land must be occupied for survival, for living and thriving.

Instead of addressing the issue of the land, and democratising the cities, the ANC led government sends police to attack those who are occupying land. If the ANC was serious about the land question, and the urban question, they would support this occupation, and other democratically organised occupations.

We would like to thank all the comrades who are supporting the land occupation in Germiston. We are not deterred. Our spirits are high as we enter the third night on the occupation. We are unshaken by the metro police. We will hold this land.

Thapelo Mohapi
Nomnikelo Sigenu
Siya Mpolase

16 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to present our views on the 2018 budget Dialogue to the Standing Committee on Appropriation

Abahlali will in this morning present our views on the budget as it relates to the landless and the homeless in this country. This is after an invitation by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa's Standing Committee on Appropriation. This will be the first time that Abahlali are ascending to the highest forum in electoral politics to express our views on the budget. None of the cities in which we have members have ever invited us to contribute to their deliberations.

Every year the budgets are made without our consultation and are imposed on us by government at all levels. We were surprised this time around, after 13 years of our struggle, including severe repression, when we received an invitation from Parliament to participate not when the budget is announced but where it is discussed. Every year government announce trillions of Rand in expenditure but there is never any participatory budgeting. Year after year huge amounts of money are spent and we remain impoverished, unemployed, landless and homeless. We always ask ourselves as to who benefits from the millions of rands announced year after year.

Last week, on Friday, 11 May, Abahlali were also invited to the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature by the MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works during his budget speech vote. While we have appreciated the MEC's invite to our movement we have expressed serious concerns for just inviting us only when he delivers the budget, and not to discuss its formulation with us, so that we put our view on it. The difference between these two invitations was that the KZN invitation was merely an observer status. Here we were made to sit quietly while "clever politicians" were discussing our budget, for us and about us but without us saying a word. We have warned the MEC that we cannot continue to attend

something that is not for us and that does not in any way change our lives for better in this so called Constitutional Democracy.

We are happy that the Standing Committee on Appropriation has finally recognise our voice. We hope that they will take seriously the fact that our Municipalities do not even invite us to participate but continue to claim that the budgets that they impose on us are 'People's Budget's. We also hope that the Provincial governments will take our movement's voice seriously to ascertain our priorities.

We have made the following budget contributions to the Standing Committee on Appropriation:

1. That land which we have occupied be released first, and that the budget, if communicated properly to us, will deal with security of tenure

- This could be in a form of certificates or documents which will free people from any possible eviction.

- If this is catered for people will start investing on the land and start developing it for themselves.

2. That serviced sites must be provided on well located land for those who may be able to build for themselves to do so.

3. That the state must urgently poll out interim services such as electricity, road access, refuse collection, water and sanitation while people wait for decent housing.

4. That there must be a proper budget for disaster management especial for shack fires, floods etc.

5. That there must be all open and free public participation in all matters relating to budgeting, and not just for ticking the box but genuinely democratic engagement.

- Abahlali are not consulted just because we are taken as the people who do not even count in our society.

- The authorities do not even respect us.

- In many instances the problems that we face are not just a question of budget constraints but how we are treated by the authorities

6. We are in most cases excluded from the IDP, even those of us who have had the opportunity to participate in IDP find that whatever we say is not taken into account. In Siyanda for instance, they pretended to be recording everything we have said as the community but come the IDP nothing that the community said

was actually captured and reflected on the IDP. So, the question is what was the point of calling for public hearings when the community voice will not be taken seriously? Development is often undemocratic and sometimes even carried out at gunpoint. In Thembisa, Vusimuzi Section, the Ekurhuleni municipality and its councilor Cllr Sloane, in Ward 90 destroyed many homes in what he called re-blocking and development.

7. Our municipalities are very good at publishing the budgets only when it is time to announce it to public forums and not when they are being discussed. So, often the budget are imposed from above. They should use the same energy of announcing it to actual mobilize us to engage and give input to it.

In eThekweni, the eThekweni Municipality has consistently deliberately excluding Abahlali and shack dwellers in general not only in any housing development benefits but also from other benefits e.g. EPWP as a form of punishment for our activism against corruption, inequality and injustices. We want the Parliament to investigate the systematic exclusion of impoverished South Africans from decision making and to ensure there is a real commitment to redistribute urban land on the basis that puts people before profit. The social value of urban land must come before its commercial value.

We would like to express our full solidarity with our comrades on the Zikode Extension Land Occupation in Germiston on the East Rand. They are now in the 6th day of their occupation and are struggling courageously for land. Inkani iyo ezovula ndlela.

We would also like to express our full solidarity with the people of Palestine and our outrage at the mass murder that has been perpetrated by the Israeli state.

Finally we would like to express our full solidarity with migrants facing renewed xenophobic intimidation in Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode

17 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Unprovoked police attack on the Good Hope Settlement in Germiston

Yesterday afternoon all the shacks on the Zikode Extension Land Occupation were demolished again. Tonight a large number of police officers, from various units, including a SWAT team, launched an unprovoked, violent and brutal attack on the nearby Good Hope Settlement in an attempt to prevent people from moving back to the occupied land. Rubber bullets were fired and tear gas was used. Individuals were targeted and threatened. There has been at least one confirmed arrest.

This is an emergency statement. Events are still unfolding, the police are still occupying the settlement and people are currently scattered and in hiding. We have not been able to account for everyone or to hold a meeting. Full details will be available tomorrow morning when people have been able to regroup.

Today is day six of the occupation. The struggle for land and dignity continues.

Nomnikelo Sigenu

21 MAY 2018

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali took to the streets in Cato Crest this morning

Today at 3 am Abahlali baseMjondolo in Cato Crest took to the street and blockaded Vusi Mzimela Road and the Jan Smuts Highway.

For a long time the community has been side-lined by the Ward Councillor when it comes to providing basic services, including those which are urgently required for basic human dignity and safety. The community has been living in the area without electricity, proper water and toilets. People are raising children in these dangerous conditions.

Earlier this year the current Mayor Zandile Gumede promised to speed up the process of providing electricity and sanitation in the settlement. These were empty promises. Politicians continue to lie to people to get their votes and then send in the police to attack people when they demand what was promised to them in the first place by politicians.

This is the very community where we lost Nqobile Nzuza, a 17-year-old girl who was brutally murdered by the police. This is the community where Nkululeko Gwala, the chairperson of Abahlali in the area, was assassinated. The Municipality continues to defy Abahlali. They don't regard the people of Cato Crest as human beings. We are seen as rubbish. The politicians are only interested in our votes, they are not interested in our dignity, or even our lives.

The protest forced the officials from the Municipality arrived to address the community. The community were very clear that the politicians were continuing their lies.

The community in Cato Crest is sick and tired of being lied to by politicians. They want services to be provided to them now. Instead of providing services the Municipality continues to try and weaken the community by dividing them. They say that people from Eastern Cape must go back to 'their province' if they

want services. This is outrageous and we will never accept it. South Africa belongs to all who live in it. If you live in an occupation you are from that occupation.

We have given the Municipality seven days in which to respond to the demands made during today's protest failing which we will make the entire Cato Manor ungovernable.

It is not our intension to cause disruption and chaos. All we want is to live dignified and safe lives. The problem is that the politicians continue to lie to the people while forcing them to continue to live in undignified and life-threatening circumstances. It is the disrespect of the politicians for impoverished people that leads people to react in the way that they do.

If the politicians want to stop the protests they must not send in the police. That will only make the people even more angry. The way to stop the protests is to engage people respectfully and to build a genuinely participatory democracy.

For as long as our dignity continues to be violated by the municipality we will continue to fight. We are not frightened by police who threaten us with guns. When it comes to our dignity we don't fear anything. We cannot compromise on our dignity as human beings.

Contact persons:

Ndabo Mzimela
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

22 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Assassination in eKukhanyeni, Marianhill, Durban

We will be able to provide more details on this assassination in the coming hours. Right now comrades are rushing to the family home.

Ndumiso Mnguni, who was shot by the security detail for the Anti-Land Invasion Unit earlier today in the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate, is still in hospital, fighting for his life.

Under the rule of the ANC the price for land and dignity continues to be paid in blood. They are our oppressors. We will not retreat.

The struggle continues.

S'bu Zikode

22 MAY 2018

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Attack on Abahlali by the City continues

The armed forces working for the eThekweni Municipality continue to relate to impoverished black people in the city like an army of occupation, especially when poor people are organised outside of the ruling party. Today at 11 am the notoriously violent Anti-Land Invasion Unit demolished Mr Ndumiso Mnguni's house in our Foreman Road branch. This was a brazenly illegal and criminal act.

When Mr. Mnguni went into the house to remove his possessions he was attacked and shot at by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit security. As we release this statement Mr Mnguni is in theatre in a critical condition. The doctors are trying to remove the bullet in his stomach. We are praying that the mighty God saves his life.

The very surprising part is that the only house that was demolished in Foreman Road is that of Mr. Mnguni which is in the middle of the settlement.

It's almost a year since two weeks old baby Jayden Khoza from Foreman Road was killed after he inhaled a teargas when police attacked the community. Recently our comrades in the Good Hope settlement in Germiston, in Gauteng, were also subject to a police attack in which teargas was recklessly thrown into a community resulting in a baby having serious breathing difficulties. Our lives count for nothing to this government.

We continue to be oppressed and violently attacked when we stand up for our lives and dignity. The police, and the security that work with the Anti-Land Invasions Unit continue to tell brazen lies about their violence against us. A young man is fighting for his life in hospital as a result of the everyday violence of a government that has no regard for the poor. We, the poor, continue to die at the hands of a government that calls itself democratic. They speak of the expropriation of land without compensation yet they shoot and kill poor people with impunity when we occupy land and insist on our human dignity. How hypocritical of the ANC!

We are praying for Mr Mnguni. We are with his family at this time. No matter how many times we have lost comrades in our movement we can never get used to it. A life is important no matter how poor that person is. Every human life must count as a life.

We are about to hold an open assembly in the community to take a collective decision on the way forward.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

24 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statement on the Assassination of S'fiso Ngcobo

On Saturday our branch in eKukhanyeni, in Marianhill, held a very successful and well attended assembly. On Tuesday night, at around 7:30 pm, our chairperson in the branch, S'fiso Ngcobo, stepped out of his home to buy a cooldrink from a shop in a container next to his home. He had received death threats and was aware that it was not safe to be out at night. But the container was just a few meters from his home. He was shot, multiple times, by a group of unknown men. The police were called. They took more than three hours to arrive even though the local police station is nearby. Despite the danger large numbers of comrades immediately gathered at Ngcobo's home.

eKukhanyeni is a land occupation, in an area formerly known as eMasenseni, in Marianhill. We have another branch in the area, in an occupation called New City in Marianridge. Tensions have been escalating in the Marianhill area, which includes Marianridge, for some time. The hostility to our movement comes from the leaders of the local ANC, as well as local business interests who depend on the ruling party for tenders.

We have consistently raised concerns about the conduct of the Ward Councillor, who is also named Sifiso Ngcobo, and is known as Nadar. He is related to Mduduzi Ngcobo (Nqola), who was the Councillor in nearby KwaNdengezi, and is currently serving a prison sentence after being convicted for the 2014 murder of Thuli Ndlovu, the Abahlali baseMjondolo chairperson in KwaNdengezi.

In April last year we issued a statement noting our concern about illegal and violent evictions in the area and the conduct of Nadar, the Ward Councillor, who "told the people who have been illegally evicted to go back where they come from. He said that the Sotho must go back to the Basotho Land and the Xhosa people must go back to the Eastern Cape."

We also noted that when people took to the streets in protest they were shot at by the police who were clearly acting in support of the Councillors in the area. We noted that "The Councillors have openly told the community that they will be wasting their time if they open cases with police. The police have confirmed this by telling the people that they will not waste state facilities by opening unnecessary cases. The evictions and assaults were illegal and criminal acts but the

police are not enforcing the law, they are enforcing the illegal oppression of the Councillors.”

In September last year we launched a branch at the New City occupation. The launch was used to celebrate the struggle that had won the land. In October last year we issued a statement noting our concern that “In Marianridge the ward councillor is intimidating and threatening members of Abahlali. One of our members, Bongiwe Khomo, was intimidated by the Ward Councillor Sifiso Ngcobo also known as ‘Nadar’. He told her that if she continues to wear the Abahlali t-shirt she will have to leave the area. He has set a law that Abahlali t-shirts must not be worn in the Ward and in the taxi ranks. Members of Abahlali pay extra for taxis just because they are wearing Abahlali t-shirts. Once again an ANC councillor thinks that they have the right to suppress the basic democratic rights of the poor.”

In March this year we issued a statement noting that after another illegal eviction in eKukhanyeni, this time by a private security company and in violation of an interdict from the Durban High Court, “three members of the movement were attacked by men driving in two unmarked vehicles. These comrades were seriously injured and are currently in hospital.” As protests escalated Nonhlanhla Zungu broke her leg while fleeing the police and Sibusiso Mngonyolo was shot with rubber bullets and sustained serious injuries.

If the ANC had any concern for the lives of impoverished black people they would have responded to these statements, and the protests organised by our members, and organised an urgent investigation into their political leadership in the Ward, and the police. But they did nothing. This is not the first time that we have repeatedly raised the alarm about violent authoritarianism and intimidation by local structures of the ruling party, only to be met with silence by the ruling party, and then to have one of our comrades assassinated. This is exactly what happened when Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated in 2014. In that case women in our movement even occupied the City Hall to warn the Municipality and the politicians that Thuli’s life was in danger. But the Municipality, the politicians and the ANC did nothing and Thuli was murdered in her home.

In 2009 our members were openly attacked by the ANC, with the support of the police, and driven from their homes in the Kennedy Road settlement. Leading figures in the ruling party supported that attack, including Willies Mchunu. Since 2013 our movement has suffered a number of assassinations and killings.

In March 2013, Thembinkosi Qumbela, who was not a member of our movement but did support a land occupation that our members also supported, was

assassinated in Cato Crest. In June the same year Nkululeko Gwala, our Chairperson in Cato Crest, was also assassinated. In September that year Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer during a protest in Cato Crest. She was 17 years old. After a long struggle the police officer that murdered her was convicted of murder. In September 2014 Thuli Ndlovu was murdered by two ANC Ward Councillors. After another long struggle the two Councillors were convicted of murder and are now serving their sentence. In June last year we lost two weeks old baby Jayden Khoza after he inhaled teargas when police attacked the community in Foreman Road. In the same month Samuel Hloele was murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit in what was then eMasenseni and is now the eKukhanyeni land occupation. In November our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation in Lamontville, Sibonelo Mpeku, was kidnapped and murdered. On 17 December 2017 Soyiso Nkqayini and Smanga Mkhize, were shot by unknown men in the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor. Comrade Smanga was seriously injured and Comrade Soyiso, the Youth League organiser in the occupation, passed away. In January this year Sandile Biyela, was killed while escaping a brutal police attack on the Solomon Mahlangu land occupation.

When we formed our movement in 2005 it was clear that our lives did not count to the government, the ruling party or to the elites in this society. We knew that we were being left to live like pigs in the mud and to burn in the shack fires. When our resistance started to become a threat to the NGOs we learnt that we were also people that could be lied about with impunity. When our resistance started to become a threat to the ruling party we learnt that we were also people that could be killed with impunity. We have learnt that for us the price for land and dignity is paid in blood.

Comrade Ngcobo was a brave and honest leader held in high respect in his community and in the movement. He led the occupation in eKukhanyeni, founded a creche and campaigned for the development of the area. He resisted in difficult times. When Samuel Hloele was murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit Comrade Ngcobo was there and led from the front. We have lost a cadre and a leader in Comrade Ngcobo. We will bury him with the dignity that he was denied in life and we will make sure that his memory is honoured.

The struggle for land and dignity continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

26 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Death Threats by Armed Men Against Leaders in the Zikode Extension Occupation

Today is day 16 of the Zikode Extension Land Occupation on the East Rand, between Boksburg and Germiston. Many of us are sick after 15 nights on the land. Some of us are still carrying wounds from the brutal police assault on 17 May. Our shacks have been repeatedly destroyed and the building materials burnt or confiscated. Cars used to transport the materials to the occupation have been impounded. We are also facing death threats. Armed men, unknown to us, are looking for our leaders.

In many cases people having been living in the shacks that have been demolished. There is no court order authorising these demolitions and they are therefore illegal and criminal acts by the police and the Municipality. The police are also guilty of abuse and assault. On 17 May when they tried to stop us from moving back to the occupation from the Good Hope settlement they attacked us with rubber bullets, tear gas and bricks. People were attacked while they were running away and hiding. A baby in Good Hope had seriously difficulty breathing as a result of the teargas. Babies have died from teargas in Durban and in Palestine. We could have lost this baby too. When a woman fell as she was running from the police Siyambusa Mpolase, our Deputy Secretary, turned back and ran to help her. He was arrested. The police shouted "This is the dog we have been looking for." They kicked him and beat him with the back of their guns. They then took him to another place, a dark place, in their van. When they got there, they continued to beat him with the back of their guns. After that they took him to the police station.

The police have made it clear to us that they are being instructed to attack us, our homes, and the occupation by Geoffrey Mthembu, the ANC Ward Councillor in the area, and Grant Nkosi, an official from the Gauteng Human Settlements Departments.

ANC leaders in the Good Hope Settlement, including Vusimuzi Geqeza and the Good Hope ANC chairperson Oliver Silela, along with other members of the branch have threatened us. Clear threats have been made against our leaders, including death threats. People in the local ANC have told us that they can pay people to come and kill us. Specific death threats have been made against six

of our leaders. On three separate occasions strange men have been asking where they can find Sizwe Mpaxa, our organiser. On Thursday strange men were asking where Luyanda Fitshane, our Deputy Chairperson, stays. This morning three strange men with guns were in Good Hope looking for our chairperson, Mlamli Gomo. They were using a car but we are not sure how many other people were in the car. We have witnesses who can testify to this if they can be given anonymity.

No pro bono law firm has been willing to help us so far. We had to use our own money to get a lawyer for the bail application for Siyambusa. We also used our own money for a lawyer to seek an urgent interdict against the Municipality to stop their illegal evictions. Our application was dismissed on Thursday on the grounds that it was 'not urgent'. We have also had to use our money to buy and transport building materials after each demolition. If anyone is willing to support the occupation with food or with blankets we would appreciate it.

We are tired and many of us are sick. Our children are staying with relatives and friends and this is painful for us. We are running out of money for food. We are living in fear. Yesterday the rich were celebrating Africa Day. We have nothing to celebrate when impoverished people must still pay for land with blood. The same government that wants us to celebrate Africa Day is sending the police to shoot us when we occupy unused land.

Our women are very strong. They will not turn back. Even when they are sick and coughing with the flu they don't want to turn back. S'fiso Ngcobo was fighting for the same struggle as us when he was assassinated in Durban.

Our oppressors don't want us to be strong. If you raise your voice up, if you organise and act and if they see that you are intelligent they will treat you like a wild animal to be hunted. When we are strong they take us a threat. They promise land but they will not allow us to participate in returning the land to the people. For them democracy does not include people like us. For them our job is to just to obey and to vote.

There is no way that we can go back. If that means that we have to die here then we will die here. We were ready to die when we first occupied the land we remain ready to die.

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Luyanda Fitshane

28 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Road Blockades are Up on the East Rand

For years we have tried to talk to the politicians and officials in the Ekurhuleni Municipality and Gauteng Provincial Government about our urgent need for land and housing. These attempts have been fruitless. Since we founded the Zikode Extension land occupation we have faced relentless illegal evictions as well as police violence and death threats. We went to court to try and stop the illegal evictions and were told that our concerns were not urgent. In the meantime, armed men have been looking for our leaders and we are getting sick after night after night in the open after our shacks have been demolished.

We have decided to organise a strike. This morning we have blocked a number of roads on the East Rand in protest against the ongoing illegal evictions, the police violence and the threats from local ANC leaders. We have not taken this decision lightly and we know that the blockades will result in more police violence.

However we are serious about our lives, about our children's future and about our dignity as human beings. We cannot accept that we must continue to be treated as we are being treated.

The land is ours. We will build a community here and raise our children here.

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Luyanda Fitshane

31 MAY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Memorial service for Comrade S'fiso Ngcobo

Today Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement will hold a memorial service for our fallen Comrade, and chairperson of eKukhanyeni branch, S'fiso Ngcobo. This is to honour our Comrade and to give him the respect and dignity that he was denied while he was still living.

The memorial service will be held at the eKukhanyeni branch where Comrade Ngcobo was assassinated outside his house by three unknown men on Tuesday 22nd May at 19:30pm. The service will begin at 3pm today, Thursday, 31st May 2018

The memorial service will be followed by a funeral service on Saturday, 2 June 2018 where Comrade Ngcobo will be finally laid to rest. He is survived by his wife Phumzile Mkhize and four children between ages 11 to 24 years old.

As our struggle moves forward will continue to honour his memory and his courage in our movement, as we honour all those who have fallen in the struggle for land and dignity.

State Presidents come and ago and we continue to be attacked by the Anti-Land Invasions Unit and the police, and assassinated by the izinkabi. The price for land and dignity continues to be paid in blood and suffering.

Inkani iyo ezovula ndlela.

Contact person:

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

1 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

New Abahlali branch to be named in honour of S'fiso Ngcobo

Yesterday Abahlali baseMjondolo held a powerful memorial service at eKukhanyeni in honour of our comrade Sifiso Ngcobo. More than 900 comrades, all showing real courage, attended the memorial.

In his address to the community of eKukhanyeni the Deputy Chairperson said that he is prepared to continue Comrade Ngcobo's work. He gave an assurance that he will not be threatened by cowards who come and kill at night. People took courage from his bravery. The struggle will continue in eKukhanyeni, and around the country. Despite all the lives lost at the hands of the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, the police and the izinkabi over the years our movement has continued to grow, and to build democratic people's power in struggle. We will continue to build our movement, and our power, and to struggle for land and dignity.

Another important announcement was made at the memorial service. Mr. Hlophe, interim branch chairperson of our new branch in Hillcrest, announced that the branch has taken a decision to name itself after Comrade Ngcobo when it is launched. It was Comrade Ngcobo who first introduced the Hillcrest Comrades to our movement.

The movement takes the issue of safety very seriously. Over the years we have had to take many measures to keep people safe, especially our leaders. Discussions on security are ongoing, as well as discussions about how we can continue to organise and build pressure to continue to secure convictions of the people responsible for the murder of our members.

The funeral service for S'fiso Ngcobo will start tomorrow at 09:00 am at the eKukhanyeni branch in Marianhill

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

14 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Serious Threats Made Against our Movement by Leaders in the eThekweni ANC

At the Executive Committee meeting of the eThekweni Municipality on Tuesday, 12 June, the Mayor and the Chief Whip made disturbingly undemocratic, authoritarian and threatening statements about our movement, and about S'bu Zikode. In light of our past experiences, and the current climate of intimidation and violence in KwaZulu-Natal, which includes the ongoing murder of our leaders, we take these threats very seriously. We are sending out an urgent call for solidarity, and for urgent action to be taken against the senior leaders in eThekweni ANC who are a serious threat to democracy, and our safety.

The Mayor, Zandile Gumede, said that there was a 'third hand' behind our movement. She also said that the City would not work with our movement and would, instead, work with the South African Shack Dwellers' International Alliance – the South African branch of the international NGO that used to be known as Shack Dwellers International (SDI). The Chief Whip, Nelly Nyanisa, said that S'bu Zikode is "hellbent on making the city ungovernable". She also issued a clear threat against our movement saying "We will deal with them." This has all been reported in the Daily News.

Since our movement was formed in 2005, without a cent of donor funding or any NGO involvement, the ANC in Durban, and sometimes elsewhere too, including the Province, have claimed that we are a front for the 'Third Force'. Our movement has always been a democratic project with elected leaders subject to the right to recall. We hold open public assemblies and regular elections and make most important decisions on the basis of consensus achieved after numerous meetings.

Our struggle for land and housing in the city is the same struggle that was waged by the United Democratic Front (UDF), the women of Cato Manor, including ANC leaders like Dorothy Nyembe and Florence Mkhize, and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). We remember that when the ANC was first unbanned in 1990 it had a poster saying 'Occupy the Cities!'

No evidence has ever been provided to support the claim that we are a front for the 'Third Force'. However, this claim has constantly been used by the ANC to legitimate repression against us, including arrest, assault, torture, the destruction of our homes and murder. In 2005 S'bu Zikode wrote an article explaining that the real 'third force' behind our decision to organise ourselves independently from the ANC, and to struggle for land, housing and dignity, was the oppression that we faced in our everyday lives.

There have been many occasions since 2005 during which the ANC at various levels has said that we are an illegitimate organisation and that they will, instead, work with SDI. In 2007 the Provincial Housing Department, at that time under Mike Mabuyakhulu, told us to join SDI or face arrest. A specific threat was made against S'bu Zikode. We refused to accept this intimidation. Shortly after this threat to our leaders S'bu Zikode and Philani Zungu were arrested and subject to severe assault in the Sydenham Police Station. We successfully sued the police for damages as a result of this arrest and assault. It is completely undemocratic and authoritarian for the ANC to decide which organisation it wants to represent shack dwellers. Shack dwellers have the same rights to freedom of association as everyone else. We can form and support any organisation that we choose.

The claim that S'bu Zikode is "hellbent on making the city ungovernable" is nothing but the rage and paranoia of a corrupt and authoritarian elite confronted by a mass movement from below that has refused to accept oppression. S'bu Zikode, like all our leaders, follows the mandates worked out in open and democratic meetings and assemblies. In April this year our audited membership passed 50 000 members in good standing. There are still 13 branches to be audited, and we continue to open new branches and to welcome new members. The direction for our movement comes from our members. Our leaders are led from below. It often takes months of discussions, in numerous meetings, to arrive at a shared position on an issue. For this reason we say "We are all S'bu Zikode!".

The ANC in Durban has a long history of illegal and often violent conduct towards impoverished people. Laws and court orders are routinely violated. We do not stand for making the city ungovernable. We stand for land, housing and dignity. For us dignity does not only require land and housing. It also requires that each person – no matter where they live, how much money they have, or where they were born – must be engaged with respect. They must be able to participate in all decision making relevant to themselves and their community. We therefore stand for participatory democracy.

We take Nyanisa's threat to 'deal with them' very seriously. In the past we have been attacked after similar threats have been made against us by senior ANC leaders in the City. This includes the attack on our movement by armed ANC members, supported by the police, in Kennedy Road in 2009. It is well known that the then chairperson of the ANC in eThekweni, the notorious John Mchunu, ordered and planned that attack. This has been confirmed to us numerous times over the years by various people in the ANC, and even the police. Shortly before the attack Mchunu made clear threats against us in an ANC meeting, threats that were reported in the media. Based on similar sources it is our understanding that Nyanisa worked closely with Mchunu during that time. We therefore take this threat from her very seriously. What was said on Tuesday sounds almost exactly the same as the things that were said before we were attacked in the past, especially in the lead up to the attack in 2009.

Nyanisa is well known for sleeping in Executive Committee meetings. But we were told that she was wide awake and with high energy when she made her threats against us.

It is clear that we are already being 'dealt with'. On 19 November 2017 Si-bonelo Mpeku, our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation in Lamontville, was kidnapped and murdered. On 17 December 2017 Soyiso Nkqayini, our Youth League organiser in the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor, was assassinated. On 22 May 2018 S'fiso Ngcobo, our chairperson in the eKukhanyeni occupation in Marianhill was assassinated. There have been no arrests for the murders of Mpeku, Nkqayini and Ngcobo.

On Tuesday the final report of the Moerane Commission was handed over to the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Willies Mchunu. We have grave doubts about this process because in 2009 when Willies Mchunu was an MEC he strongly and openly supported the attack on our movement, and the attempts by the ANC

to lie about that attack. He refused the demands for a Commission of Inquiry into the attack. However, we have high respect for Judge Moerane and we have high hopes that the report will deal with political violence in KwaZulu-Natal honestly and bravely.

When we were attacked in 2009 we were on our own. Today there is a lot of awareness across the country, and including within the ANC, of just how serious the problem of political violence is in KwaZulu-Natal. We are calling on everyone who is committed to a peaceful and democratic future in the Province to take a clear position against the conduct of the Gumede and Nyanisa, to affirm our right to organise freely, and to oppose all forms of political violence and intimidation.

We are also calling on the South African Shack Dwellers' International Alliance to take a clear and public position against the violence and lies of the ANC in eThekweni, and the attempts to divide impoverished people into an 'enemy' that can be excluded and repressed and 'the good poor' that will be recognised by the Municipality.

Noting the statements by the President of the country, and the national Minister for policing, expressing concern about political violence in KwaZulu-Natal we have written to them both asking them to ensure that there is serious investigation into the murders of our members. They have both responded positively. We appreciate this and hope that these responses are accompanied by serious action. We also note that while the eThekweni Municipality is refusing to recognise us we have been invited by the national government to contribute to the deliberations about land in Parliament.

We will continue to organise and to struggle for land and housing. We will continue to expose corruption. If anything happens to any of our leaders we will hold the Mayor and the Chief Whip personally liable as a result of the reckless comments that they made in the meeting of the Executive. Because these comments have been publicly reported no one in the ANC in the Province or nationally can deny knowledge of them. There is a moral obligation on ANC members elsewhere to condemn these comments.

We also wish to place on record that a number of our leaders in Durban have received repeated telephonic threats in recent weeks. Anyone who agrees to put their name on a press statement immediately receives death threats by telephone. In a number of wards across the city our leaders in the branches are

receiving regular death threats from ANC councillors and local party structures. We strongly suspect that this is happening because Gumede has given an instruction to attack Abahlali baseMjondolo.

We also wish to place on record that our leader in the Eastern Cape has received several death threats from an ANC councillor.

The two ANC councillors that were convicted for the murder of Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi, in September 2014 were closely associated with Gumede. The Mayor is not separate from the gangsterism that has corrupted the ANC in Durban and turned it into an oppressive force preying on the people.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

15 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Violent and Illegal Eviction Underway at the Barcelona 2 Transit Camp, Lamontville

Mayor Zandile Gumede has started her 'dealing' with Abahlali

This morning at around 10:00 a.m. the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, accompanied by heavily armed security guards, attacked the Barcelona 2 'Transit Camp' in Lamontville. It is a short walk from where Sibonelo Mpeku, our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation, was kidnapped and murdered on 19 November last year.

No court order was provided therefore this is eviction, carried out at gunpoint, is an illegal and criminal act.

Barcelona 2 is a so called 'transit camp' that was built by the Municipality to hide impoverishment and homelessness during the 2010 Fifa World Cup. Many families were forcibly evicted from their homes and moved into 'transit camps'.

'Transit camps' were also used by the apartheid regime. They are like concentration camps used to hide impoverished black people and to take control over their communities. They are not fit for human beings. It is incredible that a democratically elected black government would do this to our people.

The people moved into Barcelona 2 were told that they would not stay there for longer than three to six months. They have now been there for more than seven years. The houses that were meant for them were instead given to ANC members via SANCO and people claiming to be MK veterans.

The Councillor in the Ward is Eunice Khanyile. A large number of ANC supporters in the ward refused to vote for her in the last local government election and instead voted for an independent candidate. After the election there were sustained claims of fraud. Boxes of ballot papers were found at a local dumpsite.

We managed to hold a meeting despite the ongoing attack on the community. The residents reported that Khanyile has said that she is "cleansing the area of amaMpondo". This is outrageous but not surprising in Durban. We continue

to insist that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. On this principle there can be no compromise.

The Anti-Land Invasions Unit said they will finish evicting at 22:00 this evening.

From what we could tell in the confusion 47 households have been evicted so far. At least one person has been injured.

On Wednesday the Durban Metro Police shot at least four people at the Kennedy Road settlement. They shot people who are trying to survive by picking metals and other materials from the Bisasa landfill site. They used live ammunition and three of the four remain in hospital seriously injured and fighting for their lives.

‘Dealing with us’ has come in different forms. We have counted 16 people in or near to our movement that have been killed as a result of repression since 2009. It is clear that the Mayor can assist the police and the general public in explaining to what extent the project to ‘deal with us’ has been effective.

The ANC in Durban is a violent, criminal and dangerous enemy of the dignity, safety and unity of the people. We will continue to build unity in struggle and to resist the ongoing violence and criminality of the ANC in Durban. We will not accept their attempt to run this city as if it were a Bantustan.

We stand for a free and democratic city in a free and democratic South Africa. A neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade. It makes no difference what province or country they were born in, or what language they speak at home.

We are determined to resist the gangsterism of the ANC in Durban, and its police and Anti-Land Invasion Unit. We are exploring the possibility of legal action against the Mayor and her Anti-Land Invasion Unit. The struggle continues.

Simbongile Jujebe
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

18 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Approach the Durban High Court for a Spoliation Order

“We are all amaMpondo!”

Abahlali baseMjondolo will this morning approach the Durban High Court on an urgent basis to apply for a Spoliation Order against the eThekweni Municipality. On Friday at about 10am the notorious eThekweni municipal Anti Land Invasion Unit descended on the Barcelona 2 ‘transit camp’ (amatini or government shacks) in Lamontville and violently and unlawfully evicted the residents from the disgraceful ‘transit camps’ that there were forcefully imposed on them seven years ago for the FIFA World Cup.

The residents were told straight on their faces that they are amaMpondo and that they should return to the Eastern Cape. This is not the first time that people from the Eastern Cape have been openly discriminated against by high ranking politicians and officials in Durban. This is a dangerous politic that continues to tear apart all the gains made by our democracy.

The ANC is creating a very dangerous situation in which impoverished people are forced to fight amongst one another. When Xhosa speaking people are removed from the tins at gunpoint, and Zulu speaking people are then brought into the tins, there is a very high risk of serious conflict.

Our position as Abahlali is that we are all amaMpondo and we are all amaZulu. A neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade. We will continue to build unity in the neighbourhoods, and in struggle, and we will continue to oppose the politicians that are trying to divide impoverished people.

We call on all traditional leaders to condemn the conduct of the ANC in eThekweni in the clearest and strongest terms, and to reject this attempt by the politicians to divide the people.

At the same time as the ANC and the Municipality are playing a very dangerous game of trying to divide impoverished people the ANC Mayor Zandile Gumede and the Chief Whip Nelly Nyanisa have given public permission for

their councillors, their ward committees and BECs and the police, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the municipal security to attack our movement. They have vowed to “deal with Abahlali”. We call on the Mayor, Nyanisa and all those who think that the public can measure their leadership by attacking the landless and homeless who are already impoverished and vulnerable to withdraw their discriminative and ethnic tendency. There can be no place for this regressive politics in a democracy.

We reiterate our warning to the Mayor and those who use violence, death threats and even death to govern that if any of our leaders, including S’bu Zikode, are attacked we and the general public will not hesitate to hold them accountable.

We are hoping to meet the Mayor in court this morning to prove that her attack on Barcelona 2 is lawful. However, we note with serious concern that this municipality has never at any stage conducted any eviction in terms of the law. In other cities court orders are obtained before an eviction. However, the eThekweni Municipality is a rogue municipality that operates without regard for the law year after year.

We note that on Youth Day some young people in Durban were reeling from an illegal and violent eviction perpetrated by the ANC that left some injured, and many more homeless.

We are determined to protect the lives of the impoverished and to uphold, promote and protect the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as an important line of defence against the gangster politicians in the eThekweni Municipality. At the same time we are determined to continue to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below and in struggle.

As the Freedom Charter says:

South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

18 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Victory in Court!

On Friday, beginning at around 10 am, the notorious Security Management Unit illegally, brutally and violently evicted more than 40 families in the Barcelona 2 'transit camp'. The eviction was carried out until 1 am in the morning on Saturday. A number of people were wounded during the attack.

This morning Abahlali baseMjondolo went to court in defence of our members. We defeated the eThekweni Municipality in court. The movement has obtained a spoliation order to reinstate our members who have been illegally evicted by the Municipality. The court ordered that those who were illegally evicted in Barcelona 2 must be reinstated, and that the municipality does not carry out any further evictions in the area

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

23 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Bahlali Bayanda: Building ubuhlali in Gauteng

Despite the attacks and repression that we face our movement continues to become a home for impoverished people. Our movement is growing and we have vibrant branches in a number of provinces.

Today we will embark on a mission of building ubuhlali in the province of Gauteng. Ubuhlali is our ideology that speaks about Living Politics. This is a politics that speaks to the fact that we do not have access to land, housing, water and electricity. It is a politics that speaks to the fact that we are purposely made to be poor. It is a politics that speaks to the restoration of dignity of impoverished people. It is a politics that starts from the realities of the everyday lives of impoverished people and remains under the democratic control of impoverished people.

The President of the movement S'bu Zikode will also visit Zikode Extension, the new occupation on the East Rand between Boksburg and Germiston. The leadership of the movement in Gauteng has been facing death threats from unknown men.

The movement is not only facing repression and threats in KwaZulu-Natal. Our comrades are threatened throughout the country. When we speak truth to power, build the democratic power of impoverished people from below, and take direct action to occupy and hold land, we are often threatened.

In Volksrust, in Mpumalanga, members of Abahlali are currently being threatened with eviction by Transnet. We are preparing to launch two more branches in Mpumalanga.

We continue to occupy land even if it means that we face the barrel of the gun from the SAPS, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, the JMPD, the Red Ants and the so called Law Enforcement in Cape Town. Impoverished people continue to face evictions throughout the country. We continue to pay for land with struggle, suffering and blood. Yet the hypocrites in the ANC are speaking about land expropriation without compensation!

People want to be closer to the cities so that they can improve their lives. When they occupy unoccupied land is because they want to survive and to thrive. It is progressive when grassroots movements occupy land for living. It is regressive when government attacks people who are opening new land for living. It is regressive when government, or other forces, claim that there is a 'third force' driving us to occupy land and to build our autonomous power from below. The ANC government is a government of the rich that speaks in the name of the poor. They are deeply threatened when we organise ourselves outside of the structures of the party and speak for ourselves. But we have a democratic right to organise freely and to express ourselves freely and we will not turn back from the path that we have taken.

Thapelo Mohapi
Nomnikelo Sigenu

27 JUNE 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Four-year-old child dies in Ekuphumeleleni, death threats continue

A four-year-old boy was tragically killed by electrocution on Monday in our Ekuphumeleleni branch. Khanyisani Dlamini was playing with his friends when he slipped and fell on a live electric wire. He died on the scene.

The community in Ekuphumeleleni occupied vacant RDP houses after there was gross corruption in the allocation process. The community took this decision after all attempts to address the blatant corruption in the allocation failed. After the occupation the Municipality refused to allow services to be provided so it was decided to make self-organised connections to water and electricity. The Municipality tried to evict the community but the movement was able to prevent the eviction.

Our position as a movement is that we fully support self-organised connections to electricity, water and sanitation when these services are not provided by the state, or are removed by the state. In the case of electricity we support ‘Operation Khanyisa’ – the organised installation of electricity on a non-commodified and safe basis by trained people using insulated and properly buried cables. We do not support the haphazard installation of electricity on an unsafe basis as this poses a risk to people, especially to children. We note, though, that when there are daily disconnections by the state, or that when an entire community is not organised into a democratic formation, it can become difficult to sustain the safe organisation of access to electricity across a whole settlement.

The Councillor (who is known as ‘Khekhe’) in the area has made it clear that he will not allow Abahlali to organise in the ward, which he calls ‘his ward’. According to the community he said that there can’t be two bulls in the same kraal (referring to himself and S’bu Zikode, our movement’s President). The Councillor has openly made threats that if we convene a meeting in Ekuphumeleleni ‘we will see something we have not seen’.

Khekhe has been sending threatening messages to people in our movement. We have recordings of these messages. He has worked closely with gangster Councillors including Nqola, the Councillor now serving a life sentence for the assassination of Thuli Ndlovu, our former chairperson in KwaNdengezi. Khekhe now works closely with Nada, the Councillor of Ward 15 where S'fiso Ngcobo, our former chairperson in the Ekukhanyeni occupation, in Marianhill was recently assassinated.

It seems clear to us that the Councillors are getting a clear mandate from above, from people like the Mayor, to try and crush our movement.

Khekhe is aware that we are going to be addressing the issues of the community on 7 July. The community is currently facing evictions that target them individually. We believe that there is a clear political aspect to these individually targeted evictions. When these individually targeted evictions happen there are unknown vehicles patrolling and waiting nearby. Comrades in the area feel that the evictions are a trap to lure our leaders into a place where they can be attacked. Our leaders were also warned by local comrades that it was not safe to visit the family after Khanyisani Dlamini was electrocuted.

We have been informed that there are people who are planning an attack on the leadership of the movement on the 7th. The leadership of the movement was unable to visit the family of the child who died as a result of these threats.

We are not afraid. We cannot stop the struggle for land and dignity because of a councillor who's obsessed with keeping people poor. We have all taken the decision that we are willing to give our lives for this struggle.

Xolani Khambule
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

5 JULY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Support Street Traders in their Protest in Durban Tomorrow

The ANC in Durban continues to grow rich off impoverished people through corruption and political gangsterism. They continue to try and divide us by race and ethnicity. Death threats remain the order of the day whenever anyone stands up for honesty and justice. Our movement continues to face serious and credible threats.

The Mayor of eThekweni continues to present a clear and present danger to us. She is currently on mission to evict street traders who are surviving by selling on the streets in Durban. The Mayor is embarking on a 'clean up' campaign. We know this language. Again and again violent attacks on impoverished people and migrants are spoken of as if we are rubbish to be cleaned off the streets and out of the cities.

The current 'clean up' campaign by the Mayor is leaving people destitute. Street traders are organising and standing up for their dignity and their livelihoods. We must join their resistance.

Tomorrow the Market Users Committee, Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Right2Know Campaign will hold a march on the City Hall in defence of the street traders, and against the Mayor's 'clean up' campaign, from 9:00 am.

We have often supported street traders' struggles over the years, and many of our members are street traders. Just as we stand with the trade unions in their struggles at the workplace we also stand with people who are making a living from informal work. As a movement we always work to unite the struggles of the working class and impoverished people and to build solidarity between oppressed people.

Abahlali members will come out in numbers in support of our comrades who are facing this repression from the Municipality.

We cannot watch as people are purposely made to be poor by politicians. We cannot remain in silence. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Verushka Memdutt
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

6 JULY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Open Assembly in eKukhanyeni on Saturday

Tomorrow our movement will hold an open, public assembly in eKukhanyeni in Marianhill where S'fiso Ngcobo, our branch chairperson, was assassinated on 22 May 2018.

The ward councillor in the area, who is known as 'Khekhe', has vowed to destroy our movement. We have received numerous warnings, including from sympathetic people within the police and the ANC, that it will not be safe for us to go ahead with our meeting tomorrow.

We will not give into the politic of fear and death. We will hold an open, public meeting. The rights to associate freely, to speak freely and to organise freely were won in struggle. We cannot give them up to ward councillors, or traditional leaders, who do not think that impoverished black people should be able to participate in democratic life. We cannot give up our right to democratic life to the gangsters who control the ANC in Durban, and who only see the lives of impoverished black people as tools for their own personal enrichment via state corruption.

We continue to receive death threats, and we are receiving more and more credible warnings from outside of our organisation indicating that another assassination is imminent. We do believe that we are at grave risk. We are hoping that the recent media attention on the assassinations in Durban will give us some protection tomorrow and request the media to be present tomorrow. However most assassinations happen at night at people's homes, and this is where we remain most vulnerable.

We are requesting all the democratic forces in South Africa to pay close attention to what is happening in Durban, and in KwaZulu-Natal, and to take clear and active positions against political gangsterism and for democracy.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

7 JULY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Organising in the Shadow of Death

Since our movement was first formed in 2005 various factions of the elite – including in the ruling party, the government, NGOs and the universities – have considered the self-organisation of impoverished people in a democratic movement to be an illegitimate development.

All positions in our movement are subject to election, and the right to recall. We continually hold open and public meetings at which decisions are reached, usually by the process of continuing discussion until a consensus is developed. Yet despite this our decision to organise ourselves, and to speak and act for ourselves, has constantly been presented as an external conspiracy by elites who feel that they have a natural right to think for us, to speak for us and to represent us. We have regularly been presented as criminals.

We have faced constant lies and slander, some of it organised by intelligence, and serious and often violent repression including assault, the destruction of our homes, arrests and imprisonment on false charges while awaiting trial, torture and death. Our members have died at the hands of the police, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the izinkabi. At times some of our leaders have had to go underground and in late 2009 the whole movement had to organise underground for some months.

In 2009 our members were openly attacked by the ANC, acting with the support of the police, and driven from their homes in the Kennedy Road settlement in Clare Estate. For months our members were openly driven from their homes by armed supporters of the ruling party acting with the open support of the police. Leading figures in the ruling party publicly supported this repression.

In March 2013, Thembinkosi Qumbela, who was not a member of our movement but did support a land occupation that our members also supported, was assassinated in Cato Crest. In June the same year Nkululeko Gwala, our Chairperson in Cato Crest, was also assassinated. In September that year Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer during a protest in Cato Crest. She was 17 years old. After a long struggle the police officer that murdered her

was convicted of murder. In September 2014 Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi, was murdered by two ANC Ward Councillors. After another long struggle the two Councillors were convicted of murder and are now serving their sentence. In June last year we lost two weeks old baby Jayden Khoza after he inhaled teargas when police attacked the community in Foreman Road in Clare Estate. In the same month Samuel Hloele was murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit in what was then eMasenseni and is now the eKukhanyeni land occupation in Marianhill. In November our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation in Lamontville, Sibonelo Mpeku, was kidnapped and murdered. On 17 December 2017 Soyiso Nkqayini and Smanga Mkhize, were shot by unknown men in the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor. Comrade Smanga was seriously injured and Comrade Soyiso, the Youth League organiser in the occupation, passed away. In January this year Sandile Biyela, was killed while escaping a brutal police attack on the Solomon Mahlangu land occupation near Chesterville. On 22 May S'fiso Ngcobo, our chairperson in eKukhanyeni, was assassinated. On 29 May S'bu Zikode suddenly lost control of the car that he was travelling in. When the car was taken to a mechanic it was found that it had been deliberately tampered with. This was a clear attempt on his life.

Qumbela, Gwala, Ndlovu and Ngcobo all knew that they had been marked for death before they were assassinated. Today we are hearing the same things that we heard before their murders. We have the same sense that we had before their murders, a sense that death is imminent.

As we have previously noted the Mayor and the Chief Whip in the eThekweni Municipality made disturbingly undemocratic, authoritarian and threatening statements about our movement, and about S'bu Zikode, at an Executive Committee on Tuesday, 12 June 2018. The Mayor, Zandile Gumede, said that there was a 'third hand' behind our movement. She also said that the City would not work with our movement and would, instead, work with the South African Shack Dwellers' International Alliance – the South African branch of the international NGO that used to be known as Shack Dwellers International (SDI). The Chief Whip, Nelly Nyanisa, said that S'bu Zikode is "hellbent on making the city ungovernable". She also issued a clear threat against our movement saying "We will deal with them." This was all reported in the media. Similar statements were made by ANC leaders prior to the attack on our movement in Kennedy Road in 2009.

Since these statements were made by the Mayor and the Chief Whip we have had numerous warnings from various credible sources that S'bu Zikode's life is in grave danger. These warnings have come from people in the ANC and people in the police who are opposed to the political gangsterism in Durban. Some members of the police in Durban have often been directly supportive of, and involved in, political gangsterism and repression. But there are factions in the police, especially at national level, that are opposed to this. We have and will continue to work with them to achieve credible investigations into the murders of our comrades, and the plan to assassinate S'bu Zikode, with the aim of achieving arrests and prosecutions. At the same time we will continue to build democratic people's power from below and in struggle.

We have been warned from credible sources that the ANC in Durban is planning to present our movement as a 'terrorist' organisation to legitimate further repression. We have been through this kind of experience before when we have been presented as criminals, and as a 'third force', to justify repression. We repeat that we are a democratic organisation, with an audited membership in good standing of more than 50 000, that takes its important decisions in open public meetings. We stand for justice, and the dignity of our members.

The courts have repeatedly found in our favour and have repeatedly noted illegal conduct against our members by the eThekweni Municipality. Our aspirations for land, housing and dignity are firmly in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic.

Our members freely participate in the formation of the movement's positions, sometimes over many months of discussions in numerous meetings. This includes any collective decision that we may take about a strategic response to elections. In this regard, as in all other matters, our leaders follow the mandate generated in free and open discussion by our members. Our leaders do not give a line to the members. This is a fundamental part of our politics.

There are two main reasons why we are facing such extreme hostility from the ANC in Durban. One is that the Zuma faction has had to retreat to the City of Durban, and the City's large budget. This faction is organised around corruption and the housing budget is one of the most important vehicles through which corruption is organised. We oppose corruption, often very effectively, in communities across the city. The Zuma faction is also trying to build an ethnic

project. Our movement unites people from various ethnicities, races and nationalities in a democratic struggle for justice. This also makes us a direct threat to the Zuma project. We have held public assemblies of up to six or seven thousand people in football grounds. This is far more people than Zuma can get at his court appearances, even with a huge budget.

We will not retreat. We have faced and survived previous waves of repression, especially in 2009, and again in 2013 and 2014. We have faced and survived all kinds of dirty tricks and lies. In 2018 we are bigger and stronger than we have ever been before. We will survive this wave of repression too.

However, we wish to make it clear that if another attempt is made on S'bu Zikode's life, or on the life of any one of our members or comrades, we will hold Zandile Gumede and the eThekweni ANC directly responsible.

We are calling for national and international solidarity with our movement and in defence of democracy in Durban.

The politic of blood in this city and province must come to an end. We will not rest until justice has been served for every one of our members and comrades who have been murdered. Every assassination of every person, without regard for the organisation in which they held membership, must be thoroughly investigated with a view to achieving a successful prosecution and conviction.

We stand for peace and justice.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

20 JULY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

International Solidarity Meeting to be Held in Durban

International solidarity is vital to our safety, and our ability to continue to organise during periods of repression. The ANC is happy to allow the politic of blood to rule impoverished people in Durban but it wants to appear as a liberation movement to the world. When the ANC knows that the eyes of the world are watching they often move away from the politic of blood and back to the politic of negotiation.

For this reason our movement works hard to build relationships with radical popular movements around the world, and those few NGOs that understand the importance of popular organisation and respect the autonomy of popular movements.

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) has consistently offered solidarity to us when we have faced serious repression and we are pleased to be co-hosting a meeting with them from 21 to 25 July. We will also host 15 militants from popular movements in various countries in a movement only meeting in the eNkanini Land Occupation. This meeting will be held in the community hall that was built on the occupation and the aim will be for militants from around the world to get to know each other and to learn from each other's struggles

ESCR-Net consists of over 280 organisational and individual members in more than 75 countries, including many grassroots organisations, and is committed to economic, social and environmental justice. Delegates from 17 countries will participate in the meeting.

ESCR-Net has expressed grave concern regarding the ongoing threats and attacks faced by Abahlali baseMjondolo. The international delegates assembled in Durban are present to express their solidarity with Abahlali. ESCR-Net has stated that its members are in Durban to underscore the legitimacy of our struggle for land and dignity.

The meeting will be conducted under the slogan “your struggle is my struggle” and will discuss ways to advance collective action by struggles around the world for the realisation of human dignity.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Mgapheli Bonono

23 JULY 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Intimidation from Armed ANC Members on the East Rand

Abahlali baseMjondolo in the Good Hope Settlement in Germiston, on the East Rand, have been engaging around budgets and urban planning for a long time now. At the same time this branch has also organised the Zikode Extension Land Occupation on a nearby piece of unused land. Despite repeated illegal evictions, and the repeated confiscation and burning of building material, the occupation will soon celebrate its first three months on the land.

Promises have been regularly made, by the ruling party and various levels of government, that development is coming to Good Hope. But we do not see any allocation for us in the relevant budgets documents.

Abahlali baseMjondolo has a vibrant and well organised branch in Good Hope. Other organisations are also present in the settlement. There is also a person, Oliver Silela, who was elected as a chairperson for the settlement two years ago. The election was disputed, as very few people were able to participate in it. There has not been another election since Silela was elected.

The latest budget documents have been given to Silela but have not been shared with the whole community. On Saturday we invited Silela to attend an Abahlali baseMjondolo meeting in the settlement. We asked him to bring the latest budget documents so that they could be examined and analysed.

Silela refused to come to the meeting saying that he was worried about security. We have never threatened him, or anyone else, and were very surprised at this response. We told him that if he was worried he could come to the meeting with the police. However Silela still refused to attend the meeting.

We invited him again for Sunday afternoon at 4:30. Again he said that he was worried about his security. We called the police, speaking to Sector Manager Mngadi, explained the situation, and asked the police to come to the meeting. However they did not arrive. Silela did not arrive either. We tried to contact him by phone without success. We then sent a delegation of four women to his

house with a clear mandate to politely ask him to please attend the meeting. They were told that he was not at home.

Silela then arrived at the meeting. He was carrying a gun and was accompanied by three armed men. The three men are not residents in the community and are all from the ANC in the area. We recognised one of the three armed men as Vusi Gegeza. We told the three armed ANC men that we did not know them in the community and that there was no reason for them to be at a meeting which was about community matters. We also explained that there was no reason for armed security at a meeting that was simply a discussion about the budget and development plans. We also explained that documents relating to the development of the community should be shared with the community as a whole and not kept as the property of one person.

We were subjected to serious intimidation. At one point they threatened to shoot up in the air to force us to cancel our meeting and to disperse. This was not just intimidation. It was also very reckless and showed a dangerous contempt for the community. Every bullet that goes up also comes down. We did eventually conclude the meeting and disperse, at a time of our own choosing. They continued to roar around in their cars showing their power and trying to intimidate us.

This morning two police officers, Mkhwanazi and Mokgashwa, came to the home of our secretary Nomnikelo Sigenu. Mokgashwa told her that Silela has opened a case of 'insult' against her and that she must report to the police station this evening between 6:00 and 6:30 pm. He also told her that Gegeza is demanding that the police give him a report on this matter today.

This afternoon a delegation of our members went to the police station to open a case against Silela, Gegeza and the other two armed men who threatened us at gunpoint on Sunday. The police refused to open a case.

This worries us because the police are not conducting themselves in a professional manner, and in terms of the rule of law, on the East Rand. They evict and demolish without a court order, they refuse to open cases against their own members for serious crimes, like assault, and they take orders from local ANC structures rather than following the rule of law and taking a neutral position with regard to all political organisations. For instance, on 20 June we built four new shacks at the Zikode Extension Occupation. On 21 June the four shacks were illegally destroyed by the police during the night. The materials

were burnt. The next morning we returned to the road. The police told us to 'voetsek!' and they shot at us on the road, beat us and even came into our houses to shoot at us again. Police officers Tladi and Matladi were especially rude and brutal. We went to the police station to open a case against these two officers but the police just refused to open the case.

How is that we can have our homes illegally destroyed, be insulted, shot at and beaten by the police without any consequences for the police but when we ask to be able to participate in planning the future of our community we are treated as if we are criminals? How is it that we cannot open a case against an ANC member after he publicly threatened us at gunpoint but he can successfully demand that the police open a case against us and report back to him?

It is clear that the ANC, with the support of the police, is planning to repress our movement in Ekurhuleni in the same way that it has been repressed elsewhere in the country. We will continue to occupy, to resist, and to build the democratic power of impoverished people from below.

Nomnikelo Sigenu
Siyambusa Mpolase &

4 AUGUST 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Women are the Backbone of the Land Issue

The Women's League of Abahlali baseMjondolo is committed to building democratic women's power in the struggle and in society. The Women's League will hold a Women's Day event on 5 August at the Cato Crest Sport Ground. The event will start at 10am and conclude at 3 pm.

The theme for our Women's Day event for this year is "Women are the backbone of the land issue". Prior to this gathering the women in the movement held a summit where they discussed the issue of women and land. The women had seen that the government does not recognise the role played by women when it comes to this very critical issue. They had also seen that many of the other social forces that say that they are concerned about the land issue do not recognise the experiences, struggles and thinking of women, and especially impoverished women.

In the cities impoverished women are often at the forefront of organising land occupations, of holding the land and rebuilding again and again after each attack. Women are subject to regular intimidation and violence on land occupations from the police, municipal and private security and various 'anti-land invasion units'.

In rural areas impoverished women are often denied the right to own land and to participate in decision making. If a woman does not have a husband access to land is denied. Women who oppose the domination of men in rural areas are also subject to intimidation and violence.

Many women in our movement have paid a high price for their commitment to the struggle. This has included murder by the police and the ANC. Cyril Ramaphosa talks about restoring land to the people but he shows no consideration for the women that are struggling for land, sleeping in the open during winter after evictions, and being violated by the police.

Since our movement was founded in 2005 we have taken a clear position in support of democratic women's power in communities, in the struggle and in society. For us Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate and build our power.

We will also use the day to speak out against the ongoing threats and attacks against the leadership of the movement.

Khunjuzwa Nomtebe
Nomusa Nxumalo
Zandile Nsibande

10 AUGUST 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Memorial Service for the Late Thabang Anthony Khamali

Our comrade Thabang Anthony Khamali has passed away. Thabang was a very good comrade, always putting his effort to the movement. He was elected to the Provincial Council in KwaZulu-Natal in 2015.

He was born in Matatiele in the Eastern Cape and was a member of the Eku-phumeleleni Branch of our movement in Durban.

His funeral will be held on 18 August in KwaKawu Village in Matatiele. The movement will hold a memorial service for him on 15 August, at 3, in Eku-phumeleleni.

George Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

20 AUGUST 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

S'bu Zikode is Underground

Our movement continues to be subject to regular threats, intimidation and violence in Durban, including constant telephonic death threats.

We have faced waves of serious repression over the years, including in 2009 and 2010, and again in 2013 and 2014. This repression has included armed attacks on the homes of our leaders, resulting in their destruction, sometimes while the police looked on, as well as arrests and detention on trumped up charges, torture, assault, death threats, and assassinations.

The current wave of repression was significantly worsened by the grossly undemocratic comments made by the Zandile Gumede, the Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality, on 12 June 2018. Our movement is a democratic coming together of the oppressed, with tens of thousands of members, in which all positions are subject to election, and all elected leaders are subject to the right of recall. Important decisions are taken in open assemblies. On 12 June the Mayor repeated the allegation, that has constantly been made by senior people in the ANC since 2005, that our movement is a 'third force'. This is not just untrue, and typical of a colonial and apartheid mentality. It also works to justify violence against us, including murder.

At the same meeting that the Mayor called our movement a 'third force' the Chief Whip in the Municipality, Nelly Nyanisa, said that the President of our movement, S'bu Zikode, is 'hell bent' on make the city ungovernable. She went on to say that as the ANC they will 'deal with' Abahlali. Our movement is committed to participatory democracy. We are of the view that impoverished people should be included in all forms of decision making that affect them. We don't accept that politicians, officials, NGOs and academics should take decisions for us without us. We want to deepen or radicalise democracy. We don't want to make the city ungovernable. We want to democratise its governance by progressive organisation and mobilisation from below to enable the oppressed to participate in decision making, including decisions about land use and urban planning. This makes us a serious threat to the corrupt and to those who put profit before people.

Nyanisa's statement that the ANC will 'deal with' Abahlali has given the ward councillors permission to openly threaten and attack our movement. It was an

instruction to repress us, an instruction that will cost lives. We are not aware of any senior leaders in the ANC at Provincial or National level issuing statements to condemn Gumede and Nyanisa, or making it clear that we have a democratic right to organise outside of the ANC, and that the attacks on us are both criminal and anti-democratic.

We have had credible reports from various sources, including in the ANC and the police, that S'bu Zikode is in imminent danger of assassination. One again he has had to go underground. For some time now he has been in a secret location, away from all cellphones and out of contact with his family. We have also put in place the most rigorous possible security measures to protect other people who are under threat but many people, including anyone who puts their name on one of our statements, continue to operate at serious risk.

The country has just mourned the anniversary of the massacre at Marikana. We are well aware that we are not the only people under threat. Anyone who successfully organises the oppressed outside of the ANC is at serious risk. We continue to take a position in support of principled solidarity in action among all democratic and progressive formations that have emerged from among the oppressed.

Those of us who have accepted leadership positions in our movement have accepted the risk of death. We all understand that there will be more deaths. Despite the repression our movement continues to grow, and the struggle continues to advance. We have members on more than forty land occupations in Durban and in five provinces.

In June this year we wrote letters to both President Ramaphosa and the police minister requesting their intervention in the ongoing murders of Abahlali leaders. We have not received any response from the office of the President or that of the minister. There is a lot of talk about ANC leaders who are murdered by other ANC leaders but when it comes to the murder of our members there is silence.

We appreciate the solidarity that we have received from progressive organisations in South Africa and internationally. Real solidarity, living solidarity, is the only way that we can survive repression, overcome oppression, and build a world in which the dignity of every human being is respected.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

16 SEPTEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Resolutions from the Special General Assembly Held in Durban Today

Abahlali baseMjondolo held a special general assembly, open to all members and branches in good standing, in Durban today. The assembly was very well attended and important resolutions were taken.

The general assembly was held to deal with some serious issues confronting the movement. As everybody knows our movement continues to suffer a wave of serious repression in KwaZulu-Natal, and now in the Eastern Cape too. People have been killed in both provinces, threats of various kinds, including death threats, are an everyday bread and a large number of people are sleeping outside their homes, and moving from different place to different place each night. Some people had to move to different provinces for their safety. S'bu Zikode has been completely underground since July. All of this puts a huge strain on our movement, and on the people, families and communities most directly affected by repression.

In June our movement was approached by senior people in intelligence. They said that they had information about a plan in the ANC in Durban to assassinate Zikode. They had incredibly detailed and accurate knowledge about the internal workings of our movement and showed us that knowledge. The accuracy of their knowledge was a new development. Previously when our members have been questioned by intelligence while in police custody we have seen that their views on the movement have taken the form of a few facts scattered into wild stories that are completely and laughably untrue. Usually they are obsessed with inventing theories about external manipulation to explain what is in fact the democratic self-organisation of the oppressed as if it was a conspiracy. It became clear to us that, along with the usual forms of surveillance, intelligence now have access to detailed and accurate information from within our movement.

The intelligence officer who approached us said that the arrest of the eThekweni Mayor, Zandile Gumede, was imminent. He also said that it would not be

good for the country's international reputation if Zikode was assassinated as he was a high-profile figure. He offered to provide security for Zikode via people in the police that he said can be trusted. He asked that Zikode stay in touch with himself and these people in the police at all times so that they could ensure his safety. They also said that Zikode should agree to testify against the Mayor and that he and his family should leave Durban as soon as they could and go into witness protection in Cape Town.

Our analysis of the situation was that there are different factions in the police and in intelligence. Some are loyal to Ramaphosa and some remain loyal to Zuma. Those loyal to Ramaphosa do not want the assassinations to continue while those that are loyal to Zuma and the ANC in Durban are complicit with the murders. However, both factions want to neutralise our movement before the 2019 election. If Zikode agreed to go into witness protection in Cape Town his personal safety would be assured but he would lose his political autonomy and be politically neutralised. For this reason Zikode took a decision to not co-operate with intelligence, or the state, and to instead rely on our own comrades for his safety. He gave up all cellphone access, and contact with his family, and went completely underground.

Before Zikode went underground it started to become clear that our movement had been infiltrated by the ANC. Three people with important positions in our movement began to try and drive an agenda in support of the ANC and the eThekwinzi Mayor, Zandile Gumede.

None of these people had any popular support for their new positions in the movement but they did have significant bureaucratic authority. They attempted to use that authority to prevent people from making public criticisms of the ANC and the mayor. This was done in a highly public way at our annual UnFreedom Day rally. The same person who tried to stop public criticism of the Mayor at the rally also ordered a choir in one of our land occupations to sing at an ANC event. This group also developed a relationship with the pro-Zuma National Funeral Practitioners Association of SA (Nafupa-SA) and VBS bank. They saw this as a way to translate our growing membership, which is now more than 55 000 people, into personal wealth. They did not make this relationship a secret and vigorously tried to push this agenda.

They had no success with this project. Key decisions in our movement are made in open public assemblies. The people elected to positions in the branches and the provincial and national councils are all aware that they can be recalled

from their positions at any time by a popular vote. For these reasons it is not easy for people who have been elected or appointed to positions that carry bureaucratic authority to substitute themselves for democratic processes. Our members were clear that our movement exists to struggle for land and dignity, and is not a vehicle for making business deals with our oppressors.

The attempt on Zikode's life, and the threats that followed, were made because he was seen as the main obstacle to the attempt to capture our movement by the ANC. In fact this is not true. Elites, whether in the ruling party, NGOs or universities often tend to think that our insistence on our autonomy must really be because some or other individual is telling us what to do. In reality it is the views of our members, and that fact that our movement has remained committed to a democratic form of organising, that has made it impossible for the ANC, or various NGOs, to capture our movement.

There is an intense popular hostility to the ANC in general, and to the eThekweni Mayor and the Durban ANC in particular, in our movement. Not long ago a decision was taken that any member of our movement seen wearing an ANC T-shirt must have their membership withdrawn. This decision came from the members and was very popular. This does not mean that our movement is planning to work with any other political party. We have not met with any other party and have not had any discussion on our position on the 2019 election. It just means that our members take the view that we cannot be complicit with a corrupt and, in Durban, gangsterised and ethnicised organisation, that is oppressing us, attacking us in our settlements and assassinating our leaders.

However, when Zikode went underground the three people who are now in open support of the Mayor and the ANC were emboldened. They moved quickly to try and remove bureaucratic authority from democratic control and to try to use their bureaucratic authority to push an agenda in support of the Mayor and the ANC. But because the movement's democratic spaces remained large and vibrant, despite the severe repression, these three people had no capacity to shape the political direction of the movement. The political direction continued to be determined in open and democratic assemblies.

As a result the three individuals in open support of the eThekweni Mayor and the Durban ANC avoided open democratic spaces and continued to actively try to centralise some forms of decision making in our office. They were mostly unsuccessful.

However, they did misuse their bureaucratic positions to deny support to the rapid growth of the movement in the Eastern Cape and in Gauteng. In both provinces they tried to parachute in separate pro-ANC individuals to try and undermine elected structures and control the movement in these two provinces. In the Eastern Cape this person supports the mining companies as well as the ANC and is in fact now employed by one of the mining companies. In Gauteng they have tried to insist that branches must get permission from them to occupy land, and to prevent branches from forming their own relationships with progressive lawyers. In Durban they even went so far as to insist that our movement must attend the ANC's launch of their manifesto for the 2019 elections!

As it became clear that they would not succeed in selling our movement to the ANC they began making arguments about authority that are completely against ubuhlali. For instance, they insisted that because they are older younger people must obey them. They also insisted that because they have been in the movement longer than some others those people who are newer to the movement must obey them. Our movement has always been clear that people in an elected or appointed position must take direction from the members through democratic processes. They are not there to give direction to the members or to take decisions on behalf of the members. That is ANC politics and NGO politics. It is not ubuhlali.

The three individuals who have been captured by the ANC were able to take considerable control over our office, and our official email address. It has always been our practice that when invitations are received for the movement to send a delegate to meet with other movements or organisations that invitation will be discussed in a meeting. If a decision is taken to accept the invitation and to attend the meeting a delegate is selected and mandated, and will then report back when they return from the meeting. This is basic democratic practice. However, this pro-ANC group monopolised the opportunities to represent the movement for themselves. Invitations were no longer referred to meetings and subject to democratic forms of discussion and decision making.

The situation quickly became clear to everyone. It became clear that there had been an infiltration of our movement by the ANC. It became clear that the infiltration was driven by the possibility of personal enrichment, and not ideology. It was also clear that this infiltration was restricted to a tiny number of people, who have some bureaucratic power but no democratic power.

The situation came to the point where it had to be dealt with. The reason for this is that a decision was taken to organise a mass protest against repression on 8 October. This protest will target the eThekweni Mayor. This decision was taken in an open assembly, attended by hundreds of people. However, the three people who have been co-opted by the ANC openly and desperately tried to prevent the march from going ahead. They openly misused their bureaucratic power to frustrate organisation and mobilisation for the march. It was clear to everyone that they were doing this because if the march does go ahead their relationship with the ANC will be at risk and the deals that they have made with the ANC will fall apart.

Provincial structures and more than twenty branches formally raised the matter with the General Secretary. As a result, the movement had to call a general assembly open to all members. When the assembly was announced the three people who have been openly supporting the ANC received some support on Facebook from a former member of our youth structure who, after some time as a supporter of the pro Zuma and pro Gupta front Black First Land First, is now a SASCO (ANC) member at the Durban University of Technology. He no longer represents any constituency in our movement. In typical ANC fashion he said that 'We can't be undermined by lumpens'. This is what the ANC thinks of us, and of our right to form our own organisations and to make our decisions about our own lives, communities and struggles. In their view we are 'lumpens' who are preventing them from eating.

The assembly was held today. It was open to all members and was very well attended. S'bu Zikode agreed to attend the meeting and made his first public appearance since going underground. This was a very emotional moment for our members.

The General Secretary opened the meeting with Amilcar Cabral's famous statement: "Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories." He also quoted from Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

The matter was discussed and a collective decision taken on the way forward. Although the membership does have the option to recall any person from any elected position the decision that was taken was to immediately dissolve the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Council, and the National Council, and to call a

congress and elect a new leadership within 30 days. This was the most democratic way to resolve the situation as it ensures that everyone who holds an elected position in these structures must now seek a new mandate to hold office – including those who have opposed the infiltration by the ANC.

An interim committee was elected and mandated to ensure that this process is undertaken fairly, and that all members and branches in good standing have the same rights to participate freely in the congress. That committee consists of the following people:

Mqapheli Bonono

Thapelo Mohapi

Zanele Mtshali

Nomnikelo Sigenu

S'bu Zikode

There was a small group of people who are not known to us, and who do not hold membership of our membership, who attended the general assembly today. At least four of them were visibly armed.

The attempt by the ANC to capture our movement was decisively defeated today. We are aware that this will raise the risk of further repression even higher and are taking very serious precautions to ensure the safety of our members, and in particular the five elected to the interim structure.

As long as decision making power continues to be held by our members, and to be exercised in democratic spaces, and especially in open and public assemblies, the ANC will not succeed in capturing our movement. The right to recall individuals and to dissolve structures in an open and public assembly will protect our movement from any further attempts at capture by the ANC.

Unlike the ANC our movement is a democratic organisation.

Our movement is not for sale.

The struggle for land and dignity continues.

The struggle against repression continues.

Thapelo Mohapi

Mqapheli Bonono

Nomnikelo Sigenu

20 SEPTEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Inkosi Thulani Mjanyelwa finally laid to rest

Inkosi Thulani Mjanyelwa, the chief in Mpondoland who was brutally killed by a mob of people on 26 August, was finally laid to rest in Bizana on the 15 September. It was a long struggle to be able to bury him at his own homestead.

There is bitter division in the area between those, many linked to the ANC, who support the international mining companies, and those who want the land to be held and managed by the people. Inkosi Mjanyelwa was clearly against those who want to give the land to the mining companies. He was committed to opposing the occupation of Mpondoland by an alliance between the ANC and the mining companies.

On 4 August this year King Mjanyelwa, and other traditional leaders in the Qhawukeni Traditional Authority, welcomed our movement to Mpondoland. Thousands of our members in Durban are from Mpondoland, and for years there has been a vibrant and ongoing exchange of ideas and practices of struggle between Durban and Mpondoland. We have a growing membership in the towns and villages in Mpondoland.

At the meeting on 4 August King Mjanyelwa, and other traditional leaders, recognised Abahlali baseMjondolo as a powerful movement fighting for land, and insisting that land should be occupied and managed by the people, and should not be bought or sold. They gave their public blessing for our movement to organise in Mpondoland.

Inkosi Mjanyelwa attended our Unfreedom Day event the 23 April this year. Inkosi Mjanyelwa was a reliable chief who understands that a chief is a chief because of the people, and not because of the state. He believed that it was his duty to ensure that the land in Mpondoland was defended against the alliance between the ruling party and the mining companies. He was against other chiefs who sold the land in Mpondoland and repressed people who resisted. He believed that land must be used for living and survival. He believed in the truth even if it meant losing his life which he eventually did.

His life was taken by the people who are against the struggle to keep the land in the hands of the people. The ANC are claiming that he was murdered by the community because he was a dictator and is suspected of killing two people.

There is a long history of the ANC using rumours to justify repression. Our comrades and members in the area are all clear that these rumours are not true. They say that Inkosi Mjanyelwa was killed for Mpondoland. He was killed so that those who wanted use the land for private profit and not for the benefit of the community could become wealthy at the expense of the people. He was killed because he was a stumbling block between those who wanted to take the land from the community. He stood his ground and never gave in to those who wanted to take away the land in Mpondoland. They say that Inkosi Mjanyelwa was not just a chief, he was an activist.

His funeral was dominated by the ANC. This came as a surprise because the people who were marching against the arrest of six people arrested for the killing of Inkosi were wearing ANC shirts. Also, it has been the ANC because the ANC who have been pushing the rumours about Inkosi.

We know that when an activist is attacked or killed for fighting against the state, propaganda is used shamelessly. When our movement was attacked by the ANC in Kennedy Road in 2009 incredible lies were told. Those lies were later exposed as fabrication in court. In time the truth became clear. When Bhazooka Radebe of the Amadiba Crisis Committee was killed for being vocal against the mining of the Mpondoland propaganda was used.

A number of our comrades from the Eastern Cape are currently in hiding because they supported Inkosi, and the struggle to keep the land in the hands of the people, and today they are facing threats. Our movement will continue organise in the Eastern Cape and to work with all other progressive forces to protect Mpondoland from those who want to use it for profit.

The hypocrites in the ANC who were against Inkosi are now pretending to have shared his sentiments. Abahlali came out in numbers when Inkosi was laid to rest. In the end the ANC had to give Mqapheli Bonono a platform to speak for our movement and he gave a powerful speech with no compromises on our politic, which is a politic that says that land should be owned and managed, democratically, by the people and should not be bought and sold.

We remain committed to building the struggle for land, and against the alliance between the elites in the ANC and the mining companies, in Mpondoland.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

27 SEPTEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Struggle Continues

The struggle against all the forces that vandalise human dignity has no borders. A human life is a human life where ever it may find itself. Just as we welcome comrades from other countries into our movement, and host comrades visiting from other countries in South Africa in meetings in our hall built in the eNkanini Land Occupation, we are also offered solidarity and hosted by comrades around the world, such as the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil.

Last week three of our comrades, Mqapheli Bonono, Zanele Mtshali and S'bu Zikode were warmly welcomed in Ghana. They visited Elmina Castle, a slave fort, with other comrades where *Senzeni Na?* was sung. Zikode also addressed more than 400 militants from more than 60 countries at the opening session of a Pan-African meeting of radical forces from across the continent. Referring to Frantz Fanon Zikode encouraged the delegates to take up the challenges confronting our generation. At the meeting there was strong criticism of those NGOs that try to substitute themselves for popular democratic organisations and a strong commitment to build real solidarity, living solidarity, between trade union and community struggles.

On Friday night Zikode will give a talk at the People's Forum in New York on the power of living politics, the sources of the courage to resist, the necessity for democratic organisation and the repression that continues to rain down on us from the political gangsters in the ruling party and the Municipality in Durban.

This weekend will also be busy in Durban. There will be a political education session, in the form of a discussion and a sharing of experiences and ideas, and a launch of a new branch in Hillcrest. This branch is named after S'fiso Ngcobo, the former chairperson of our Ekukhanyeni branch in Marianhill, who was assassinated on the 22nd of May. Comrade Sifiso was instrumental in building this branch which is why they decided to name the branch in honour of him.

This weekend we will also be holding political education workshops in Inanda and Cato Crest. Both of these communities have been facing brutal and

unlawful evictions at gunpoint perpetrated by the notorious Anti-Land invasions Unit.

We have recently been approached by representatives from a number of other communities from around Durban that are also facing evictions. As people confront the armed violence of the state, and have their homes burnt and destroyed, they realise that they made a terrible mistake in voting for the ANC. We will also begin the process of talking about possibilities for new forms of organisation and resistance with people in these communities. Joining our movement is a slow process that requires careful discussion, collective consensus and democratic organisation.

The struggle continues. Repression continues too.

One of our leaders in Ekukhanyeni, who has already lost one family member in the struggle, has been threatened by a man who says that he is ex-MK. He demanded that she give him land to build a house claiming that the land belongs to the Zulu King. He said to her, in Zulu, that "This woman does not know me. I am a veteran. I can send people to take her away." Since the threats were made a suspicious car has been stopped at her house in the evenings. Strange men have been waiting outside her house from around 23:00 to 1:00. This is typical of the events that usually precede an assassination. She has moved from her house and is staying with comrades elsewhere.

Our movement has survived constant intimidation, and repression, including repeated assassinations, as well as attempts at co-optation and infiltration. We will not turn back.

Our dignity & freedom are not negotiable.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali

4 OCTOBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

March in Cato Manor on Friday

Tomorrow comrades from the eNkanini Land Occupation in Cato Crest will, together with comrades from all the other branches in Umkhumbane, march on the MEC for Housing.

The march is to demand services for the land that has been occupied, and held, despite severe state repression.

The MEC promised, on several occasions, to provide these services in Umkhumbane, with eNkanini as a pilot project. However, the promise has not been kept even though his office is so close to Umkhumbane.

Each branch has drawn up its own memorandum to deliver to the MEC.

The march will start at 10:00, at the eNkanini Land Occupation, and then proceed to the MEC's office in Mayville.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Mlungisi Mokoena
Amanda Bolino
Mqapheli Bonono

5 OCTOBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to march against state repression, threats and assassinations

On Monday 8 October Abahlali baseMjondolo will march against repression in Durban. There will be solidarity protests in Cape Town, Johannesburg and New York.

Since our movement was founded in 2005 we have faced waves of repression including assault, arrest, torture in police custody, organised campaigns of slander, the destruction of our homes, death threats, the murder of our members during protests and evictions, and the targeted assassination of our leaders. The price for land and dignity has been paid in blood.

This repression comes from a very clear source – the ANC. The Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the police are part of the state that is controlled by the ANC. When we were attacked by the ANC in Kennedy Road in 2009 the police supported the attack, and the criminal justice system was grossly misused to support the attack. Senior ANC politicians like Willies Mchunu supported the attempt to drive us out of Kennedy Road with violence. This was not an isolated instance. In 2013 it was widely reported that the assassination of Nkululeko Gwala took place hours after public threats were made against him by another senior ANC politician, Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

Usually the threats against our comrades, and the assassinations that sometimes follow these threats, come from local ANC councillors. They use the izinkabi (hitmen) to carry out the assassinations. It is clear that the local councillors understand that they get their permission to make these threats, and to hire the izinkabi to do their dirty work, from the statements made by senior ANC politicians. We have noted the increase in threats following recent statements made by Zandile Gumede and Nelly Nyanisa.

After long struggle we have secured convictions in two cases. Two ANC councillors and their gun man are now serving life imprisonment for the assassination of Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi, in 2014. A police

officer is serving a ten year sentence for the murder of Nqobile Nzuzi, who was 17 years old at the time of her death, in Cato Crest.

Last year we lost four comrades. So far this year we have lost two comrades with S'fiso Ngcobo being the latest to be killed. He was murdered by three gunmen in Marianhill on the 22 May 2018. There has never been any arrest for Ngcobo's murder. In fact it is clear that there has been no investigation. Just like many other comrades he was killed with impunity.

On the 12 June the Mayor of Durban and the Chief Whip in the eThekweni council made open threats to our movement and our leader S'bu Zikode. The police officers who confirmed that a hit had been planned on Zikode's life have done nothing to protect him. Zikode's car has been tampered with on two occasions and he has been forced into hiding. In the Eastern Cape our chairperson Fano Mathumbu, and two of Abahlali's secretaries, have all had to go in hiding after Inkosi Thulani Mjanyelwa was killed in broad day light by a gang. When the killers were taken to court they were supported by people in ANC t-shirts.

Nobody in government has taken these killings seriously. We have appeared before the Moerane Commission which was set up to investigate political killing in KwaZulu-Natal to give testimony but that has not helped us. The Interministerial Committee instituted by President Ramaphosa to look at the political killings has not included Abahlali in its investigation. It is only concerned about the killings within the ruling party.

In June this year we wrote to President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister Bheki Cele about all this. We received no cooperation from them.

We have laid charges of against those who intimidate us and those who threaten us with death.

The repression that we have faced, and continue to face, places huge strain on our movement, and on families and individuals. The ANC have exploited the fact that we are being forced to operate in crisis mode to try and infiltrate our movement. They have not succeeded. Open democratic practices, and especially open assemblies in which everyone can speak freely, are our best defence against infiltration.

The ANC in Durban operates like a mafia. There is no distinction between criminality and politics. The rest of the country needs to understand this clearly and to face this directly.

We will march against the violence against our movement and our leaders, and all other activists, in Durban on Monday, 8 October 2018. We will gather at Curries Fountain (DUT) from 8 am then march into the city centre where a memorandum of demands will be handed over at the Durban City Hall at 12pm. The march in Durban will be supported by organised street traders, including the Market Users Committee, as well as Ubunye Bamahostela, the Congolese Solidarity Campaign and comrades from the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) and the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU).

Solidarity marches have been organised by our comrades in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Our comrades in New York City in the United States will protest at the South African High Commission.

We have written to President Ramaphosa and the Minister of Police to receive our memorandum.

We will demand an end to violence against our movement and all other struggling communities. We will demand the right to free and democratic organising outside of the ANC. We will demand that all the murders of our comrades be properly investigated. We will demand that all threats made by councillors, as well as the Mayor, be investigated. And, yes, we will demand that our leaders in hiding be protected.

For comment from Abahlali baseMjondolo

Mqapheli Bonono

Zanele Mtshali

Thapelo Mohapi

For comment from the Market Users Committee

Verushka Memdutt

For comments from the CBD Street Traders

Richard Shezi

For comment from the Congolese Solidarity Campaign

Raphael Bahebwa

For comment from the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)

Phakamile Hlubi-Majola

For comment from the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU)

Khonzeni Mkhize

For comment on the solidarity protest in Johannesburg

Thami

For comment on the solidarity protest in Cape Town

Bels

14 OCTOBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Bahlali welcome S'bu Zikode back to umzabalazo

On Monday more than 5 000 comrades marched from Curries Fountain to the Durban City Hall to protest against the repression of our movement, including ongoing threats and assassinations. It was made very clear that the ANC is responsible for this repression. After months underground S'bu Zikode participated in the march and addressed the gathering outside the City Hall. He has made it clear that he would rather perish than bow to an abusive state.

Today Abahlali baseMjondolo Barcelona 2 in Lamontville, an area in which there has been serious repression, including murder, have organised a rally to welcome S'bu Zikode back to umzabalazo. Other branches in Durban have been invited to gather at Barcelona 2 for this event.

The comrades in Barcelona 2 have successfully resisted all attempts by the local ANC ward councillor Eunice Khanyile to violently and unlawfully evict them from their homes. Her violent and unlawful eviction took place few weeks after eThekweni Mayor Zandile Gumede and Nelly Nyanisa, council Chief whip, made threats public against our movement and against S'bu Zikode in particular. Abahlali took the city to the Durban High Court where the court ordered the city to reinstate hundreds of displaced families.

We will not turn back. The struggle for land, freedom and dignity continues. We will confront all forms of oppression with the organised power of the oppressed.

The event started at 10:00 am and is continuing now.

Mqapheli Bonono
Thapelo Mohapi
Jujebe

23 OCTOBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Shack fires are our daily lives

When you live in a shack in this country you are considered to be someone who cannot think. Your dignity is not recognised. You are left to live with the rats and the floods. You are left to burn. Your life does not count as a human life.

Almost 25 years after apartheid we are still condemned to indignity. We are still forced to live like pigs in the mud. We are still sentenced to die in the fires. When we refuse indignity and stand up for our humanity we continue to face arrest, assault, torture and assassination.

We are seen as a problem to be dealt with by the police and the NGOs. The politicians only remember us during elections. They see us as a vote bank, not equal participants in democratic life.

The recent fire in Cape Town which left more than a thousand people homeless, and one life lost, is more proof that our lives do not matter in the eyes of this government. The only reason political parties attended to this problem is because there is an election next year. But making a noise after a big fire when an election is coming is not the same thing as providing people with decent housing and stopping the fires.

We have heard many people suddenly becoming experts on shack fires. Some are saying the reasons that shack fires exist is because we build too close to one another. Others blame the forms of lighting or heating that people use. In some cases alcohol is said to be the cause of the fires.

It is typical for middle class and elite people to think in this way. They want to blame the oppressed for their suffering rather than to blame the systems that cause oppression.

When you are living in shacks your life is vandalised by the state. The economy places no value on your dignity. When you are forced to live on a tiny piece of land with thousands of other people, when you are forced to build with wood, cardboard and plastic, and when you are not allowed to connect yourself to electricity disasters are inevitable.

Under these circumstances there will always be floods and fires.

The state has failed to provide land, housing and services for millions of people. When we take our own action to occupy good land, to build decent houses and to connect ourselves to water and electricity, the state criminalises our efforts.

The state always blames us. We are blamed for being homeless. We are blamed for moving to the cities to seek a better life. We are blamed for occupying land. We are blamed for trying to build homes for our families. We are blamed for making our own connections to water and electricity. Then the very people who are constantly blaming us for being oppressed while benefiting from the systems that oppress us then expect us to vote for them.

It is time that as the impoverished we open our eyes and see that we are being fooled by politicians. We are living in these undignified and dangerous conditions because of them.

We need to hit them where it hurts the most. That is in the vote. Let's not vote for the same people who oppress us. It is clear that we can't trust politicians. The ANC in KwaZulu-Natal is repressing us. In the Western Cape the DA is discriminating black people.

Others are involved in continuing to make people in Limpopo poor via the corruption that took place in the VBS bank. Who do we trust really? All the political parties are oppressing us.

We must unite as the oppressed, as impoverished people, and refused to be used by politicians. We must build our own power and work to emancipate ourselves.

But in the urgency of the crisis in Cape Town immediate support is needed. We are able to collect donations in the form of clothing and other useful things in Durban via our office which can be contacted. We will be working with comrades from Social Justice Coalition in Cape Town to assist in this difficult time.

Shack fires are political. We refuse to be left to burn.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Axolile Notywala

31 OCTOBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Solidarity with our Comrades in Brazil

For a number of years our movement has enjoyed close relationships with various movements in the left in South America. This has included the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST), known in English as the Landless Workers' Movement, in Brazil. Many of our comrades have spent a lot of time with the MST in Brazil.

We have also been pleased to build a relationship with Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto (MTST), known in English as the Homeless Workers Movement, also from Brazil. This year we had the honour of hosting comrades from the MTST in Durban.

The recent elections in Brazil have been won by the extreme right. This is a disaster for democracy. Jair Bolsonaro, who will be the new president, has described organisations like the MST and the MTST as 'terrorists' and land occupations and road blockades as 'terrorist activities'. It is clear that the right will militarise the state and attack the popular movements of the left, and rule the poor with even more violence. Poor people in general, and black and gay people in particular, are at serious risk.

There have already been attacks on progressive media, progressive spaces in the universities and black and gay people. Our comrades in Brazil fear that a serious attack on the left, and in particular the popular movements like the MST and MTST, is a real and urgent danger.

We condemn the raids that have already been carried out against progressive forces in the media and the universities and express our full support for MST, MTST and all other forces of the left in Brazil that must now confront the reality that serious repression is inevitable.

We commit ourselves to standing firm in solidarity with our comrades in Brazil and call on all our comrades in South Africa, and around the world to do the same, especially organised membership based formations like popular movements and trade unions. We are encouraged to see how many of our comrades around the world are watching the situation in Brazil and are willing to act in whatever way they can to be in solidarity with the movements and people of Brazil.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

5 NOVEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Serious Factual Errors in Mail & Guardian Article

As everybody knows our movement has been subject to sustained violence, including assassinations by the izinkabi and murders by the police, municipal security and the Anti-land Invasion Unit. On 8 October we marched, in our thousands, against political violence.

We are not the only organisation that is subject to political violence in KwaZulu-Natal. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, the South African Communist Party and various political parties, including the ruling party have all had their members assassinated. Most of the people who have been killed are ANC leaders who have been killed on the orders of other ANC leaders.

On 18 October S'bu Maphumulo the ANC councillor for Ward 88 in Umlazi was assassinated. The next day the African News Agency reported that:

Maphumulo made local headlines last year when shack-dweller group Abahlali baseMjondolo accused him of intimidating one of its Silver City, uMlazi, branch leaders at a community meeting.

The group claimed Maphumulo stormed the meeting with police officers and “hitmen”.

Speaking to ANA on Friday after the news of Maphumulo's murder, Abahlali president S'bu Zikode said: “He was one of the councillors that intimidated Abahlali leaders in our Silver City branch in Umlazi.

“We had opened an intimidation case against him and the police would not arrest him. He would come into Abahlali meetings with his armed men and intimidate and disturb our meetings. May his soul rest in peace.

“Having said that, I do want to say, our condolences to Maphumulo's family and children. No human being deserves this kind of brutality. That is why we came out in our thousands last week to say killing of people must come to an end. May his soul rest in peace.”

This report accurately reflects our experience and views.

This weekend we were disturbed to read the article on the murder of Maphumalo in the Mail & Guardian titled 'Unsolved KZN hits spread fear'. The article contains some errors that could put our members at significant risk.

There was a march on the Councillor on the day that he was assassinated and it has been claimed that during that march threats were made to burn down the Councillor's house. The article states that 'Activists from the civic movement Abahlali baseMjondolo in the ward, who were involved in that protest march, were detained and questioned by the police in the day following.' Later on in the article the protest is referred to as 'an Abahlali march'. The article is accompanied by a photograph of our march against assassinations on 8 October. However the caption makes it seem like the photograph is of the march on the Councillor on 18 October. That caption has now been corrected online but readers of the print copy will still have the wrong impression and think that the photograph is of an Abahlali march on the Councillor.

The march on the Councillor was not an Abahlali baseMjondolo march. It was organised by concerned residents in ward 88 and our movement played no role in the organisation of the march, and didn't mobilise our members to support the march. The three activists who were arrested after the assassination – Bheki Buthelezi, Sizwe Shibe and Sithembile Doncabe – are not Abahlali baseMjondolo members. We do know Bheki Buthelezi and Sizwe Shibe, who is known as Rasta. They are well known activists in Durban, and have been supportive of our movement from time to time, but have never taken membership of our movement. Sizwe is a member of a separate organisation, the United Front, and Bheki has worked with various organisations, including the United Front.

It is disappointing to us that the Mail & Guardian has printed a factually incorrect report without contacting us to ensure the accuracy of the information that they have published. We understand that there was no intention to misrepresent the facts but rumours and false information can easily cost lives in KwaZulu-Natal where the politic of blood has become an everyday bread.

We have always called on the police to investigate and bring to book all those who are behind the killings of activists and politicians. We continue to do so. We cannot live under these conditions where political killing has become a normal thing.

We condemn any form of killing whether it is politically motivated or not. Our condemnation of political killings includes all the politicians who have been killed, including, of course, Cllr S’bu Maphumulo.

While we understand that there was no bad intention with this article we would like to ask the media to take greater care with their reporting, and to contact us before accepting as true what other people say about us. In this province journalistic errors could have very serious consequences.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

8 NOVEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Brutal Armed Attack on the eKhenana Land Occupation

The eKhenana Land Occupation was founded in Cato Crest in August this year. Since then it has been subject to repeated armed attacks. The local ward councillor Ward councillor Mzimuni Ngiba has personally accompanied by the police and the Anti-Land Invasion Unit during at least one attack. The ANC leadership in the ward have made it clear that they will not accept the occupation and they have made it clear that they intend to continue to mobilise violence to destroy it.

Today at around 11 am the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, armed security and metro police arrived at the occupation. There were more than 200 of them and they were prepared for war. They attacked the occupation with serious violence including rubber bullets and live ammunition. A number of people were injured in the attack. Mthobeli Sinaba, Bhekokuhle Shezi and Lando Tshazi are currently in King Edward Hospital as a result of injuries sustained in the attack. Lando Tshazi was shot in the leg with live ammunition and the bullet is still stuck in his leg.

The hypocrites in the ANC continues to speak about land reform in parliament and in the media while violently evicting black people in the cities, like the apartheid government did. They do not recognise our humanity. We are treated like animals.

Talk about expropriation is just cheap talk aimed at winning votes. The reality is brutal armed attacks on people organising land reform, and undertaking urban planning, from below. Under the ANC we continue to pay for land with blood.

We continue to commit ourselves to democratic self-organisation and land reform from below. We continue to commit ourselves to defend our occupations. We continue to commit ourselves to defend our humanity.

Our comrades are currently rebuilding their lives after this brutal eviction.

The eKhenana occupation will be held, just as the eNkanini occupation was held.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni

26 NOVEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Tomorrow We Go to Court to Stop the Eviction of Disabled Residents

Tomorrow the eNduduzweni branch of Abahlali baseMjondolo goes to Durban High Court as the eThekweni Municipality and KZN Department of Social Development intensifies its war on the blind and physical challenged residents in the eNduduzweni Centre for the Disabled in uMlazi.

At the same time the eThekweni Municipality's Land Invasion Unit is intensifying its war on the eKhenana land occupation in uMkhumbane.

For a long time now the KZN Department of Social Development has tried to evict the eNduduzweni residents who have lived at the Centre for the Disabled for many years. They have failed with all their tricks, including saying that they want to renovate the home and therefore residents must return back to rural dumping areas where there are no jobs or prospect of economic livelihood, and no facilities for people in wheelchairs or people who are blind. They have been harassing residents, stealing from them, cutting services and lying to them. They have even tried to evict them through court but failed.

The residents are living in a home that was given to them many years ago. After the government took over the home they were given a grant. But then the grant was stopped they were given stipends as they work on handwork as part of skills development projects. They have now been told that they will no longer receive stipends and that instead they will receive cooked food. The residents have rejected the decision to replace the stipend with food citing that they have families to support back home, so feeding them like animals does not give them dignity means that they are unable to support their families.

While comrades were waiting for the Department of Social Development to consult with them they sent eThekweni municipal officials to cut electricity as way of punishing them and forcefully drive them out of home.

The KZN Department of Social Development has failed to engage the residents honestly and respectfully. The dignity of the residents is not respected.

The eNduduzweni branch has had to go to court after the eThekwini municipality cut off their electricity.

We are pleased that the Legal Resource Centre is taking the eThekwini Municipality to Durban High Court to demand re-electrification. The states continue to fail to treat people with respect and dignity.

Abahlali will come out in their numbers to support our comrades against indignity and injustices.

Baba Shiba
Mqapheli Bonono

1 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eNkanini Branch to Open its Community Hall Today

Today, Saturday 1 December, our eNkanini Branch in Cato Manor, will officially open its new community hall. The land was first occupied early last year and the occupation faced serious and often brutal resistance from the local ANC and middle-class residents living on nearby land. It took sustained courage to hold and win the land. The alliance between the middle class residents, the ANC and the police did not stop the inkani of community.

The struggle resulted in many comrades being arrested, and many were seriously injured. Comrades were evicted from the land during at least twenty-two separate attacks. The City would burn their belongings and building materials after each and every eviction. They never gave up.

We have had to go to court on the 27 July 2017 where we had obtained a court interdict against the evictions. But City would continue to evict residents in brazen violation of the court order. At the end of last year we had to bring an application for contempt of court. We wanted to hold the Mayor of eThekweni, Mam Zandile Gumede, and the City Manager, Dr Nzuzo, personally liable for contempt. That matter is set to be heard in March 2019.

We have called on South Africans to come to eNkanini to learn what the expropriation of land from below could look like if fully supported by the state and public at large. The land was occupied by the residents. The community was formed and built by the occupiers. They have built their own homes. They have connected themselves to water, sanitation and electricity by themselves without the support of the municipality. They have also built the hall themselves. This is land reform, and urban planning, planned and carried out from below.

Today we are pleased to say that not only have we won land and built our homes but we have also built our community, our lives and our dignity.

The event will start at 10am. We have asked comrade S'bu Zikode to cut our ribbon as a symbol of courage. The hall will be used to build ubuhlali.

Smallboy Mokoena
Vusi Mazubane
Nhlanhla Mtshali
Mqapheli Bonono

4 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Violent police assault leads to death of another baby

On 16 November there was a brutal attack on the eNkanini land occupation including a helicopter and police from as far away as Bloemfontein. As individual homes were raided numerous people were severely beaten by the police. Teargas was thrown into homes without regard for who was inside and many children were affected.

Nonhlanhla Nzama, a resident in the occupation who was seven months pregnant, collapsed and was admitted to hospital for five days after inhaling the teargas. On Friday her child was stillborn.

A child has been denied to be on earth. His crime is that he was going to be born to a poor family who had decided to occupy land and to take their place in the city. His parents have been denied the blessing of a child by a government that does not recognise them as human beings. They are both traumatised. Nonhlanhla is still in hospital.

The police at the Mayville police station have simply refused to open cases of assault. People who have persisted in trying to open cases have been threatened by the police.

In this country the lives of the poor are freely vandalised without any consequences for our oppressors. All we are to the government is a bank of votes.

The eNkanini occupation has been targeted for this kind of brutality because of its strong support for the nearby eKhenana land occupation. The ANC refer to our members in both occupations as thugs and criminals. As they talk about land reform they brutally repress anyone who organises land reform from below.

For the poor the price for land continues to be paid in blood.

Small Boy Mokoena
Nhlanhla Mtshali
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

7 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to hold Policy and Special Elective Congress

Our movement has been going through a tough time. Our land occupations are coming under sustained and illegal state violence. Many of our comrades have been injured and arrested, some have been tortured. We have buried many comrades this year as assassinations have worsened. Death threats have forced a number of comrades into hiding.

The forces of oppression have pursued a dual strategy. With one hand they have mobilised violence against us from the police, private security, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the izinkabi. With the other hand they have tried to co-opt people in organisation via an alliance between forces in the ruling party, the National Funeral Practitioners Association of SA (Nafupa-SA) and VBS bank.

Our togetherness has allowed us build and sustain the courage required to survive the violent onslaught. Our radically democratic practices, which include the right to recall anyone from any position, and to dissolve any structure, via a popular vote in an open assembly have allowed us to survive the attempt at infiltration and co-option.

The Special General Assembly held on the 16 September took a resolution to dissolve both the National and Provincial Council of Abahlali. It was immediately replaced with an Interim Council formed by an open vote at the Assembly. The Interim Council was given two main tasks:

1. To prepare for the mass protest that was already planned against repression and killing of Abahlali members. This protest march was a great success in Durban and there were solidarity events in Cape Town, Johannesburg and New York City.
2. To prepare for an early Elective Conference.

Tomorrow we will hold a Policy Conference. In this conference delegates representing all branches in good standing will discuss different policy matters including possible amendments to the Abahlali Constitution to ensure that it

is as democratic as is possible. Any proposed changes to the Constitution that emerge from these discussions will be voted on during the Elective Conference.

We will also elect our new leadership during the Elective Conference.

We have had number of consultative discussions with branches and the Chairpersons Council about the process for this election. We have agreed that all branches that will be participating must be in good standing. That means that their membership status must be valid and that their leadership must have been elected according to the agreed on democratic process.

We have also agreed that the number of delegates that branches will be sending will be determined by the size of the branch.

We have also agreed that those branches that are not in good standing will be welcome to attend the conference but they will only hold observer status and will not have voting rights.

All candidates for election must be members in good standing and must have been nominated by at least one branch in good standing. Each candidate who has been nominated for election, and who has decided to accept that nomination, must write a letter explaining what they can offer to the movement should they be elected.

Each branch can nominate a maximum of three candidates for election. Any member in good standing can be nominated but the nominations from each branch must follow our commitment to full and immediate equality between women and men.

We have approached comrades outside of the movement to identify an independent organisation or individuals to help us to ensure that the election is fair. Today the Interim Council is handing all responsibilities related to the election to this Independent Body that will manage our election process.

Joyce Majola
Nomusa Sizani
Sane Mthethwa

10 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali held a successful elective congress over the weekend

Over the years our movement has grown rapidly despite the continuous repression from the state. The vision of the movement has always been to protect, promote and advance the interests of the impoverished and marginalised. We continue to fight for a just and equal society where dignity of all human kind is recognised. We have not deviated from our vision. We continue to build the power of the impoverished from below.

This weekend we held an elective congress. A total of 23 branches, all in good standing, participated in the congress. Five provinces were part of the conference.

On Saturday 08th December the policy conference was held where two representatives from each branches were part of the policy formulation and the amendment of the constitution. On Sunday, the following day the elections, which were highly contested, were held for the National Council of Abahlali baseMjondolo.

Independent observers were tasked to act as our IEC.

The newly elected National Council takes on its responsibilities after a period of sustained repression, including multiple assassinations, and attempts by the ANC to infiltrate the movement. They have a clear and democratic mandate and the trust and support of tens of thousands of our members in settlements and occupations across the country.

The newly elected leadership of the movement is as follows:

- Sibusiso Zikode – President
- Mqapheli Bonono – Deputy President
- Thapelo Mohapi – General Secretary
- Nomsa Sizani – Deputy Secretary
- Zanele Mtshali – National Chairperson
- Thuso Mohapi – Treasurer
- Mlungisi Mokoena – Co-ordinator
- Bathabile Makhoba – Chief whip

The struggle continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

26 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Return to Court in the Wake of Another Murder and More Illegal Evictions

Once again Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will be going to court to prevent ongoing illegal and brutal evictions directed at an impoverished community by the eThekweni Municipality. This time the target of the Municipality's attack is the eKhenana land occupation in Cato Crest.

In the past six months the notorious Anti Land Invasion Unit, with the support of the eThekweni Metro Police, has been regularly demolishing and burning down people's homes in the eKhenana land occupation.

On Thursday 20 December more than 46 homes were demolished and three were burnt down by the Anti Land Invasion Unit. There was no court order and this was, therefore, another illegal attack on the occupation.

This occupation has not come easy as many people have been injured after being shot with live ammunition by the Anti Land Invasion Unit. On Sunday at around 8 pm one of the participants in the occupation, and a leader in the protests organised to defend the occupation, Senzo Gumede, was shot and killed by unknown men in a nearby area.

Senzo was vocal against those who opposed the occupation. He took a leading role in organising the road blockades used to defend the occupation when it was under attack. He had been threatened by the ward councillor in the area, and, on a number of occasions, he was also threatened by taxi owners who said that the road blockades were hampering their business.

As we go to court on Thursday 27 December we want to ensure that the rights of the impoverished and marginalised cannot be grossly violated with impunity. While the ANC continues to render people homeless during the festive season our movement will continue to defend the dignity of the poor at this time. We will continue to occupy and keep land for living and thriving.

We expropriate land for the poor from below unlike the hypocrites in Parliament who talk about land reform while violently and illegally repressing the

struggles of the people. We continue to redress the injustices of the past via organisation and struggle from below. We want to do away with apartheid spatial planning via grassroots urban planning and direct action.

It is time that ordinary poor black South Africans realise that the ANC led government has failed to ensure that land is returned to the people. It is time to organise democratic power from below and to occupy land for living.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni

28 DECEMBER 2018

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Update on the Court Application to Stop Evictions at the eKhenana Land Occupation

Yesterday our movement filed an application to prevent any further evictions in our eKhenana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. The court adjourned this matter indefinitely until further information from both parties is gathered.

The Municipality urged the court to give them time to formulate their supplementary affidavit. Even though the interdict was not granted, we consider the court's response to be valuable because while the matter is in court the Municipality is not allowed to continue with the evictions and the community is not allowed to continue to build more structures.

This means that if the Municipality continues with the evictions, we can file against them on an urgent basis. If they do try and continue with the evictions against the instructions of the court we'll immediately return to the court to seek an urgent interdict against them.

We welcome the decision of the court and will continue to organise to build the power of the impoverished from below to struggle to realise our right to the cities, and to ensure that the land is shared among those who work it. With organisation and mobilisation at scale, and over time, we can work to ensure that grassroots urban planning, and direct action confront apartheid spatial planning and capitalist planning.

Land, wealth and power must be shared.

We are not afraid. We are prepared to die in defence of our human dignity,
Thapelo Mohapi

Mqapheli Bonono

Zakhele Mkhize

18 JANUARY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Vicious evictions continue in eKhenana

On Wednesday afternoon the Anti Land Invasion Unit waged a brutal attack on the eKhenana land occupation in Cato Crest. More than 35 homes were demolished and burnt by these thugs.

The attack yesterday happened despite the matter being before the court. On 27 December last year we approached the High Court for an urgent interdict against the repeated attacks on the eKhenana occupation. The lawyers for the Municipality asked the court for time to prepare their answering affidavit. The court specifically stated that there should be no further evictions until the matter had been resolved. These evictions were therefore in violation of both the law and the specific instruction of the court.

The eThekweni Municipality and its Anti Land Invasion Unit do not regard people who are living in shacks as human beings. They see us being beneath the law.

Yesterday we saw that Msawakhe Mayisela, the spokesperson for the City, has told the media that there is a 'third force' behind what they call land invasions and we call land occupations.

They have been calling our movement the 'third force' since 2005. This language is used to evict us from democracy and to prepare the public for violence against us, including murder.

Land occupations are not a result of a foreign conspiracy. They are a result of the fact that millions of people are landless, and do not have access to the cities. They are a result of the fact that in almost 25 years in power the ANC has failed to address the land question in the cities, as well as in the rural areas.

One faction of the ANC claims to be the custodians of the Constitution which says that everyone has a right to housing, and that no one should be evicted without an order of the court. The other faction claims that it wants radical land reform. However we continue to be subject to illegal and violent attacks when we occupy land and advance land reform and realise our right to the cities from below.

It has become obvious that all the talk about land reform in this country is just a political campaign for the elections this year. The ANC has never been serious about land reform and they are not serious about it now.

We will make our own future. The struggle continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Snanga Mkhize

11 FEBRUARY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Admission of corruption by city official not a surprise.

It has been reported in the media that Sibusiso Vilane, deputy head for sanitation operations in the eThekweni Municipality, has admitted to approving payments totalling R36 million to four companies for providing sanitation to shack settlements even though they did not in fact provide the services for which they were paid.

When one lives in a shack settlement life is hard. There are often no basic services and when they are provided there is never enough for the entire community.

As with the provision of electricity to shack settlements in Durban the decision to provide sanitation came in response to years of struggle. When the eThekweni municipality first agreed to provide and maintain public toilets in shack settlements five years ago we hoped that this was going to make the lives of people who have spent their lives relieving themselves in the bushes easier. We hoped that this would help to keep women and children safer. We hoped that this was a small but important step towards the recognition of our human dignity.

However corrupt officials and politicians have just used the budget for the toilets as an ATM. Some companies have taken millions of rands to provide toilets but have not provided any toilets. Many shack settlements are still waiting for these toilets to be provided. They have been waiting since 2013.

When toilets have been provided some have never been looked after by those who were employed in the Expanded Public Works Programme to clean them. Some of these employees have admitted that they are getting paid for work which they have never begun to perform.

When toilets have been provided, and there is actually a cleaner working, we find that a woman is supposed to clean the male and female sections. Cleaners are not given proper protective clothing or any form of health care even though they work under very unhealthy conditions.

As a result of the officials and politicians using these toilets as ATMs the conditions are shocking and unhealthy. There are rats as big as cats. It is not healthy for children to play next to them.

The recent admission by Sibusiso Vilane comes at a time where we as a movement have been asking questions with regards to this matter. We, however, believe that Vilane is a small fish being used to cover some of the prominent politicians in the municipality. Vilane has recommended that his punishment is that he either be suspended for 10 days without pay or his salary increment be withheld for a period not exceeding 13 months. This is an attempt to cover up massive corruption.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is calling for the immediate dismissal of the two officials implicated in this corruption scandal. We also call for the immediate dismissal of Mayor Zandile Gumede as all this corruption, as well as escalating violence against shack dwellers from the Metro Police and the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, has happened under her watch. We also call for the immediate dismissal of Mondli Mthembu who has been mentioned in a number of corruption scandals in the city. We believe that Sibusiso Vilane and Vusimuzi Mkhwanazi are not the only officials responsible for the corruption in the toilets scandal. More officials and political heads in the municipality are involved and must be held accountable.

When the President of the country says he is serious about fighting corruption, he must first prove it by cleaning up the biggest region of his party which is in Durban. This will prove that he is indeed in charge and that the rumour that his predecessor is still in charge of the municipality is just a rumour. The President also needs to act, seriously, against the violence in the municipality, including violence from the Metro Police, the SAPS, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, private security companies and the izinkabi.

As long as municipal officials and politicians continue to see the victories of our struggles as opportunities to enrich themselves and their families we will continue to organise against them.

The solution to the wholesale looting of budgets allocated to improve the living conditions of impoverished people is open, public and participatory budgeting and project management.

Nomsa Sizani
Bathabile Makhoba

14 FEBRUARY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Durban High Court Grants Abahlali baseKhenana an Interdict against eThekweni's Notorious Land Invasion Unit

Yesterday afternoon the Durban High Court granted us an interdict against the eThekweni Municipality's repeated, vicious and illegal attack on residents of eKhenana land occupation in Cato Crest.

The Abahlali baseMjondolo Khenana branch has suffered violent and illegal evictions from eThekweni Municipality since October last year. The Municipality has repeatedly demolished people's homes, confiscating and burning their building materials and other belongings. Women and children have suffered the most in the hands of the city that claims to be a caring city.

This is not an isolated case of illegal and violent actions against impoverished people by the Municipality. The Municipality constantly engages in violent and illegal action, including the use of live ammunition against unarmed residents.

In all their evictions they have ignored the law. It is important to note that the City has never at any stage acted within the discipline of the law when it comes to evicting impoverished black people from occupied land. They treat us as if we are beneath the law. Over the years we have won more court interdicts and judgments against them than we can remember.

On the 27 December last year we went to court to seek an order against the ongoing and illegal evictions. However, the matter was adjourned for both parties to file their supplementary affidavits. Both the residents and the Municipality were not supposed to conduct any act of either rebuilding shacks or evicting residents as the matter was sub judice. However, as always, the Municipality acted in full and brazen violation of this. They just continued to burn, confiscate and evict residents.

Yesterday, Wednesday, 13 February we had no choice but to return to court on an urgent basis. The court did not hesitate to see who was the culprit in this matter and quickly granted Abahlali an interdict against the municipality.

The City is now interdicted from evicting 109 families cited in the court papers. The court also instructed officials of the Land Invasion Unit together with Abahlali leaders to convene a joint inspection in order to seek agreement on the demarcation of the site. We have to make note of all the applicants and take pictures of them standing in each of their structures and to file joint minutes in respect of the inspection conducted.

However, this did not work in 2014 in the case of Cato Crest evictions where the local councillor mobilised ANC members to prevent the implementation of the court. They actually threatened our legal team and disorganised everybody making it impossible to implement the court order. It may also be dangerous to try and implement the order now given the approaching election and the well-known and often violent political intolerance in KZN.

We were ordered to return to court on the 19 March 2019.

We wish to welcome this judgement as an important step in holding the City accountable and to protect impoverished black people against the endemic human rights abuses perpetrated against us by eThekweni Municipality.

S'bu Zikode
Bathabile Makhoba

22 FEBRUARY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ANC undermine High Court interdict

When the eKhenana land occupation was organised last year the ANC ward councillor in ward 101, Mzimuni Ngiba, was very adamant that it will not be a success.

Ngiba even organised members of the local ANC Branch Executive Committee to unlawfully demolish people's homes. They were heavily armed and fired shots in the air to scare the people away.

Ngiba has been the councillor of this ward for six years. He has been consistently authoritarian and hostile to all forms of organisation outside of the ruling party. Many of the people living in the new occupation had been left out of the in situ upgrading that took place in this ward because they were not members of the ANC. They were made homeless when the upgrade happened, and it was this that forced them to decide to occupy new land.

Four of our comrades have been murdered during struggles for land in this ward. Thembinkosi Qumbela, Nkululeko Gwala, and, recently, Senzo Gumede were all murdered by the izinkabi for support land occupations and speaking out against the corruption and the unfair allocation of housing in Cato Crest. Nqobile Nzuza was shot and killed by a police officer from the Cato Manor police during a protest against illegal evictions from the Marikana land occupation in Cato Manor.

On Wednesday 13 February the Durban High Court granted our movement an interdict against the eThekweni Municipality preventing them from continuing to carry out illegal and violent attacks on the eKhenana land occupation. The City was interdicted from evicting 109 families cited in the court papers. The court also instructed officials of the Land Invasion Unit, together with Abahlali leaders, to convene a joint inspection in order to seek agreement on the demarcation of the site.

However as noted at the time when a similar interdict was won against the Municipality in 2014 to protect the Marikana land occupation Ngiba mobilised

ANC members to threaten us, and our legal team, to make the inspection on the site impossible.

On Tuesday 19 February at around 5 p.m. Ngiba mobilised ANC members to clear the bush next to the eKhenana settlement and to occupy it. Some people who already had land were forced, with threats of violence to join the occupation. The occupiers threatened motorists and Abahlali members and demolished and burnt some of their shacks.

As a result of what happened on Tuesday, and the continuing threats and intimidation the spite inspection that was supposed to happen on Wednesday 20 February could not go ahead. The City will blame this on us when in fact it is a result, once again, of Ngiba's actions.

This is not only an attack on our movement but also an attack on the judiciary by the ANC.

When we occupy land the Anti Land Invasion Unit and the Metro Police will come and remove people forcefully and even use live ammunition. Lives have often been lost in the struggle for land. They will evict us without regard for the law. But when members of the ANC occupy land in violation of a court order the municipality does not act against them.

Residents of the area in formal houses have been told that the new occupation was organised by Abahlali. This is a lie. The new occupation was organised by Ngiba. Anyone who wants to know the truth must just visit the area and see for themselves what is happening.

We are not opposed to occupation of land by the people. We have always affirmed our support for the occupation of land as a means for people to live and thrive. We support grassroots urban planning.

However, we are concerned when the ruling party uses occupations to reassert their monopoly on the allocation of land, to attack an autonomous and democratic movement and to undermine the court when the court has given us some protection against illegal state violence.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Lindokuhle Mnguni

27 FEBRUARY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eThekweni Municipality forced to recognise Abahlali baseKhenana 109

On 13 February the Durban High Court granted us an interdict against the eThekweni Municipality's repeated violent and illegal attacks on residents of eKhenana land occupation in Cato Crest. The Court directed the municipality's Land Invasion Unit and Abahlali leadership to hold a site inspection. The inspection was disturbed by the local ANC councillor Mzi Ngiba last week.

Ngiba had directed ANC supporters to occupy the land following our court victory. People did not occupy the land because they were in desperate need for land. They occupied it on Mzi's instruction to subvert the law and threaten an autonomous popular organisation. The site inspection could not go ahead last week as threats were made to us and Khenana homes were attacked by Ngiba's people.

Our legal team asked for postponement for yesterday. The process went very well and peacefully. We were able to map up all our members on site. Each of the 109 families cited on the court order stood before their homes to be verified and photographed. We are now expected to file joint minutes and submit it to court. This is to ensure that our members are not violently and unlawfully evicted from their homes.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to our legal team from Socio Economic Rights Institute who worked hard to defend all these 109 families who have long been brutalized by the City.

We wish to congratulate our movement for years of struggle for land and dignity, and to educate the eThekweni Municipality to respect our human dignity. When they come to evict us they never have a court order. They also treat us as if we don't count to the law. Usually they use violence as they vandalise our humanity.

We were quite happy to read their statement when they proudly said that they are armed with a Court order when they came to evict Ngiba's people.

Hopefully they will always follow the law when dealing with all people, whether ANC members or not, in the future.

Ngiba's attempt to undermine our occupations in the area has failed. Our occupations are all still there. After the eThekweni Municipality approached the Durban High Court to seek an eviction order against Ngiba's ANC people on Friday he had to call a special meeting to apologise to his people and instruct them to vacate the Land they have occupied. This act triggered huge protest over the weekend against Ngiba.

However instead the police ignored the protest by Ngiba's people and attacked the eNkanini occupation in a so called "raid". This started on Friday afternoon and the counter protest continued the whole night and on Saturday. A total of 7 activists were arrested for what they call 'public violence' which usually just means that a councillor has pointed people out to the police. We call this trick police violence. All the comrades subject to police violence were released by the Durban Magistrate court yesterday.

It is clear that the police in Cato Manor continue to think that they work for the local ANC rather than to implement the law. They have tortured and murdered comrades in the past and regularly subject our members to serious violence. We have already put one of their officers in prison for the murder of one of our activists and we will continue to resist the thuggery and criminality of the Cato Manor.

Land, wealth and power must be shared fairly.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

1 MARCH 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Dishonest statements by MEC Ravi Pillay

On 13 February the Durban High Court granted our movement an interdict against the eThekweni municipality's repeated violent and illegal evictions against the eKhenana land occupation in Cato Crest. The interdict protects 109 named families against illegal eviction.

The roots of this occupation are in the corruption of the local ANC. When housing was provided in the area the process was corrupt and some people were left homeless.

After the interdict was granted to our movement the local the local ANC councillor Mzi Ngiba encouraged, and in some cases forced, his followers to occupy land to try and undermine the court process. This caused division in the ANC in the city with Ngiba supporting the new occupation organised to disrupt the court process and the Mayor and other senior people in the party opposing it.

On 22 February the Municipality went to court to seek an order to evict Ngiba's ANC people. They were successful. When we are evicted the Municipality just sends in armed men to attack us. There is never a court order. We were pleased that they were now going through the court and hope that they will do this for all occupiers in the future.

The court directed officials of the Land Invasion Unit and leaders of Abahlali to hold a site inspection in order to establish the exact demarcation of the property so that 109 families protected by the court order cannot be mistakenly evicted when the City evicts Ngiba's ANC comrades.

On 27 February provincial MEC for housing Ravi Pillay published an article in the Mercury. This article contains two deliberately dishonest and defamatory statements about our movement. The first line of the article states that: "Last Friday, the Durban High Court granted an order to eThekweni Municipality against Abahlali baseMjondolo and a large number of land invaders." As Ravi Pillay is well aware the court order does not give permission to evict members of our movement. It was granted against Ngiba's ANC comrades.

How can the court issue an interdict protecting Abahlali members against the Municipality on 13 February and then, on 27 February, issued an order to evict the same people? The truth is that Ngiba encouraged and forced some people to occupy land to undermine the interdict won by our movement and the Municipality than won an order to evict Ngiba's people. This is the first time that we are aware of them seeking an order to evict.

Further down in his article Pillay makes a second dishonest and defamatory statement. He writes that: "We are pleased that a Mr Zondi who was an office-bearer of Abahlali baseMjondolo was arrested and convicted last year for selling land unlawfully and sentenced to three-year imprisonment."

We issued a press statement about this matter on 13 March 2018. We made it clear that Zondi was not a member of our movement, that he was falsely claiming to be a member of our movement and that we condemned his corruption in the same way that we always condemn corruption. We stated that: "We welcome his arrest and hope that there will also be an effective prosecution and a conviction."

At the time we were negotiating with Pillay, who has often been willing to negotiate with us when the Municipality in Durban has not been willing to negotiate. We worked closely with the provincial Department of Human Settlements to have Zondi arrested for selling land on our name. We were the ones that raised this matter with the Department.

Pillay's claim that Zondi 'was an office-bearer' of our movement is completely untrue and Pillay is being dishonest when he leaves out the fact that we were the ones who raised this matter with his Department in the first place.

We understand that Pillay is under huge pressure from the rate payers' associations who are opposed to the escalation of land occupations in the province. But we cannot allow him to spread lies about our movement in order to cover for himself.

Today, a former member of our movement is expected to appear in Durban Magistrate court on charges of selling land and collecting membership fees in the name of our movement. We first heard about this from concerned community members in December last year. We immediately launched an internal investigation about these allegations and we found them to be true. We are the one who then approached the MEC's office and the police to report this matter after which the police took over the investigation. One of the two individuals has been arrested and will appear in Durban Magistrate court this morning. We

are happy to say that, this was a joint effort between our office, the MEC's office and the police. We trust that Pillay will be honest about this.

We are opposed to the commodification of land and to all forms of corruption whether by the state, the ruling party, NGOs or other impoverished people. Many people join our movement because of their experience of corruption in the ANC and we will never tolerate any corruption in our movement or in the name of our movement.

Zondi was not a member of our movement. The person who will appear in court today is a former member of our movement. In 2014 a person who was a member of our movement was charging membership fees at an inflated rate and collecting money from a community facing evictions which she said was for lawyers. We only work with pro bono lawyers and, in this case, there were in fact no lawyers. We held an internal inquiry and expelled that person. These facts are well known.

Last year it became clear that a small group of people in our movement had been offered a deal involving the National Funeral Practitioners Association of SA (Nafupa-SA) and VBS bank to sell our movement to the pro-Zuma forces. Those individuals were recalled from their positions by a popular vote at an open assembly following which they resigned from the movement. These facts are also well known.

We are fundamentally opposed to corruption and when it has appeared in our movement we have acted against it immediately and decisively.

Ravi Pillay has often been one of the few people in the ANC that we can negotiate with. We are very disappointed that he has chosen to resort to blatant dishonesty. He holds an important position in our society at a time when escalating land occupations are resulting in increasing social tensions between the middle classes and the poor. We hope that he will be willing to conduct himself with integrity in the future.

We trust that Pillay will apologise for making dishonest and defamatory statements about our movement and that the Mercury will issue an apology for publishing false and defamatory statements.

We reiterate our position that land, wealth and power must be shared fairly and that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
S'bu Zikode

11 MARCH 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The trial for our damages claim from the 2009 attack in Kennedy Road begins at the Durban High Court today

From the moment when our movement was formed in 2005 the ANC claimed that we were ‘the third force’ and treated us as illegitimate. We faced constant repression. Our protests were illegally banned, and attacked when they went ahead in defiance of bans. Numerous people were assaulted and arrested by the police. The police even used force, including serious violence, to prevent us from participating in radio and television talk shows.

In early September 2009 John Mchunu, who was then the chairperson of the ANC in the eThekweni Region, and a strong backer of Jacob Zuma, told the regional general council of the ANC that our movement was a threat to the ANC. He was said that “The element of these NGO [sic] who are funded by the West to destabilise us; these elements use all forms of media and poor people. We know them very well; we have seen them using their power at Abahlali baseMjondolo.”

On the night of 26 September 2009 a group of armed men, who identified themselves as ANC and as Zulu, stormed the community hall where our youth league was holding a camp. They were swearing and throwing stones in the hall attacking Abahlali. They were shouting for S’bu Zikode and said that they would kill him if they found him. They said that Abahlali baseMjondolo was ‘selling Kennedy Road to the amaMpondo’.

Seeing that Zikode was not at the camp held at the community hall they then headed to his house, which they destroyed, after which they attacked the homes of other members of the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC) members and those of the Safe and Security Committee affiliated to Abahlali. This committee was formed in a response to a mandate by women who wanted closing hours to be instituted for shebeens which had started to stay open all night resulting in noise and, also, an escalation in domestic violence.

The group of armed ANC supporters destroyed and burnt the homes that they attacked after looting whatever they could carry away.

This attack continued throughout the night of 26 September and 27 September and the morning of 28 September 2009. Numerous people made ongoing attempts to seek the help of the police but all calls for help were ignored. This attack happened in the presence of state security agencies who chose not to protect people's lives. They allowed it to continue in broad daylight.

On the night of 26 September two people were killed, many were seriously injured and hospitalised, and hundreds were displaced.

During the attack the first ever offices of Abahlali, which were located in the Kennedy Road settlement, were looted and destroyed. Our library was also destroyed.

After the attack 12 members of Safe and Security Committee whose homes were burnt down, and all of whom were Xhosa speaking people, were arrested and charged with numerous fabricated charges including murder. They became known as the Kennedy 12.

On 28 September the office of Willies Mchunu, the then MEC for Transport, Safety and Community Liaison, issued a press statement stating that "The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government has moved swiftly to liberate a Durban community (Kennedy Road)".

On Sunday 11 October senior ANC provincial leadership, including Willies Mchunu, together with the police held a press conference in the community hall in the Kennedy Road settlement. ANC supporters from neighbouring communities were bussed in and misrepresented as Kennedy Road residents. They launched a brazen propaganda that said that Abahlali was the cause of the violence.

For months after the initial attacks the homes of remaining Abahlali members were openly destroyed by local ANC supporters on Sunday mornings. People who tried to go to the Sydenham Police Station to ask for assistance were insulted and threatened by the police and chased out of the station.

The Kennedy 12 spent ten months in prison. When the matter finally went to trial the judge threw the case out when the prosecution had finished making its case as it was obvious that the case against the men had been crudely fabricated.

Abahlali is suing the Minister of Police and the Metro Police for damages for the failure to intervene in the attacks on the members of our movement. Lives were lost and many people suffered injuries, trauma, loss of property and damages to their belongings as well as homelessness as a result of the deliberate failure of the police to protect Abahlali members and their families.

The trial is scheduled to begin today and to run until 18 March at the Durban High Court.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono

1 APRIL 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu

Abahlali have noted the attacks on people born in other counties during these past few days with great sadness. The attacks started in the Springfield Park area in Durban last week and have resulted in numerous people being displaced from their homes and communities. Two people have died.

We believe that umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu. We believe that unyawo alu-nampumulo.

We believe that we are people because of others. We believe that our humanity is defined in relation to others and how we treat others. We believe that how we treat others should have no relation to where they were born. We believe that none of us knows what the future holds and that any of us may find ourselves having to seek the shelter of strangers in the future.

From the onset our movement's philosophy of ubuhlalism started from the principle that every human being has an inherent dignity as a human being and should be treated in a way that respects their dignity. This is the foundation of our politic and it is where we draw the strength to rebel against injustice, even when the struggle is long and its cost is very high.

We are committed to the struggle to build a society, and a world, in which every person's dignity is respected, a world of equality and justice in which land, wealth and power are shared fairly.

We believe that there is only one human race and that the borders created by colonial rule should be irrelevant to our project to build solidarity among the oppressed and to ensure that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

In all Abahlali meeting spaces we affirm that this is what we stand for. We affirm that a neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade without regard for where they were born, what language they speak or what religion they practice. This is what we stand for and where we engage from before we even begin to engage our engineered impoverishment and landlessness, the repression that we face and the misery that we are subjected to.

We have always welcomed people born in other countries into our occupations, our communities and into our movement, and at all levels. We have worked closely with migrant organisations for many years. When there have been times of xenophobic violence, like in 2008 and 2015, we have always taken a position that it is our duty to shelter and defend everyone who is under attack.

We note that in Durban the ruling party has shamefully exploited race, ethnicity and xenophobia to divide and weaken the oppressed. We note also that in the lead up to the coming election both the ANC and the DA have made campaigning statements that are deeply xenophobic, grossly irresponsible and that pose a real and urgent threat to our democracy.

The politicians are deliberately building hate to divide us. They know that if neighbours are turned against neighbours their power will be secure.

We call on all political parties to respect the lives and dignity of impoverished people. Violence, discrimination and xenophobia have no place in our society.

As always we are committed to doing all that we can to oppose xenophobia. We call on all progressive forces to work with us in building solidarity between the oppressed in all communities affected by xenophobia.

Umntu ungumuntu ngabantu. A person is a person by persons.

Nomsa Sizani
Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode

14 APRIL 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Armed Attack at the eKhenana Land Occupation in Cato Crest

The comrades on the eKhenana Land Occupation in Cato Crest have fought a hard and brave struggle for land. Today there was a successful launch of the branch, and a celebration of the victory that has resulted in land being won after a long struggle.

However last night, while comrades were putting up the tent, Cde Siyabonga Mngadi was shot by an unknown person who just arrived and started shooting wildly at our members. He is in hospital at the moment.

Two weeks ago another comrade was shot dead at the same occupation.

We don't know who is responsible for these shootings but we do know that the local ANC councillor, the notorious Mzi Ngiba, has repeatedly threatened our members, and the occupation. He has accused our movement of taking what he calls 'ANC land'.

Our position remains that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, and not just to the rich, or to the ANC. Our position remains that land must be allocated on the basis of social need and not on a commercial or party political basis. We remain committed to land reform from below via the democratic self-organisation and mobilisation of the oppressed.

Contact persons:

Lindokuhle Mnguni
Mqapheli Bonono

14 APRIL 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to launch a branch in eKhenana

Today we will be launching a new branch in our new occupation in eKhenana Cato Crest. We will also be celebrating our victory after the court ruled in our favour earlier this year. Prior to the victory in court the community of eKhenana had been facing brutal evictions from the eThekweni Municipality's Land Invasion Unit.

The court instructed our legal team and the municipality to conduct an inspection at the occupation. This was done and houses of the people were numbered which ensures that the municipality will not evict Abahlali from the occupation.

This occupation has come at a heavy price. Many of our comrades were shot with rubber bullets and live ammunition. As is the case in many of our occupations we have also lost a comrade in this occupation. Senzo Gumede was murdered while walking back to his house. This comes after he was threatened by the local taxi bosses who complained about his role in organising the road blockades used to defend this occupation.

The celebration will include the slaughter of a cow as a symbol of our victory.

We continue to win land from below via the organisation and mobilisation of the oppressed by the oppressed.

Contact persons:

Lindokuhle Mnguni
Mqapheli Bonono

26 APRIL 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to mourn the fraud of 'Freedom Day'

Many South Africans will be celebrating 'Freedom Day' on 27 April as we mark the anniversary of the first time that our country's black people voted in a democratic election. We always acknowledge and salute all the people that struggled for us to win this victory, including, especially, all those ordinary people whose names will never be known to history. Many of our own members carry scars from the struggle against apartheid.

However, we know that what we see today is not what the people fought for.

Today the ruling party tries to make the impoverished, the dispossessed and oppressed, think that we are free by giving us free t-shirts, free meals and free rides to the stadiums to listen to politicians tell us that they brought us freedom. Many of the people that will go to the stadiums to listen to the politicians have no jobs, no land and no safe homes. Many of them will return to shacks or RDP houses that were damaged in the recent floods, and many of them will go to bed hungry that night.

Abahlali have no reason to celebrate this so-called 'freedom' while we live in indignity. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' while we have no land. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' when we have no jobs, or jobs that keep us exploited and poor. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' when many of us remain without safe and dignified homes, and continually at the mercy of evictions, fires and floods in our shacks. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' when we are ruled by gangster politicians. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' when the ruling party, the ANC, continues to murder our members during protests and evictions, and to assassinate our leaders.

We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' when millions of people remain impoverished while the politicians and their families grow richer by the day. We have no reason to celebrate 'freedom' while the politicians prop up the system of racial capitalism that made us poor and keeps us poor.

We will not be going to the stadiums to listen to the politicians. We will be holding our annual Unfreedom Day Rally to mourn what was supposed to be a real revolution bringing real freedom for all. We will also gather together to recommit ourselves to building the power of the oppressed from below, and to struggling for a genuinely emancipatory programme, for a society in which land, wealth and power are shared fairly.

This is a national event for our movement and comrades will be joining us from all over the country. Our comrades in migrant organisations will also join us as we take a clear public position against xenophobia and the politicians that try to turn neighbours against neighbours. We have also invited comrades from the labour movement to join us as we remain committed to work to build alliances between the progressive forces in organised labour and the progressive movements of the poor. It is vital that we build unity in struggle, including unity between struggles in communities and in workplaces, to be able to effectively confront the monster capitalist state.

The UnFreedom Day Rally will take place on Sunday, 28 April at Thekwini TVET College, Springfield Park in Durban. We will start at 10:00am and finish at 3:00pm.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomusa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali

1 MAY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Join Workers' Day Events

Today is Workers' Day, known around the world as May Day, a day to celebrate the struggles of workers.

Our movement is committed to building unity, in struggle, between the oppressed. We have always organised in solidarity with migrant organisations, street traders, flat dwellers and other groups representing impoverished and oppressed people. We are also committed to building unity, in struggle, between impoverished people, many of whom are not members of trade unions, and the unionised working class. If we can support each other in our struggles we'll both be stronger and the working class as a whole, unionised and not unionised, working formally and informally, will be stronger.

On Sunday, the leadership of the South Africa Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) joined us at our annual UnFreedom Day rally in Durban.

Today we will join SAFTU, including NUMSA, the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and others unions, in their march through central Durban. We will support this march in numbers.

Our members in Gauteng are travelling to Limpopo in numbers to support the SAFTU event in that province.

We will also use May Day to express our solidarity with our comrades in Venezuela. One of our leaders visited Venezuela recently and she has given us comprehensive reports of the situation there. We are in full solidarity with the progressive popular movements organising in the favelas there and we are completely opposed to all attempted by the government of the United States to work with the rich in Venezuela to take over the country in the interests of capitalism, racism and imperialism. Just as we have stood with our comrades in Haiti, Turkey, Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the past we will stand with our comrades in Venezuela too.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomusa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali

4 MAY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Practical Support for Members Affected by the Floods

The recent floods in Durban hit the poor the hardest. Many people lost their homes, or had their homes and possessions badly damaged. Some people lost their lives.

To be poor in South Africa means that you must constantly live with fire, floods and armed and violent evictions and disconnections. You can never really relax. There is constant worry and stress. There is no holiday in the shacks.

Our movement does not only struggle for land and struggle to force the government to provide services to occupied land. We also work to develop mutual aid and support. Over the years we have built and run creches, community halls and vegetable gardens, visited the sick, supported families and communities with organising dignified funerals, organised safe and non-commodified access to water, electricity and even sometimes sanitation, and supported comrades who have lost their homes in fires, floods and government attacks.

Today we will be visiting Ekukhanyeni and New City in Marianhill to support comrades who lost their homes in the recent floods with materials to rebuild and groceries.

We are denied support from the Disaster Management department in the eThekweni Municipality despite the fact that the poor are always the worst affected in all disasters. A large amount of money has been released by the National Treasury in the name of the poor but we get nothing. When our members approach Disaster Management they are referred to useless and harassing councillors – the same councillors that deny any development to people who are not ANC members, who demand bribes for access to development, who organise evictions, who threaten us and, in some cases, are the ones who organise assassinations.

We would like to note our appreciation for the solidarity for people affected by the floods that was received from Norwegian People's Aid, An injury to one is an injury to all.

Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali

6 MAY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Press Conference: Abahlali to announce our position on elections

Last year our membership audit in KwaZulu-Natal exceeded 55 000 members in good standing. Our movement has continued to grow since then, in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere in the country.

Since 2013 the ANC has regularly assassinated our leaders. As S'bu Zikode said in his UnFreedom address this year to vote for the ANC is to vote for our own grave diggers.

Even now, just before the election, the ANC continues to attack impoverished black people in Durban. The Azania land occupation in Ward 29 in Mayville has come under serious attack from the local state. A total of 76 homes were demolished and burnt by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit yesterday. At the same time that people are promised a better life, and asked to vote, they are rendered homeless by a violent state acting outside of the law.

We will announce the full details of the decision that we have taken with regard to the election at a press conference to be held at our offices at the Diakonia Centre, at 20 Diakonia Avenue in central Durban, tomorrow, May 7, at 13:00.

George Bonono
S'bongiseni Zwane

7 MAY 2019

Press briefing · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statement on the 2019 election

Today we held a press conference in Durban to announce our position on the election. This statement was given to the journalists present.

Last year our membership audit in KwaZulu-Natal exceeded 55 000 members in good standing. Our movement has continued to grow since then, in KwaZulu-Natal, and elsewhere in the country.

Since 2013 the ANC in KwaZulu Natal has regularly assassinated our leaders. As S'bu Zikode said in his Unfreedom Day speech voting for the ANC is like digging our own grave.

Even now, just a few days before the election, the ANC continues to attack impoverished black people in Durban. This is done in the name of the 'new dawn' and 'growing South Africa together'. The Azania land occupation in Ward 29 in Mayville has come under serious attack from the local state. A total of 76 homes were demolished and burnt down by the Anti Land Invasion Unit on Sunday. At the same time the very people are promised a better life and asked to vote are rendered homeless by violent state acting outside the law.

A vote for the ANC is a vote for the izinkabi, for the gangster councillors, for the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the casspirs. A vote for the ANC is a vote for violent dispossession, violent repression and death. A vote for the ANC is a vote for corruption. A vote for the ANC is a vote for capitalism, for land to be allocated on the basis of money rather than need.

We have had series of serious discussions about this general election. Over many meetings held over a number of months, including large assemblies, and an all-night camp, and including all structures of our movement in KwaZulu-Natal, the KwaZulu-Natal section of the movement has come to a consensus about our strategy for this election.

We have discussed what it means to vote but still remain impoverished. What it means to vote but remain landless and homeless. What it means to vote but to be denied basic services that our constitutional democracy and international laws and standards have promised us. And we have discussed what it means to vote but get killed by the very same people you have voted into power.

We have learnt that we live in the most economically productive history of our time. A time where there is more wealth than ever before. This is a time where there is enough food, clothing and educational resources for everyone, where there should be decent housing, and safe and inclusive cities for everyone. There is enough wealth for everyone to have access to excellent schools and hospitals. There is also enough land for everyone if no one takes too much for themselves, and if land is allocated according to a social logic rather than a capitalistic logic. However the rich continue to take most of the land, and to capture most of the wealth, leaving billions of people impoverished across the world.

We have discussed how the current economic system creates poverty, inequality, landlessness and unemployment amid abundance. We also know that the promises that are being made for the election are mostly lies that cannot or will not be fulfilled. This is simply because our economy remains in the hands of the few elites, black and white.

We have listened carefully to all the political parties that have been brave to engage with us. We realised that almost all of them are the same. All they want is an opportunity to eat for themselves. In other words they think it is just their turn to eat for us and on our behalf. Many of them want to turn neighbour against neighbour in order to divide the oppressed and sustain the power of our oppressors. We cannot accept this.

We were agreed that we wanted to vote for a party of the left – a party that was committed to sharing land and wealth equally. We were also agreed that we wanted to vote for a party that would build solidarity among the oppressed in struggle and refuse the politic that turns neighbour against neighbour.

We have decided to make a collective tactical vote for the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party, a newly formed workers' party with a base in the trade union movement. The SRWP has called on all working class people, employed or unemployed, to join forces and destroy the exploitative class system that is monster capitalism and build a society free of oppression and economic exploitation where power will rest in the hands of the majority. They have called for socialism. This call resonates with our daily struggle hence we have decided to support them in this election. This party has made no empty promise to us. They have been open about the fact that not all power resides in parliament and they have committed to struggle with us outside of parliament. They have committed that elected leaders that do not serve the people well will be able to

be recalled. They have engaged us with respect and committed to treat us with respect and dignity.

However Abahlali will not take membership of the party or join the party. We will keep our autonomy separate from the decision making structures of the party. We do, though, hope that we can build and sustain unity in struggle between all the progressive forces among the working class, including precariously employed, unemployed and impoverished people.

We have always been a movement of the left. We have always opposed capitalism and we have always been committed to participatory democracy as a means of struggle and as a goal of struggle. We are committed to democratic worker control in the workplace, and democratic community control in communities.

We understand very well that parliament is only one terrain of struggle, and that our power comes from below, from the struggle waged from the occupations and in the streets.

However, our oppressors have mobilised constant violence against us, including armed, violent and illegal evictions and disconnections, as well as the use of lethal force during evictions and protests, and targeted assassinations of our leaders. It is, therefore, vital that we contest the authority of our oppressors on every terrain of struggle, and that we use all means at our disposal to remove those who have murdered and assassinated so many of us from access to state power. This includes collective decisions about tactical use of the vote.

Therefore, we will vote against the ANC and for the SRWP on Wednesday, and, at the same time, continue to build our power from below, and to work to build unity in struggle with all progressive forces.

We also wish to state that this was a collective decision taken at the Abahlali General Assembly in Durban and not by other provinces where there are branches of Abahlali. It is therefore a decision by and from the membership in KwaZulu-Natal. However the leadership of Abahlali will continue to engage these provinces as well as we work towards building the movement and establishing elected provincial councils across the country.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomusa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali

15 MAY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We Welcome the Arrest of the Gangster Mayor of Durban for Corruption and Money Laundering

We were not surprised by the arrest of Cllr Zandile Gumede, the mayor of eThekweni. The corruption in Durban had become so brazen, and supported with such brazen thuggery, that eventually the state had to act. The news broke yesterday morning when the mayor was due to appear in Durban Commercial Court. Like many gangster politicians when her arrest finally came it was hidden from the public and the media. It is reported that she and the other accused were able to hand themselves over to the police. It is also reported that she was able to use the back door to enter the court to escape media attention. A poor person arrested for insisting to be treated like a human being will never be treated with these courtesies.

For too long we have been saying our cities have now taken over by gangster politicians and mafias. For them the crisis of the impoverishment of the majority is just a way to enrich themselves. When we speak out about corruption and the looting of state resources we face death threats, arrests, assault, torture and assassination. The ANC make it clear that for as long as they are in power only their members will receive services and that no member of our movement should expect to receive access to services or housing.

The mayor was arrested on charges of corruption and money laundering amounting to R208 million. Some of this money was meant to provide water and sanitation to shack settlements. We have been struggling for access to services in our occupations and settlements for many years. When our struggles are successful, and money is allocated to the poor, the politicians shamelessly steal it for themselves. They profit from our suffering and our struggles. They eat for us, and on our behalf. The ANC in the province, and nationally, have repeatedly been made aware of this yet for years they were silent and defensive.

Gumede, Cllr Mondli Mthembu, who is the chairperson of Human Settlement and Infrastructure, and her whole administration have been very brutal to us. Gumede and Mthembu have instructed the entire administration not to entertain us.

We note that Gumede was released yesterday on R50 000 bail with strict conditions that she does not interfere with witnesses etc. We have heard that the hawks have been intimidated since the investigation. We know that the mayor is a very dangerous person and that she is surrounded by very dangerous people. The media has in the past reported that she is also implicated in murder cases. This did not surprise us. We are concerned about the safety of the witnesses.

When S'bu Zikode had to go underground again due to credible information from within the police and intelligence of an imminent assassination the police discovered that the suspect believed to be plotting the assassination was working in the office of the mayor. Gumede and Nelly Nyanisa, the ANC chief whip, have since refused to cooperate with the police investigations. The KwaZulu-Natal police have been scared of the mayor. Since October 2018 they have since failed to secure an appointment with her in order to obtain police statement with regard to the plan to assassinate Zikode.

It was under Gumede's administration that the City and the ANC increased their violence and stopped negotiation with us. We were assassinated by the izinkabi, and murdered by the metro police. Illegal and violent evictions became a daily occurrence.

It was under her administration leadership that Samuel Hloele of eKukhanyeni was shot dead in a broad daylight, allegedly by Metro police, during their illegal and violent eviction in 2017. It was under her leadership that baby Jayden was killed by inhaling tear gas thrown by the police into the Foreman Road settlement after a protest on the street near the settlement. And, yes, it was under her leadership that Sifiso Ngcobo our chairperson in eKukhanyeni was assassinated in May 22, 2018. It was under her leadership that two comrades in eKhenana were shot and killed this year. In seven communities that were illegally and violently evicted under her leadership people now live with disabilities as a result of attacks by the police and other unknown gangsters.

It was under her leadership that casspirs (armoured vehicles) worth R28 million were purchased to oppress the poor while people remain homeless. It was

under her leadership that R25 million was spent to rent 800 portable toilets for six months. It was under her leadership that the Public Protector found that each government shack in the Kennedy Road transit camps was built at a cost of R35 000 when the normal cost is R5 000.

We wish to congratulate the hawks on this arrest and we hope that she and her co-accused can have their turn in court and that the trial will be fair. We also hope that other cases opened against the mayor can also be investigated freely and fairly, and that the impunity with which the many other gangster councilors in the ANC in Durban, and other towns in the province, have operated for years will come to an end.

We repeated that we are concerned for the safety of the whistleblowers and witnesses in this matter and call for them to be given every available form of protection and support.

We call on all progressive organisations and people in eThekweni to reject the ANC's culture violence, corruption and intimidation and to build a counter-culture of justice, democracy and peace.

We also call on the ANC in the province to immediately fire Gumede from her position as mayor. There is more than enough evidence that that has become a disgrace in our city.

Mqapheli Bonono

Nomusa Sizani

S'bu Zikode

28 MAY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Mob Destroys Home in Tembisa

Reblocking in Vusimuzi in Tembisa south has been imposed on many people in an undemocratic, top down, illegal and threatening way. It has caused serious divisions in the community, and significant losses and suffering to those whose homes have been destroyed or damaged. However, despite sustained resistance over many months the local councillor, Hendrik Selwana, is determined to push ahead with the reblocking. People have been told that those who accept reblocking will get electricity and this has been used to divide people.

Before the government was destroying people's homes. Now those who are now for reblocking are being asked to demolish the homes of those who are against reblocking so that people in the community can do the government's dirty work.

On Friday 17 May Cllr Selwana called a meeting to tell people that reblocking is coming back to eSteneni and Mangosuthu 1. Abahlali baseMjondolo members were not told about the meeting. However they found out about the meeting. People sent by the councillor said that Abahlali members will be moved by force. We called the councillor and he said that he had not asked his people to say this and that he would talk to them. However they continued to threaten us.

On Monday 20 May a mob came to Mr Sithole's home and said that they were told to come and demolish his home. Abahlali members rushed there in their numbers to stop the demolition. The police arrived and the attempt to demolish the home was stopped.

On Wednesday 22 May the mob returned to Mr Sithole's home. This time they came with a car that they wanted to use to force open a road. They insulted Mr Sithole but he and his home were again protected by Abahlali members.

On Sunday 26 May the mob went to Mrs Mbatha's house in Mangosuthu 1 and threatened to demolish her house. She said that she cannot accept that her house should be destroyed and she was threatened. She was told that her house would be burnt when she was at work. On Monday 27 May the mob returned and demolished her home.

Abahlali members went to the police station to report this illegal destruction of a person's home but the police refused to open a case and told them that they must go the councillor. The station commander is the councillor's homeboy. However Abahlali members went back to the station, protested, and eventually forced the police to open a case.

This evening, just after the sun went down, the mob returned to the remains of Mrs Mbatha's home and removed the foundations. They promised to return tomorrow and install someone else on the site of what used to be her home.

We call for an immediate end to this top down form of development, and the illegality, and the threats and intimidation that have come with it. It is outrageous that a councillor can mobilise his supporters to brazenly destroy people's homes. As a movement we stand for participatory and democratic forms of development.

Melita Ngcobo 42
Noxolo Shabalala
George Bonono

5 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali bas'eKhenana return to court

For a long time the Abahlali bas' Khenana land occupation has faced brutal and illegal evictions from the eThekweni Municipality's notorious Land Invasion Unit. The belongings of the community have been confiscated and burnt many times. Abahlali have always rebuilt after each and every eviction. Under the rule of the ANC inkani opens the road to land, and the price for land is paid in blood.

Mzi Ngiba, the local ANC councillor, has been dividing the community using the local ANC members to wage violence on Abahlali. He has also encouraged local ANC members to occupy land with the aim of displacing Abahlali.

After repeated violent and illegal evictions Abahlali had to approach the Durban High Court to seek an interdict against the municipality. The court granted Abahlali an interim order prohibiting the City from illegally evicting, burning or threatening Abahlali.

Abahlali had to obtain this interdict to protect our members from being violently and illegally evicted by the City but we note that the attacks on the occupation have come from both the City (the state) and the ANC (the ruling party). The eThekweni municipality has always been heartless to poor landless communities. The ANC has also been violent and intolerant to poor people organised outside of the party. The party structures have been used to wage war against autonomously organised people since 2009.

The ANC continues with apartheid spatial planning, and violent forms of oppression. It is most unfortunate that what was supposed to be the government of the people has become the government of the elites. We are ruled by violence, not democratic discussion and negotiation.

Today Abahlali bas'eKhenana will return to Durban High Court to finalise the interim order. We hope that the interim order will be made final so that our communities can live in peace and harmony.

Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni

6 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to take the City of Ekurhuleni to Court

The Abahlali baseMjondolo branch in Vusimuzi, Tembisa, will tomorrow take the City of Ekurhuleni, to the Johannesburg High Court over longstanding brutal and illegal evictions in the area. Since 2018 the community has suffered ongoing attacks in the name of reblocking.

Reblocking is supposed to be a process by which shacks built closely together are separated to make space for development. This is done to build passage ways, road access, provision of sewer pipes, water and sanitation and electricity.

However, in Tembisa the terms of this “development” were never discussed with the community. The terms and process were imposed from above.

The community was not told which part of the community would be affected. We were not told what budget was made available for this work etc. This was a top down and authoritarian form of development that caused serious divisions in the community, was misused by the local councillor for his own interests, and resulted in numerous people losing parts or all of their homes. The process also became xenophobic.

Some people’s houses were completely destroyed. Those whose homes were of a reasonable enough size for their families had their homes forcibly reduced into small sizes that were not viable for their families. People’s belongings were destroyed while homes were vandalised by the Red Ants, Metro police and residents loyal to the councillor. Even the allocations of the jobs to do this work were misused in the interest of local elites.

Some people were brought from outside to build in people’s yards after their homes had been demolished causing families to fight each other.

We have brought an urgent application to the Johannesburg High Court to interdict the City to immediately cease its violent and unlawful conduct. The matter will be heard tomorrow morning.

Our movement has always stood for participatory and democratic forms of development in which grassroots urban planning is taken seriously and people are included in all forms of decision making that affect them. This is what we refer to with the slogan ‘nothing for us, without us’. What is happening in Vusimuzi is a top down, authoritarian and violent form of state-imposed vandalism

Melita Ngcobo
Busisiwe Shabalala

7 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Violent Evictions in Cato Manor & Chesterville

Yesterday at about 10:15, while we were hosting a vibrant and very interesting political education meeting in central Durban, the Land Invasion Unit, the Metro Police, the Public Order Police and private security attacked the Azanian occupation in Cato Manor. Around 60 homes were destroyed. The ward councillor was present during the attack.

There have been repeated attacks on this occupation since February, when the land was first occupied. One person was recently discharged after being hospitalised for two months as a result of injuries sustained from the Land Invasion Unit during an eviction. The comrades rebuilt last night, working through the night and in the rain.

Today the Ridgeview settlement in Chesterville, which has been there since 2006, was attacked by the Land Invasion Unit and municipal security. A number of comrades were shot with rubber bullets. More than forty homes were demolished before the eviction was stopped after comrades organised and resisted. The comrades who lost their homes will rebuild.

In both cases the Municipality did not have a court order and so both evictions were illegal and criminal acts.

The Azania occupation is in Ward 29 and the councillor is Mveli Mthembu. The Ridgeview settlement is in Ward 24 and the councillor is Sifiso Mngadi. They are both ANC councillors. Those who chose to vote for the ANC in the recent election should consider the wisdom of their choice carefully as the ruling party continues to oppress the poor.

This weekend we will be launching a new branch and holding political education workshops in four settlements in Gauteng. Tensions are still running high in Vusimuzi, in Tembisa, where reblocking has turned into evictions, and xenophobia, perpetrated by supporters of the local ANC councillor with brazen collusion between the local police and the councillor.

Everywhere impoverished people remain beneath the law while our oppressors in ruling party and the government remain above the law.

The struggle continues.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Mqapheli Bonono
Gugu
Lindo Manqele

11 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali welcome the news that Zandile Gumede has stepped down as the Mayor of eThekweni

Abahlali baseThekwini deserve respect and dignity from anyone holding public office, including mayors and councillors.

We wish to welcome the decision made by ANC Provincial Executive Committee in KwaZulu Natal that Mayor Gumede must step down for thirty days following her arrest on serious charges of corruption and money laundering. Gumede is out on R50 000 bail after being arrested on the charge of stealing R208 million of tax payers' money, money meant for a Durban Solid Waste tender. R37 million of this money was meant to provide water and sanitation to shack settlements. Many of us in shack settlements remain without water and sanitation. One of the causes of our continued suffering is corrupt officials like Gumede.

We suffer today, not because our cities and our country cannot house and feed us all as the nation. There is enough money to ensure that everyone can live in dignity and safety. The problem is the distribution of wealth, and corruption is one of the ways in which even the very limited redistribution of wealth towards the impoverished is captured by an elite to enrich themselves at the direct expense of the poor. One of the reasons why we remain poor is because of corrupt officials like Gumede. There are many Gumedes in South Africa who have become a stumbling block to future stability of our country.

However, we are concerned that at least 62 councillors are implicated in this scandal. It will not be fair and easy for a new mayor to be surrounded by, and to work with gangsters that are ripping off our city and its people. While we appreciate the work of the Hawks and the PEC we call on the Hawks to also prosecute these councillors. These councillors and other hidden gangsters are dangerous to us who speak out against corruption.

South Africans and the world must know that this is a reason why we have lost 18 activists since 2013, some at the hands of some ANC councillors and

some at the hands of the various armed forces controlled by the ANC. This is the reason why our leaders live under the shadow of death each second and each minute while we speak against corruption.

It is clear that had we not make noise and risked our lives to protest against such gangsters, and protested for the resignation of Gumede, the ANC would not have acted against her. However, 30 days leave is a joke. Her removal from her office must be made permanent. No full and credible investigation could be completed in 30 days, and the state prosecution will not be concluded in 30 days. Besides, our city deserves leaders with integrity.

Abahlali baseMzinyathi live just next to the Inanda Dam but people have no piped water for many months now. Instead of fixing few pipes and taps millions of rands are wasted on individuals who are enjoying tenders to provide water tank trucks. How much is paid to the companies that got the tender to send the trucks providing water? Who benefits when there is no piped water in that community? Who is getting rich from our continued suffering?

Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali
S'bu Zikode

13 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Major Attack on the Azania Land Occupation

There has just been major attack on the Azania Land Occupation this morning. Many of the occupiers were at court this morning to support comrades from another occupation and the City sized the opportunity to attack.

The Land Invasion Unit, and the Metro Police, arrived, heavily armed and demolished around 70 homes, after which they burnt the materials and people's possessions.

This is how the ANC rules the poor – with violence and brutality.

The comrades will rebuild, and they will keep rebuilding until the land is theirs.

Mqapheli Bonono
Gugu

16 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to commemorate Youth Day in Durban & Newcastle

June 16, is a very significant day in our calendar where we remember those young people who took a stand against the ruthless apartheid regime in 1976. Many people lost their lives in the youth driven insurrection that spread across the country in 1976.

However, today, 25 years after the end of apartheid, most young people still face many of the same challenges that they faced under apartheid. And young people continue to lose their lives in the struggle for dignity, justice and a future. The state and the ruling party both continue to murder impoverished black activists.

Our young comrades, some still of school going age, continue to lose their lives in the struggle for land, housing and dignity for the impoverished and oppressed in this country.

In 2013 Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer at a road blockade organised in protest against unlawful evictions in our Marikana occupation in Cato Crest. Nqobile had joined hundreds of young people who decided to take to the streets to protest against these illegal evictions by the notorious Anti Land Invasion. Her crime was that she was born in a poor family.

In June 2017 Samuel Hloele was murdered by the Anti Land Invasion Unit in Marianridge. His community was facing continuous brutal attacks from this unit. He decided to take a stand and put his life on the line for his community.

S'bonelo Mpeku a provincial spokesperson for KZN was kidnapped and assassinated after receiving threats from the local ANC in Sisonke Village in Lamontville. Mpeku was very vocal against the vicious evictions in his community.

Senzo Gumede from eKhenana was also shot and killed last year in December after receiving threats from a local taxi owner for his role in organising protests against the evictions in eKhenana.

Nkululeko Gwala, Sandile Biyela, Soyiso Nkqayini also lost their lives in the struggle for land, housing and dignity.

Young people continue to suffer at the hands of the state in post-apartheid South Africa. Students in the Fees Must Fall Movement are still facing criminal charges for fighting for a free and decolonised education. Their crime is that they come from families who cannot afford to pay for their education.

We still face many of the same struggles that the youth of 1976 faced. The difference is that we are oppressed by those who claim to have liberated us and continue to tell us that we are free. We are still faced with a state that responds with violence to people who are protesting peacefully and which can murder us with impunity.

As we commemorate this day we make a serious request that the lives of the young comrades that were lost in the struggle for human dignity before, during and after apartheid are all recognised. When we pretend that it was only the apartheid state that used murder as a form of political control we are not telling the truth about post-apartheid South Africa, and we disrespect the courage and memory of many brave comrades who have lost their lives in struggle under the rule of the ANC.

Today we are holding two commemorations for young comrades who have fallen in struggle before, during and after apartheid. We are holding one event in the Surat Hindu Hall in Durban and another in Osizweni in Newcastle. They will both start at 10:00

Contact persons:

Khanyo Shange
Zanoyise Kati

18 JUNE 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Kennedy Road Trial Resumes Tomorrow, Another Attack on the Azania Occupation

Today the Azania land occupation was attacked again. Twenty-six homes that had been rebuilt after the last attack were demolished and the building materials burnt. Around one hundred and fifty people will have to sleep in the open tonight. The struggle to hold the land continues despite the repeated armed and violent attacks from the state.

We repeat that the ongoing attacks on the Azania land occupation are illegal and, in law, criminal acts perpetrated by an armed and violent state against impoverished people. The comrades will rebuild once again. The land will be held.

The ongoing attacks on the Azania land occupation are just part of a long history of state violence against our movement, and against other poor people's struggles.

Since our movement was formed in 2005 our aspirations for justice, and our insistence on the recognition of our human dignity, have continually been treated as criminal by the state, and by some NGOs that prefer to speak for the poor rather than to the poor. For almost 15 years we have been subjected to regular violence from the national and municipal police, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and municipal security guards.

We are expected to vote in elections but we not considered to be citizens in a democracy. The reality is that we are ruled by the gun, the rubber bullet, tear gas and the fist.

But we are not only subject to violence by the state. The ruling party, the ANC, also subjects us to regular intimidation and violence, including assassination.

Tomorrow we return to court for our damages claim against the police for their complicity in the violent attack by the ANC on our movement in the Kennedy Road settlement in 2009. The trial is scheduled to start tomorrow and to continue on the 21st.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali

9 JULY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Baby Khwezi Mlingo Is No More

Last night at about 8pm a 2-year-old baby girl, Khwezi Mlingo was left in the house in the eNkanini land occupation with her two brothers, one is 7 years and the other is 12 years.

The mother of the 3, Mbali Mlingo was still on her way back from work. She had asked the neighbour who is running a creche nearby to check on her kids. The father had left to work for his night shift duties. The self-connected electricity went off and the neighbour helped to light the candle. The candle fell causing the shack fire. The 12-year-old boy and the 7 year boys were burnt trying to help their sister. They sustained minor injuries and were rushed to hospital. They were treated and discharged. However, the 2-year-old baby girl Khwezi could not make it. Khwezi was burnt to ashes.

We wish to express our deepest condolences to the Mlingo family and the community of eNkanini.

Those of us who arrived at the scene are shocked. Many of us who witnessed the incident are still trying to come to terms with trauma. Losing a baby in this way is traumatic. Over the years our movement has had to mourn the deaths of a number of babies including Mhlengi Khumalo who died in a shack fire in the Kennedy Road settlement in 2005, and Jayden Khoza who died after the police fired teargas into the Foreman Road settlement in 2017.

If we had water and electricity the community would have been able to put the fire off. The provision of basic services in the settlement would have saved Khwezi's life. The recognition of our human dignity would have saved the life of Khwezi and many more children whose only crime is to be raised by impoverished families who are forced to live in shacks.

The winter season is always a dangerous season for the shack dwellers and all impoverished communities. Year after year we are left to burn. This is the politic of contempt.

We call on government to provide electricity, water and other basic services to all shack settlement as a matter of urgency while we wait for decent housing.

We call on government to recognise our humanity irrespective of our socio-economic status. We also call on all our communities to work together to look after our children together and to ensure that candles and paraffin stoves are never left unattended.

Usually the first major project after land has been successfully won is to build a creche which can be run by the community to keep all the children safe. Every time a land occupation is attacked by the state the building of a creche is delayed and more children are put at risk.

Nomsa Sizani
Thabile Makhoba

11 JULY 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to hold Memorial Service for baby Khwezi Mlingo

At 12 pm tomorrow Abahlali baseMjondolo members will hold a Memorial Service for baby Khwezi at the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor. Baby Khwezi Mlingo was burnt to ashes on Tuesday at 8pm after a candle fell causing a shack fire that took her life and injured her two siblings. This community, like many shack communities, does not have formal access to water and electricity.

For too long now Abahlali have been serving our life sentence in the shacks, without the basic services that can keep people safe, a life sentence handed by the ANC government. The City has vowed never to render any services to Abahlali settlements as long as the ANC is still in charge of government. This decision was taken since Nigel Gumede and Obed Mlaba were mayors of Durban and it has been continued till today. Anyone who rebels against the corruption and violence of the ANC, against the indignity in which the ruling party forces us to live, is denied access to basic services and housing.

We are being punished and blacklisted for exposing corrupt and gangster councillors and mayors who are looting the municipalities. We are excluded from development because we have organised so many successful land occupations, and because we are committed to self-management and revolutionary democracy.

Many of our leaders have been assassinated. Even our children continue to perish at the bloody hands of the ANC. Mhlengi Khumalo who was killed in a shack fire in Kennedy Road settlement in 2005. Baby Jayden Khoza who was teargassed to death in Foreman Road settlement after a protest for electrification of settlement in 2017. These children are innocent. They came into the world with the same beauty and possibility as all other children. The contempt that the ANC has for impoverished black people took their lives and robbed their families of what was most precious to them.

They could have become Presidents, or artists, or intellectuals, or loving parents. Instead their lives were taken by the politic of contempt. This is oppression and we will continue to rebel against oppression until there is respect for the lives and dignity of every human beings.

We know if these were the children of Cyril Ramaphosa or Sihle Zikalala something would have been done to prevent the loss of their lives.

Yesterday, the City's disaster management officials, the local councillor and Mbulelo Baloi, the spokesperson for the KZN MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works, visited the tragedy scene as if they were going to do something for the family. But as usual neither the City nor the MEC are prepared to honestly engage Abahlali or the family on this tragedy. We are on our own. Baby Khwezi is no more while these politicians enjoy long glasses of wine paid for with tenders from the city, tenders won with our blood, and greedily consumed at the cost of our dignity and safety.

Baby Khwezi will be laid to rest on Sunday, 14 July at the family home in Ilovu, South of Durban. She will be buried with the dignity that she deserves, the dignity that she was denied in life by the ANC.

We will never know the woman that she could have become. But we will know justice. They can't kill us all and the struggle is growing stronger.

Vusi Mazula
Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Thabile Makhoba

8 AUGUST 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Suspended eThekweni mayor returns to Durban Commercial Court on charges of corruption today

The eThekweni mayor, Zandile Gumede will today appear before the magistrate, along with the chairperson of the ANC in eThekweni Region. This follows her arrest and serious charges on corruption. The charges relate to a R208 million Durban Solid Waste tender. She was released on R50 000 bail few months ago.

It is alleged that at least R37 million of that money had been set aside to provide water and sanitation to shack settlements. However it is alleged that Gumede, Mondli Mthembu who is the chairperson of Human Settlement in the City, and 7 more senior officials corrupted that money to enrich themselves.

The elites in the ANC are enriching themselves by stealing from the poor. This is what they call 'radical economic transformation'. Corruption has robbed many of us of the right to access basic services. Twenty five years after the end of apartheid we continue to live in shacks of indignity. We live in the mud like pigs while politicians enrich themselves and their family at the expense of the poor.

Many of our members live in life-threatening conditions in shack settlements. Gumede and company occupy the highest position in the City so that impoverishment, inequality and unemployment become permanent in our life time.

The politicians have spent millions of rands buying casspirs, armoured vehicles usually used in wars, to protect themselves from the people that they rule. When we protest we are murdered by the police and the private security companies. The izinkabi come in the night to assassinate those that speak out.

Abahlali will assemble at the City hall to express our demand that those who steal from the public, those who steal from us, are convicted and jailed. remain behind bars. We will be there despite the fact that her supporters continue to remain committed to the politic of violence and blood

14 AUGUST 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali welcomes the KZN ANC decision to fire Zandile Gumede

Yesterday the ANC Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) finally fired the long embattled mayor of eThekweni Zandile Gumede.

We wish to welcome this decision which is long overdue. Gumede is facing serious charges of corruption and irregularities. The charges relate to a R208 million Durban Solid Waste (DSW) tender to clean the city's refuse. At least R37 million of that money was meant to provide water and sanitation to shack settlements in the city. It is alleged that Gumede has been interfering in the issuing of tenders in order to enrich herself. This is what the Nigel Gumede ANC told us in the past: that they will eat for us and on our behalf. They said as long as the ANC is in power Abahlali will get nothing from this government. We have seen that the Zandile Gumede ANC is the same as the Nigel Gumede ANC.

Zandile Gumede's governance has been characterised by gangsterism and terror. Under her leadership Abahlali have lost many lives. Just in 2017, within a space of eight months, eight Abahlali activists were murdered by izinkabi zamakhansela, by the Metro police, the Land Invasion Unit and the South African Police Services. One of those killed was baby Jayden Khoza who inhaled teargas during a brutal police raid on the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate in protest at Gumede's refusal to provide us with electricity.

We cannot forget that it was under Gumede's leadership that the City decided to spend millions of rands buying armoured vehicles, designed for war, to protect itself from its poorest residents.

Our city has been in crisis for too long. Gumede is not the only problem. The ANC Chief Whip Neli Nyanisa once threatened Abahlali with violence in a full council meeting. We were very pleased to see that Nyanisa, along with Speaker of the Council Cllr William Mapena, and ANC and Cllr Mondli Mthembu, Chairperson of Human Settlement and Infrastructure, was also fired yesterday.

Amongst those who were fired today was uMsunduzi Mayor Cllr Themba Njilo. Pietermaritzburg has also been in a serious crisis for a long time and we welcome the action taken in that city too.

Gumede's gangsterism has undermined women's empowerment in our city. She has been a disgrace and shame to many who supported her to ascent to the mayoral position because they believe in women's leadership. She has been fired in a women's month. We call on the ANC to commit to genuine women's empowerment, from below, that improves the lives and empowers women from the ground up. One powerful woman cannot be made to substitute for all other women, especially when she is a proponent of political gangsterism.

Gumede was not alone in corruption. The Hawks have confirmed that at least 62 ANC councillors are also involved in this corruption and are being investigated. We are told that their arrest is imminent. We hope that the Hawks will have the courage to act without fear and favour to arrest all councillors implicated in corruption.

We hope that the ANC is not going to redeploy the people that it has now fired in other public positions. We also hope that the ANC will take the integrity of people it deploys to government very seriously.

The struggle for land, dignity and freedom continues.

S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani
Mqapheli Bonono

4 SEPTEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Condemns the Xenophobic Attacks

The recent attacks on our brothers and sisters in Pretoria and Johannesburg are a disgrace that needs to be condemned in the strongest possible way. Abahlali baseMjondolo have always condemned this kind of inhumanity. We have always understood that the old Bantustans, now turned into provinces, and the colonial borders, were created by the colonisers to be able rule and control us. We have always understood that we were made poor by racial capitalism and that it is the alliance between the ANC and racial capitalism that keeps us poor.

Our movement was formed on the foundation of Ubuntu, where the spirit of community and working together is encouraged. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. A person is a person whenever and wherever they find themselves, and must be respected as a person. A neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade without regard for the province or country in which they were born, or which language they speak.

Our oppressors work very hard to hard divide us because they want to weaken us. They tell impoverished people that we do not have jobs, or houses, or services, or decent health, care because of people from other provinces and countries. This is a lie. The government does not give us the means to a dignified life because it holds all impoverished people in contempt, because it is in a self-serving alliance with capital and because it is run more like a Mafia looking after its own interests than a tool of the people.

We have always worked to build the unity of the oppressed from below, and in struggle. There has never been a xenophobic attack in any of our branches, or in any area where we are strong. Since 2008 we have committed ourselves to shelter and defend anyone under attack and we remain committed to a living politic of solidarity. This is made clear in all our political education and we work closely with a number of migrant organisations. Comrades born in other countries are included as prominent speakers in our meetings and rallies.

Let us not allow our minds to be colonised even though we have fought against colonialism. Anyone who tries to tell us that our neighbours are our enemies is an enemy of our unity, and our work to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below.

Let us build the unity and power of the oppressed in South Africa, in Africa and in the world. Let us build a world in which land, wealth and power are shared, and the dignity of all human beings is respected.

We would like to work with all progressive membership-based organisations, including our comrades in the trade union movement and progressive church leaders, to build a broad and strong alliance against all forms of xenophobia, including the xenophobia in the ANC, the DA, the state and all these small organisations spreading such dangerous lies and hatred on social media.

The is time for clarity and courage.

Unyawo Alunampumulo.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Melita Ngcobo
Vusi Khoza

8 SEPTEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Today's Abahlali General Assembly to Discuss the National Crisis of Violence Against Women, Migrants, Children and Impoverished People

Our country is in a deep and very painful crisis. Millions of people see no future for their lives and we face terrible violence from the state and each other. Husbands attack wives. Neighbours attacks neighbours. Fathers attack their own children. The state destroys our homes with violence every day. No one is safe. Nowhere is safe.

As impoverished people we have been living in a constant state of emergency for years. We have lost 18 comrades in a few years. Most of them have been killed by the municipal Land Invasion Unit of the eThekweni Municipality. Some of them have been killed by the South African Police, some of them have been killed by the Metro police, some of them have been killed by the izinkabi hired by ANC councillors.

In most of our major cities the municipalities have special armed units that are being used to govern impoverished people with militarised violence. In Durban the City has even bought armoured vehicles designed for use in colonial wars to govern the poor. In Cape Town the soldiers are on the streets. We can see the future that is planned for us clearly – it is a future in which the impoverished are ruled by militarised forms of state force. It is a future in which the solidarity that we have spent years of working to build among the oppressed is attacked by other poor people encouraged and sometimes organised by politicians who see our unity as a threat to their power.

We also face terrible structural violence. This winter season over 15 babies have been burnt to ashes by shack fires. The state and the public have been quiet because shack dwellers lives count for nothing. We are not counted as human beings or as citizens. These deaths have never been seen as a crisis. Our children are not counted as children. We grieve for them on our own.

Since our movement was formed in 2005 we have worked to build democratic women's power in our movement, in all the struggles that we support, and

in society. For us it has always been clear that this is the best way to achieve full equality between women and men, to make sure that women's issues are at the forefront of all that we do and to keep women safe. We have always taken a clear position that we will not accept that any man can be a comrade in a meeting and an oppressor at home and that we will support any woman facing oppression in her home, as much as we would support a woman facing oppression from the police.

Since our movement was founded we have also made sure that it is a home for all of the oppressed without regard to the province or country in which they were born, or the language that they speak at home. Politicians have put us under huge pressure for this but we will never deviate from this. Since 2008 we have also worked very closely with migrant organisations and we always include migrant organisations in our meetings and rallies. There has never been an attack on migrants in any of our land occupations, or even any area where our movement is strong.

Today we note that those who attack migrants are very often the same people who are dangerous to women too. We note too that those who carry out violence on the streets often bring it home, to their own families. If you can harm and kill a migrant man what could stop you from perpetrating that same violence against your loved ones, including even your own children?

We have never stopped educating ourselves about the danger of hate and xenophobia. This is a permanent part of how we organise. In fact, in all our community meetings before we can talk about the politics of land, housing and dignity we talk about *ubuhlali* and *ubuntu*. The foundation of our movement is an affirmation of respect for human life. We talk about the kind of society we are struggling to build. A society where justice, equality, respect and dignity become the order of the day.

On Friday we held a very good meeting in our office with our comrades from the Coalition of the Poor and migrant organisations and other formations and individuals to strengthen the struggle against xenophobia in Durban. Representatives from all the major migrant organisations were present. There were about fifty leaders at the meeting. Leaders from the hostel dwellers were also there and the taxi organisation and the Durban Central police also attended and participated. The meeting went very well. This work is ongoing.

Today's General Assembly will be used to discuss how we, as a movement, can take forward the struggle against violence and the best ways for us to defend

migrant communities, women and everyone else who is vulnerable to violence, including our LGBTIQ+ comrades and children.

The solution to our crisis is build a more democratic world, a more peaceful world, a world in which everyone's human dignity is respected and everyone is safe. We need a world in which land, cities, wealth and power are fairly shared. Every attempt to turn the oppressed on each other, whether on the streets or in our homes, must be opposed. Every attempt to build solidarity must be supported.

We will also use today's meeting to celebrate and reflect on the progress made on the installation of electricity in the New City land occupation. This project is currently taking place and it is democratic and participatory. The New City settlement is one of the seven land occupations in which the legal right to access the land was confirmed in court after several severely violent evictions.

The meeting will also be attended by Councillor Mfeka of Ward 14 who has worked closely with community. What has been significant about the New City project is that the councillor there has taken an independent and democratic view of how to work with Abahlali. The community has democratically elected a Steering Committee. They have also elected a Community Liaison Officer (CLO), all without any interference of the councillor.

In the past people appointed to these posts have been imposed by councillors on communities and normally are party political deployees. They have worked against the communities and for the corrupt interests of the ruling party. We will use this opportunity to share with other communities the success in New City for learning purposes. We do hope that other ANC councillors and officials also have so much to learn from this experience. If we can build more democratic forms of engagement with the state from below development can become something that will benefit communities rather than politicians. This will be a big step forward.

The meeting will take place at Hindu Surat Hall, 137 Prince Edward Street, Durban. We will start from 10:00am

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

19 SEPTEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseVusimuzi Comrades to Appear in Ekurhuleni Magistrate's Court this Morning

In August this year, in the Women's month, two women from Vusimuzi-Section, Tembisa, Mam Hlatshwayo and Neli, were arrested and charged with fabricated cases for organising and loudhailing in the community. This follows the top down and imposed re-blocking project that has been imposed on the community. Reblocking has become a new eviction terminology to justify eviction by the City of Ekurhuleni. The community resisted reblocking in streets and in courts.

Of course, organising and using a loudhailer are not crimes according to the law. But the police usually ignore the law and take instructions from local politicians. The two comrades were arrested by Tembisa police on the instructions of local ANC councillor. The community has named Tembisa police station as "Luthuli House" because it the police are now acting on the instructions of the politicians and are controlled by ANC councillors.

Today they are going to appear in court for the second time. The march outside the court has been supported by Abahlali branches in Tswalopelo and Gabon in Daveyton because we are one family. An injury to one is an injury to all. We all stand in solidarity with these two strong women, and the community of Vusimuzi.

The protest outside court will also be used to denounce violence against migrant communities, women and children that has caused so much pain and disgrace to our country.

Despite continuous state repression using the police and other organs of the state we continue to organise against the attacks on women, we continue to speak against the abuse of children, and we continue to speak against xenophobia that has been incited and legitimated by some government officials. We are not frightened. We organise in the entire country. Our movement is growing everyday despite the challenges of repression.

We will continue to work to unite the oppressed and to build democratic forms of popular power to oppose oppression from below.

Melita Ngcobo
Mqapheli Bonono

23 SEPTEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Commemorate our Fallen Heroes through the Annual Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Lecture

September is a sad month for our movement. Our offices and our homes in the Kennedy Road settlement were ransacked, attacked and destroyed in September 2009. Our leaders were violently driven from the Kennedy Road after the conspiracy to assassinate our leaders including S’bu Zikode failed. After this attack the then MEC for Safety and Community Liaison Willies Mchunu celebrated the “demise” of Abahlali. This attack happened in the presence of the police. It was September 2014 when Nqobile Nzuzi, an Abahlali student who was 17 years old, was shot dead by the police during peaceful protest in Cato Crest. It was September 2014 when Thuli Ndlovu our chairperson in KwaNdengezi was assassinated by a hitman hired by two ANC councillors and their gun man (hit man). The councillors and their hit man were later sentenced to life imprisonment by the Durban High Court.

Tomorrow Abahlali in KwaZulu Natal will be gathering at the Surat Hindu Hall in Durban to remember and honour all our fallen heroes. Families of all our fallen heroes are invited. Our Secretary General Nomsa Sizani who lost a nephew, Samuel Hloele, who was senselessly gunned down by the Anti land invasion unit during an occupation in Ekukhanyeni will be giving us this year’s Thuli Ndlovu Annual Memorial Lecture.

Thuli Ndlovu was an Abahlali activist, an Abahlali Branch Chairperson and member of the Abahlali National Council who was assassinated by ANC councillors Christian “Nqola”Mduduzi Ngcobo, Luvelile Lutyeku and Ndlovu (hitman).

Nomsa will be raising difficult questions like how Thuli Ndlovu and Nkululeko Gwala, an Abahlali leader who was assassinated in Cato Crest in 2013, would reflect on the current socio economic situation in our country given the

level of state violence and other social ills. The lecture is aimed at honouring these heroes and their families.

We will start the day by placing flowers on the grave of Thuli Ndlovu to honour to her. This will be followed by the lecture by Nomsa. We will then celebrate our diverse cultures and strengthen our unity and solidarity.

We will use this day to denounce all forms of violence against migrant communities and violence against women and, also, children. It is time to build unity amongst the poor and working class. Our unity as oppressed people is our strongest weapon against oppression. All those who try to divide us are our enemies.

Nqobile Nzuza, Thuli Ndlovu, Nkululeko Gwala, Sibonelo Mpeku and other leaders who have fallen in the struggle for land and dignity are just statistics to our government, but to us they are our heroes who have fought a good fight. We will also honour them and give them the respect that this government fails to give

Nomsa Sizani
Mqapheli Bonono

27 SEPTEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo to hold Heritage Celebration in Gauteng

Our movement continues to grow and to support the impoverished to organise themselves and to build democratic counter-power to the state and capital. We now have branches in five provinces. There has been rapid growth in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, and we are steadily advancing in Gauteng.

The recent xenophobic attacks were centred in Gauteng, and they continue in various neighbourhoods. In a number of neighbourhoods people continue to be removed from their homes by xenophobic mobs. Some of our members tell us that they are still sleeping with their IDs under their pillows.

Our members in Gauteng have been doing excellent work, often in solidarity with our comrades in NUMSA, to build popular solidarity and opposition to xenophobia.

It is vital that we work with all our members, and other progressive forces, to continue to build a politic based on solidarity among the oppressed in Gauteng.

On Saturday 28 September we will hold a Heritage celebration in Vusimuzi section, Tembisa in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng. The event starts at 10 a.m. S’bu Zikode will address the gathering.

The theme of this year’s Heritage event is “Our unity is our weapon of success”. We will be celebrating our diverse cultures, and making it clear that for us a comrade is a comrade and a neighbour is neighbour without regard for the province or country in which they were born, or what language they speak at home. We will also be taking a clear position for the full equality of women in communities, in the struggle and in society, and against the ongoing attacks on women.

We invite all those who are opposed to xenophobia, and for the full equality of women, to join us in Tembisa as we work to build a progressive and democratic politics from below.

We will also take clear positions against evictions and repression, for land, wealth and power to be shared equally and fairly, and for the dignity of all people to be recognised and defended.

South Africa belongs to all who live in it. Every person should be able to live freely, in safety, with dignity, and without the fear that their humanity will be vandalised.

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.

Melita Ngcobo
Nomsa Sizani
Mqapheli Bonono

14 OCTOBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

City Attacks Community in Verulam

This morning at about 10 the Anti-Land Invasion Unit attacked a small community in Parkgate in Verulam in Durban. This community falls under Ward 102.

This is a community of about 75 people, including school going children, living in about 20 houses. This community has lived on this land since 2016.

A few days ago the City arrived and, without explanation marked ten houses with an 'X'. Today they destroyed these ten houses, and then continued to destroy another 5 houses before the community was able to organise resistance and save the last five houses. Their belongings were also thrown out and destroyed. They have been left destitute.

As is usual in Durban there was no court order and this eviction was, therefore, an illegal and criminal act on the part of the City.

This attack was not an isolated event. There are constant attacks by the City on impoverished people. In the Azania land occupation in Mayville in Ward 29 there have been repeated illegal attacks on the occupiers. After having their homes, which numbered more than 50, repeatedly destroyed they built one large structure to stay together and continue the resistance. Even this structure has been attacked and destroyed.

In Zamokuhle in eKuphumeleleni near Shallcross, which is in Ward 17, there was another eviction yesterday. As usual there was no court order. There are 120 homes in this occupation. Ten were destroyed before the community could organise to stop the attack.

In Durban impoverished people face a systematically illegal, criminal and violent form of governance at the hands of the eThekweni Municipality. This state criminality and violence is not taken as a crisis by the media and civil society. It is taken as normal. This is because impoverished black people are not really considered to be full and equal citizens of this country.

We reject state criminality and violence, and will continue to oppose it from the land occupations, in the streets and in the courts. We will continue to insist on the full recognition of our human dignity.

Mqapheli Bonono
Thulani Cele

20 NOVEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The City of Ekurhuleni violates a Court Order, and Melita Ngcobo is assaulted and arrested

Melita Ngcobo, an Abahlali chairperson in Vusimuzi Section, Tembisa, has just been arrested for questioning the brazen violation of a court order. She was assaulted before the arrest.

On 9 September 2019 the Gauteng High Court issued an interdict following a series of evictions carried out in the name of ‘re-blocking’ in Tembisa, Vusimuzi Section. For too long the Ward Councillor Selwana, together with the Members of the Mayoral Committee (MMC), have been violently and unlawfully been evicting this community in the name of ‘development’.

There was no consultation at all before this disastrous development started. We do not know how much budget was allocated and for what. The families with big houses or yards are attacked and forced to make space for other families in their yards. The belongings of people, including furniture, clothes and food, have been thrown away. Some people’s homes have been fully or partly demolished. Some have been forced onto river banks where it is not safe. Some have been forced to rebuild over old pit toilets, and some people are sick. People’s self-built toilets and other infrastructure have been destroyed.

People’s homes have been attacked by both the City, and supporters of the councillor. The police have frequently acted as if their mandate is to obey the councillor and not the law.

We wrote to the Head of Department of Human Settlement reporting this imposed so called ‘development’ because it is clear that there is corruption in this. There is no City that can use a local councillor to impose ‘development’ of this nature against the will of the people.

The Court had ordered that they can only finish with six families in Mangosuthu and eSitineni and that after that they must stop. The next phase can only begin when lawyers of both parties, that is lawyers of Abahlali and that of the City, meet to agree on road map and process. The court also said that

the families to be 're-blocked' need to be consulted and, lastly, that if the 're-blocking' leads to demolishing people's homes, they must be given material to immediately rebuild those houses.

However today four homes were attacked and demolished in brazen violation of the court order. The evictions are now targeting Abahlali homes in what has become a political attack carried out in the name of 'development'. The local ANC say that they just want to 'teach Zikode' a lesson because 'the law does not apply' to them. Melita has just been arrested for political reasons by the Luthuli House police station. They claim that 'she has a big mouth' when she shows a court order to police.

There is no democracy for the poor in this country. We continue to be treated as if we are beneath the law, and the ANC continues to conduct itself as if it is above the law.

Jabu Qwabe
Motsheawa Mmifi
S'bu Zikode

21 NOVEMBER 2019

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali in ekuRhuleni are under attack

We, Abahlali, are fighting for better lives and for people's rights. We are fighting for land and dignity. It is unfortunate and very disrespectful to see that our rights are violated each and every day by our government.

The government's duty is to make sure that every human is satisfied with the realisation of every right written in the Bill of Rights. Our government is working to achieve the opposite of that.

We say this with regard to the situation at Vusimuzi, in Ward 90 in Tembisa, ekuRhuleni. The Municipality, along with supporters of the ward councillor, Hendrick Selwana, are attacking and destroying people's homes. When we mobilise to stop the attacks we are threatened with violence. When we went to court the order of the court was just ignored.

Yesterday, our leader Melita Ngcobo was assaulted, arrested and then jailed. She has been denied medical attention. What has become of our world, our nation for abusing and violating women's rights, as well as human rights?

South Africa is facing a very painful and difficult situation of femicide – the killing of women. It is very shameful to see our government doing the same thing we are fighting against. Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by the police during a Abahlali baseMjondolo protest in Cato Manor in Durban in 2013. In 2014 Thuli Ndlovu, the Abahlali baseMjondolo chairperson in KwaNdengezi in Durban, was murdered on the order of two ANC councillors.

Yesterday there were more demolitions of homes. At around 10:00 Melita Ngcobo was arrested for standing up to a government that attacks poor black people in violation of the law, and a court order. She was standing up for our dignity as human beings, and for justice. Instead of defending her the police stood by while she was assaulted by supporters of the councillor. They then arrested her, detained her and denied her medical attention.

The ANC is contradicting itself. President Ramaphosa and police Minister Cele have committed themselves to ensure that the government works to stop

gender-based violence. Yet the very same organs of the state that are supposed to protect women in our country are violating their rights.

We need those who performed the assault on our comrade Melita to be arrested, prosecuted and jailed. We need the police who stood by without defending her, and then arrested her and denied her medical attention to be fully and fairly investigated. We need true leaders not gangsters.

Melita is still in police custody. We are told that she has been charged and that she will appear in court tomorrow. When she enters the dock she will see red everywhere, and she will know that she is not alone.

Rise Melita Ngcobo Rise!

Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo!

ekuRhuleni! Aluta continua!

Jabu Qwabe
Olitter Maphela
Nomsa Sizani

6 JANUARY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two Children Seriously Injured in a Fire in the eLindelani Settlement

The family of Mazeka in our Lindelani branch started the year 2020 in a very bad way. The family lost everything in a fire that broke out last night, at around 9pm.

The fire was started by a candle that fell on the bed while the eldest child was in the toilet. Two children aged 9 and 17 sustained serious burn in the fire. They have been treated at a nearby clinic where they are being taken care of. However, their lives will never be the same again. Their lives will be divided in to the time before and after the fire.

The Disaster Management has not arrived at the fire ever since. When the ward councillor was contacted he said that he does not attend to community issues at night as he fears for his life. He asked the community to take photos and send it to him.

This is the everyday contempt with which the government treats impoverished black people. More than twenty-five years after apartheid we are still not counted as human beings, or citizens.

The community does not have electricity which is why the family had to resort to using the candle. Impoverished people are systematically denied electricity when they live in places of their own choosing, and when we are given formal access to electricity by the state it always comes after years of struggle.

Our movement has been insisting that shack fires are political since 2005, and insisting that they be treated as a national emergency and that urgent measures be put in place to mitigate the risk of fire.

It is a norm that when poor people who are already living in inhuman conditions in shack settlements seek for assistance in emergency those who are in power do not respond on time, or at all. However, when they seek votes the very poor people are the ones who are their main target. We have become vote

bank for politicians who come to lie to us when elections are coming but treat us as if we are not human beings the rest of the time.

We continue to insist that the recognition of our full and equal humanity is not negotiable. We cannot accept that our children continue to be devoured by fires in 2020.

Zanele Mtshali
George Bonono

3 FEBRUARY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Mob Violence in Vusimuzi, Tembisa

There has been a long struggle against reblocking in Vusimuzi. It has been imposed in a top down way, with no democracy. Many people's homes have been destroyed. The situation has been made worse by the local councillor, Councillor Seloane, who has exploited an already authoritarian process to try and weaken our movement and strengthen the ANC. Our members have been systematically disadvantaged by the process, and the mob violence has been encouraged against us from the ANC. At the time the local police have acted under the instruction of the councillor, ignored the law, and colluded in repression.

On Sunday 26 January one of our comrades was left homeless by the reblocking process. The councillor told her that she must apologise to the community for being an umhlali (member of our movement). We did not agree that she should apologise for being an umhlali, and we could not accept that someone should lose their home for being a member of a democratic movement. We therefore rebuilt her home.

They councillor called the Anti-Land Invasion unit to destroy the new home. We engaged the Department of Human Settlements and they agreed that we could elect our own CLO, and begin a democratic process of bottom up grass-roots urban planning. On Wednesday a new street was opened and residents were allocated stands. This time we made the stands big enough for families so that we can live with our children free and not in a box. Our community was very happy. We worked very well with the Department.

However, the councillor was very unhappy with our movement working directly with the department. On Sunday 2 February he called a public meeting which he said would be about electricity. He used that meeting that only he can allocate stands and he said that ANC members who are tenants must occupy the stands.

ANC members were encouraged to attack us again. We were taking photographs and a guy came from nowhere and slapped Jabu Qwabe, who is 37 years old. We asked why they were doing this and they started throwing beer

bottles and stones at us, and attacking us with sticks. We ran towards Jabu's house and they followed us throwing stones. Mr Hlongolo was injured and his child, Unathi, ran to her father. They beat her on her forehead with a stone very hard. She fell immediately and she fainted. We ran to the clinic and they took her to hospital. Unathi and both her parents were very injured. Unathi is still in ICU.

Now the police are looking for Mr Hlongolo even though he did nothing wrong. This is not the first time that the police have wanted to arrest people after they have been attacked and beaten by people mobilised by the ANC Ward Committee. And this situation is not unique to Tembisa. It has happened elsewhere in the country since 2009 when the ANC, with the backing of the police, attacked our members in the Kennedy Road settlement and destroyed their homes.

Our chairperson went to the Tembisa police station but they didn't attend her. But they attended Meriam from the ANC ward committee. Most of the people from the committee were drunk.

The ANC are now threatening to burn down the house that we rebuilt.

The child was bleeding badly before we reach to the clinic. We need prayers

Melita Ngcobo
Mayibuye Shabalala
Mqapheli Bonono

21 FEBRUARY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali will march to the Durban City Hall to submit our proposals on the Amendment Bill.

The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa has called on all South Africans to comment on the Amendment of Section 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This follows a heated national debate on “expropriation of land without compensation”. A lot has been said by political parties and politicians on this important issue. We know that the land that is often talked about is commercial land used for business purposes, for private profit rather than public good. And we also know that a new programme of land reform driven by the elite, from above, will not benefit impoverished people.

We do not believe that land should be turned into private property and be bought and sold. We believe that land is a gift, that needs to be shared, worked, lived on and managed in common. We have always taken the position that the social value of land must be considered before its commercial value. We have also always insisted on the full and equal inclusion of women in the land question. Women have been side-lined over the decades when it comes to the distribution and management of land, including land under traditional authority in rural areas.

Since the end of apartheid politicians have been asking us to trust them now because land reform will come in the future. However not only do they not say how land will be allocated and managed if this reform ever really happens, they also repress ongoing struggles from below to access land.

Since the foundation of our movement land expropriation from below has been our key strategy for accessing the land. We have successfully occupied vacant and unused land to build our homes, as well as creches, halls, churches and community gardens. Today thousands of us have a place called home, and live in settled communities close to work and schools, because of our land occupation’s organised from below.

We currently have branches in five provinces. The current membership is at 75 023 people in 77 branches. Around 90% of our membership lives on occupied land. The same politicians who say that we must trust them now because they will 'deliver' land from above in the future have brutally repressed the ongoing struggle for land from below. In KwaZulu-Natal we have lost the lives of eighteen comrades in this struggle. They have been murdered by the izinkabi, the police, municipal security and the anti-land invasion unit. Apartheid might be over in law but, in reality, impoverished black people continue to live in a society in which the price for land is paid in blood. Women and men have lost their lives in the struggle for land. Children have been left without breadwinners, and left motherless and fatherless.

We have had series of long and careful discussions at our branches, at our monthly General Assemblies, and in community meetings, about Abahlali's take on the land question. Through this process we have formulated a collection response to the "Expropriation Bill".

We have decided to respond to the call to submit our proposal to the "Expropriation Bill". Abahlali refused to leave this important task to individuals to do the online submission on behalf of the movement. Abahlali resolved that we are going to submit our proposals in the Abahlali way – together. This will be a way that will allow all our members and comrades from the Coalition of the Poor, and other progressive formations to actively participate. We will submit our proposal in a form of a protest march.

We have asked the Chairperson of the Ad hoc Committee on the Amendment Bill Dr Mathole Motshekga to come to Durban to receive our submission in person. We want to make sure that our voice is clear and loud. We do this because we have paid a high price for occupying land to build homes for our children. We want to make sure that land is not taken from white elites and given to black elites and that ordinary people remain landless and with no access to economic opportunities, as it stands today.

The land discussion and submission take place at a very difficult time in our movement when the eThekweni municipality is attacking and destroying people's homes in occupations across the city. As always, all these evictions are violent and unlawful. This makes us deeply suspicious about the claims that the government makes about its intentions to restore the land to the people. If the state is serious about land reform they must first give us collective ownership of

the land that we have occupied over the years. There must also be an immediate end to the ongoing vicious evictions in Durban, and the forced and often violent reblocking of our settlements particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

Hence, we call for the expropriation of land from below. Our detailed statement on our position, worked out in numerous meetings involving thousands of people, will be issued to the media at the march.

The march will be held on Monday, 24 February. It will start at King Dinuzulu Park at 10:00am and proceed to the Durban City Hall.

Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Mqapheli Bonono

2 MARCH 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Assassinations Continue within the ANC in Durban

Today we received a call from Mthokozisi Mhlophe's family. He was murdered on Wednesday last week at his house in Mayville, just opposite the eNkanini occupation. They called us because people don't know what else to do when assassination tears into their homes and their lives.

Mhlophe was an ANC loyalist and led in various structures of the ANC. In this capacity he often engaged local leaders in Cato Crest like Thembinkosi Qumbela, who was assassinated in March 2013, and Nkululeko Gwala, the Abahlali leader who was assassinated in June 2013.

Although Mhlophe was in the ANC he engaged our leaders with an open heart in those days. When we were attacked by the ANC in Kennedy Road in 2009 Mhlophe was brave to open his funeral parlour offices in Sydney Road and allow Abahlali to begin to regroup from his business site. That is where we had our first meeting after the attack.

Later on, when we reopened our office in the Salisbury Centre he would come and engage our leaders with respect. Our politics were already very different but the conversations were always carried on with respect.

While leading within structures of the ANC he was shot but survived the attempted murder. There was later a second attempt to his life during which he was shot in the thigh and still survived. He then joined the Delangokubona Business Forum, which was closely linked to Zandile Gumede. This was a time when we were facing another wave of serious repression from the ANC, led by Gumede's faction.

Last Wednesday at about 21pm while sitting in his house with his wife and children, two unknown men knocked at the door. While his wife asked who was there, one of the men said he was Sihle from eMathinini and that he needs to speak to Mhlophe urgently. While his wife was arguing with the man saying that it was late, Mhlophe showed up and was shot thirteen times in his forehead

in front of his wife and children. His 19-year-old son tried to defend his Dad but was shot in the leg. He was hospitalised and was discharged yesterday.

Abahlali visited the family this afternoon after we received the call. They narrated to us the incident. They know that he had been in meetings which led to arguments. But they are too scared to talk about it, or to even say what they are suspecting.

They are concerned that ANC leaders, including the PR Councillor, have not come to visit the family but are spreading news about his death. They were even reluctant to facilitate his memorial service. This is all nowhere in the media. It is concerning us why this is not in the media.

On the same night two hours before Mhlophe was murdered S'bu Nguse was murdered about a kilometre away in Cato Crest. Nguse was also a prominent ANC member and served in local structures of the ANC. Of late we were told he became a business man. It is alleged he used to instigate violence and supplied illegal firearms. He threatened Abahlali in eKhenana. Nguse's name was mentioned quite often as one of the alleged suspects in the murder of Nkululeko Gwala in Cato Crest few years ago.

The world needs to know just how dangerous the ANC in Durban is. The country is not safe in the hands of the ANC. We are all not safe from the ANC. If they are able to kill their own like this how much more free will they feel to kill us, and others outside the party?

Our politics was always very different to that of Mhlophe. We have made very different choices. As time passed those differences became bigger. Our vision of the future is very different. However, no human being deserves to be killed like this. This brutality and impunity is just too much. Silence on this is too much. The world must know the truth about the ANC.

Mhlophe leaves behind his wife Fazeka and six children. We wish to express our deepest condolences to Fazeka and the children.

We do not know who killed Mhlophe, or hired izinkabi to carry out the hit. We hope that law enforcement will investigate the murder unlike many assassinations of Abahlali members where no arrests were made and there were no investigations.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono

22 MARCH 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Coronavirus: A Call for Solidarity in a Time of Crisis

Abahlali baseMjondolo has held small meetings with elected leaders in all the provinces where we have members to discuss the coronavirus crisis. The best available scientific information has been shared with our members. We have decided to suspend our entire programme of meetings and protests until the crisis has passed. This includes our annual UnFreedom Day rally held each year in April, which usually attracts more than 5 000 people.

We have declared a red alert in all land occupations and settlements affiliated to the movement. The resources that would have been used for meetings, protests and rallies have all been redirected towards providing equipment that can help people to survive this crisis. We are all doing all that we can to communicate the best information, based on science, to our members and to combat fake news and conspiracy theories.

We will do all that we can to keep our members, and other impoverished people safe. However, we face some serious challenges which result from the longstanding social crisis. Shack dwellers, and other poor people, including street traders, casual workers and undocumented migrants, have not been taken into consideration when it comes to the prevention of the corona virus, or included in decision making about the crisis.

Already people who live in shack settlements are faced with many other diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, HIV, and various stress related conditions. This is as a direct result of the failure of the government to provide housing and basic services to our communities, the failures and decline of the health care system, as well as the economic crisis that has resulted in mass unemployment. There is real fear that this new virus will hit impoverished people the hardest. In the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919 sixty percent of the people who died were poor people living in western India. There is a fear that, once again, it

could be the poor of the world, more than a billion of whom live in shack settlements, who are hit hardest by this epidemic. This is a national and international emergency.

Disasters, like fires and floods, always affect impoverished people the most. For this reason, we have been saying, during 15 years of struggle, that disasters are political. Disease is also political. Class determines who has medical aid and who does not, who has access to water, sanitation and safe means for heating and lighting and who does not. We have reminded all our members that access to life saving medication for people living with HIV was won through struggle and the politicisation of an important health issue. It is now vital that we politicise the crisis caused by the coronavirus and that impoverished and working-class people take their place in this process.

The leadership of Abahlali has visited settlements where we have membership as a way of spreading the word about the virus. Many people have complained about a lack of understanding about the virus.

On 15 March the President made a call to all south Africans to take precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus. However, many of the measures that are being recommended assume that everyone lives in a house, a house that is at no risk of being destroyed by the state, a house which has water and sanitation. But the reality is that millions of us continue to live in shacks of indignity. It does not seem possible to prevent this virus from spreading when we still live in the mud like pigs, when in many settlements there is no water, or hundreds of people sharing one tap, and many settlements lack any access to sanitation.

Our members have stressed that many people do not have regular or easy access to water and proper sanitation and are still using bushes to relieve themselves. Municipalities across the country do not collect refuse from shack settlements. In Mbizana communities share water with cattle which results in many diseases.

Our members have also expressed concern that the high employment rate and the extreme poverty in shack settlements makes it difficult for us to stay in our homes. If we do stay at home we may die as a result of starvation before the virus gets us.

Our members have also noted that it is also difficult to isolate ourselves from each other as we live under extremely congested conditions.

Another concern that has been expressed is that we continue to have our shacks (illegally and violently) demolished by the state during this time of crisis. Today in Ekuphumeleni one of our members has been hospitalised due to state violence during an eviction. People are being left homeless and their belongings burnt to ashes at the hand of arrogant councillors like S'busiso Kwela of Ward 17 whose taxi business benefits from tenders from the eThekweni Municipality.

On Wednesday we wrote to the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal requesting an urgent meeting to discuss how we can work together to develop a strategy to keep residents of shack settlements safe in this time of crisis. We have not received a reply, or even an acknowledgement of our email.

We as shack dwellers also love our country and its people and we want to help the government in the fight against this pandemic. This is a national disaster that needs a united force to work together for the health and safety of everyone. This is no time for political differences or fighting factional battles. We are calling for all South African, black and white, rich or poor, documented or undocumented, organised and unorganised, to be united in the fight against this pandemic before we perish. People must be put before profit. However, this can only be done when the poor and the working class are also considered and included when decisions are made and strategies for the way forward developed.

After numerous discussions, in all provinces where we have members, we would like to issue an invitation and a set of demands.

We would like to express our appreciation for and solidarity with all nurses, doctors and other health professionals working against this virus, including people working as cleaners and in other jobs in hospitals, and to call for a massive increase in financial support for the health care system. In our office in Durban we have pictures of Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon. They were both radical doctors who took the side of the oppressed. Steve Biko was a medical student before he was banned and then murdered. We would like to invite all progressive doctors, and other medical experts, to work with us, as comrades, as we oppose this pandemic.

We also issue the following set of fifteen demands:

All evictions must be stopped with immediate effect.

All disconnections from self-organised access to water, electricity and sanitation must be stopped with immediate effect.

All shack settlements must be included in municipal refuse removal programmes with immediate effect.

All workers, including domestic workers, who are not required to be on the frontlines of working against the pandemic must be given paid leave until the crisis has passed. Workers who are on the frontline of working against the pandemic must be given all possible forms of protection and care.

A guaranteed income must be made available to all people who are not able to earn an income during this period of crisis.

Steps must be taken to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient healthy food including the provision of free food parcels. Subsidies and price caps must be put in place on all basic food items. The measures that have been put in place against hoarding and profiteering must be strictly enforced.

Water and sanitation must be provided to all shack settlements as an urgent priority.

Sanitiser and all other medically required equipment must be made available to all at no cost.

All residents of shack settlements who test positive for the virus must be given safe and dignified accommodation in which they can self-isolate. Where necessary appropriate buildings can be requisitioned for this purpose.

Scientifically based information about the virus, and how to protect people from it, must be shared in all languages, in a way that is accessible and understandable to all, and is based on the understanding that millions of people live in shacks, that others are detained in prisons and migrant detention centres, and that millions of people will starve if they cannot continue to earn an income.

Payment must be suspended on all loans.

Free data must be made available to all by the cell phone companies so that people can stay in touch with family, friends, neighbours, hospitals and comrades.

All people detained by the state for non-criminal acts, such as being undocumented, occupying land, participating in arranging self-organised connections to water, electricity and sanitation, and so on, must be released with immediate effect.

All hospitals and all other health facilities must be available to all people living in South Africa, including undocumented migrants, with immediate effect.

There must be free testing and treatment for all.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
OJ Majola

29 MARCH 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Evictions Continue in Durban Despite the National Moratorium

The national government made a clear promise that there would be no evictions during the national shutdown implemented to slow the spread of the coronavirus. However today, at around 12:30, Calvin Security returned to the Eku-phumeleleni settlement in Marianhill, which falls under the eThekwin Municipality, and demolished 5 houses. This the second eviction aimed at our movement during the national shutdown and it is a direct violation of a promise made by national government, and a direct attack on the most vulnerable people in this time of crisis.

At the same time the government is starting the roll out of jojo tanks to provide water to settlements that do not have water. Twenty-three settlements have been promised water tanks and today tanks were installed in four of these settlements. We have been struggling for access to clean and safe water for all since 2005 and we welcome the provision of water to these settlements. We are also pleased that in Vusimuzi in Tembisa the tap that was broken has been fixed.

However, while the national government has been engaging with us during this crisis the eThekwin Municipality has not been doing the same. As a result of the lack of engagement some tanks have been placed right next to rotting piles of uncollected rubbish. Because there has been no communication people don't know if this water is safe to drink, or if it is only for washing hands.

Our members are extremely worried about the future. We cannot self-isolate when many people share one single room shack, when there are long queues to collect water or to use ablution blocks – or no water or ablution facilities at all, and when people have lost all their income and have already run out of food. People are also deeply concerned about how plans to 'de-densify' or 'decant' large settlements will be implemented.

It is vitally important that all levels of government engage us, and all residents of shack settlements across the country, in this time of crisis. We remain committed to working with all social forces, including the government, in the interests of the collective health and safety of everyone who lives in South Africa. We appreciate the lines of communication that have been opened by the national government but are deeply concerned about the conduct of the eThekweni Municipality.

We continue to organise in this time of crisis, using cell phone apps instead of face to face meetings, and we remain in contact with our lawyers. Any attempt at forced evictions will be resisted. We have attached a letter sent by our lawyers, the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (Seri) to the eThekweni Municipality.

We urge all levels of government to engage us in a respectful and democratic manner as we work together to find a way through this crisis.

Mqapheli Bonono
OJ Majola
S'bu Zikode

31 MARCH 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two Settlements Violently Attacked by the eThekweni Municipality Today

Two settlements affiliated to our movement, Azania in Cato Manor and Ekuphumeleleni in Marianhill, were attacked by the eThekweni Municipality and subject to eviction today. In Azania 15 homes were destroyed. In Ekuphumeleleni, which has now been subject to three attacks from the eThekweni municipality since the national lockdown started, three homes were destroyed. After people's homes were destroyed their building materials were broken, and then petrol was poured on them and they were burnt.

Both attacks were extremely aggressive and violent and left people injured. Five residents from Azania have been taken to hospital with serious injuries. In Azania live ammunition was used, and shots were fired despite the presence of children and elderly people. Both evictions were carried about by the notorious Calvin Security, an organisation that consistently acts towards poor black people with violent brutality and in brazen violation of the law.

As usual there was no court order for these evictions and they were therefore illegal and criminal acts. They are also in direct and brazen violation of the regulations governing the national lockdown. It has repeatedly been stated by national government that there should be no evictions during the lockdown but the eThekweni Municipality has gone rogue and is waging ongoing violent attacks on our members.

We are the people who are most at risk from this virus and yet the eThekweni Municipality is sending out armed men to destroy our homes and attack us in this time of crisis. These attacks have pushed us into a fight for our lives. We have no choice but to resist.

Mqapheli Bonono
OJ Majola
S'bu Zikode

1 APRIL 2020

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Sekwanele! Enough is enough!

We as the Women's League of Abahlali baseMjondolo see the need to express our pain and fear, and our deep disappointment and anger at the eThekweni municipality. We need to issue a clear warning that we will not continue to accept oppression.

Abahlali as a movement teaches respect. Men must respect women. People of different generations must respect each other. People who are born in different countries and people from different provinces must respect each other. We have struggled for years in our movement to ensure that poor people are treated with respect. In this crisis caused by the coronavirus we have respected the President's call to stay indoors even though this is very difficult when there are many people living in one shack, and even though this is very difficult when we don't get paid when we don't work.

It has been promised by national government that there will be no evictions during the lockdown. But by day five of the lockdown the eThekweni Municipality had already attacked us, violently, and unlawfully, three times. They destroyed our homes and left many people injured. It is very sad and unjustifiable what they are continuing to do to us as impoverished people. They are undermining us and rendering our rights useless even during this time of darkness, not only in our country but even globally. Is this happening because we are not counted as human? Is this happening because we do not count as citizens of this country? Is this happening because we do not have rights as shack dwellers?

Sizokuthola nini ukuphumula ezweni lethu uma sihlukumezwa kanje?

How are we going to be indoors while our houses are being demolished? Some of us we are single parents who not working. We can't afford to buy more building material after the securities, armed men sent by the government, have broken and burnt it.

As women we have been denied the right to housing. Even when we build our own houses they are destroyed. Housing is not possible without land and we are denied the right to land. We have been oppressed by the Kings in our rural

areas. You are denied access to land if you are a single mother. We have moved to the city and now we are still facing the same oppression from the eThekweni Municipality.

It is really so sad for a single mother and her children to be chased away from their homes at this very hard time. It is such a humiliation. What must a mother say to her children? It is such an embarrassment to our government. What happened to the 'women empowerment' that the President of the party in power promised us at the beginning of the year? It is clear to us that this 'women empowerment' is not for us. When we work to empower ourselves securities are sent to attack us.

We are afraid of the coronavirus, but there is no virus worse than not having a place to stay. There is no virus worse than armed men attacking and destroying your home. There is no virus worse than armed men shooting at your family, including children and old people. There is no virus worse than having to sleep outside, where there is always the fear of rape. There is no virus worse than our children waking up at night crying and shouting in fear.

We say that enough is enough. The struggle for land and dignity in the cities goes back more than a hundred years. Our struggle to occupy land, build homes and defend our dignity was the struggle of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. It was the struggle of the United Democratic Front. We do not want this struggle to also be the struggle of our children. It is enough.

We have buried our children and husbands as a result of these violent evictions. Right now, some of our men are in hospital, or at home with serious injuries. The brutality of the SAPS, municipal security, private security, the Red Ants and the Anti Land Invasion Unit has taken too many lives and left too many people injured. The blood of too many innocent people has been spilt. It is enough.

Ukubekwezela kwethu sekuphelile. Isibindi sethu siqinile.

Our movement organises the oppressed and projects the voice of the voiceless, the voice of the landless and homeless people of our country. Since it was established in 2005 we have been invited to a variety of different meetings by the departments of housing and land affairs, as well as municipalities, regarding the issues of land distribution and evictions. We have been to many meetings

but not even one of those meetings has helped us with resolutions of the eviction situation we are facing. Why are we still invited to those meetings if our ideas and views are not going to be taken to consideration? It is enough.

After fifteen years of struggle we continue to face unending evictions, relocations, the demolition of our vital belongings, the demolition of our houses, threats to our members and leaders, and killings. It is enough.

Now in this crisis, as we speak, we don't know how to make sure that we stay safe from the coronavirus. Some of us don't have even food to put on the table because we're self-employed. Those of us who are street vendors are already devastated by the lockdown. Now we're stressed about where we are going to rebuild our children's homes. We are stressed that when we do rebuild the securities will return to attack us again and destroy our homes again. It is enough.

As the Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League we will hold the government responsible for anyone who will die because of the coronavirus since we told our children to stay indoors and to wash their hands. But where are they going to practice this hygiene if they are homeless? We built homes for our children. It was the municipality that destroyed them. It is enough.

The Government is always saying that he is worried about Gender Based Violence but he sends armed men to attack us and leave women and children homeless and destitute. If there is any rape or murder of a women or a child who has been made homeless in these attacks we will hold the government responsible since he doesn't care about our safety. He is even sending the SANDF to victimise impoverished people across the country. It is enough.

As Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League we think that this 21 day shutdown has been implemented with a top down approach. Why we were not told on time to prepare ourselves? Why were we not included in decision making so that our suggestions could be included in the planning? The government is always deciding for us like we can't think for ourselves. It is enough.

It is not right that blood must still be shed for the land that our fathers and mothers fought for so that we could live without fear. For how long are we going to live with fear and tears in our only homes? This is a war against the poor. It is enough. We will act.

How many lives must we lose during evictions? How many husbands must we lose? How many children must we lose? Each and every human life counts as a human life. Rich or poor a human is a human.

Senzeni na?

When the President says that “our people should remain indoors” but our homes are destroyed it becomes clear to us that we are not classified as people of this nation. When the President addresses the nation he speaks as if the role of the government is to protect its citizens yet the same government is the cause of harm and despair for its citizens. The way we are treated as women during evictions is so humiliating, disgusting and devastating.

Women have too much work on their shoulders. If you are a women you have to go to work after work because you take care of your family and do cooking and chores. But in these communities who are currently facing these illegal evictions you also have to figure out how are you going to rebuild your children’s home. On top of that when these illegal evictions occur the securities abuse us and our children like nobody’s business. There is always sexual harassment and assault. They beat us up very badly. They don’t care whether you’re carrying a baby or not. As a result of this brutality some of us end up finding it very difficult to receive grant money because our Sassa cards are being destroyed along with all our other belongings. Some of us are defaulting on our treatment because our medication and clinic cards are destroyed so our health is at risk. Some of us experience miscarriages. Sometimes we even lose our partners.

We as the Abahlali Women’s League call upon the President to end his silence on the attacks on our movement, and all the other abuse from the police and the army against poor people across the country, including three murders. He must give us the answers. When will this violence and abuse stop? How are those of us who have been evicted going to spend 21 days without shelter? Where do they really want us to go at this critical time? We have complied with the request of the President of the country. However, if the eThekweni Municipality can’t respect us we won’t tolerate their disrespect. We will act.

Enough is enough bomama! This is our time to show our government that we stand for our children. We are fighting power to survive in the world.

Yonk’ indawo umzabalazo uyasivumela.

Wathint’ abafazi, wathint’ imbokodo

Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Zandile Nsibandé

2 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

Stop the Abuse and Violence Against Poor Black People!

Since the coronavirus lockdown began our movement has been violently attacked by the eThekweni Municipality and Calvin Security on three separate occasions. The attacks on our movement continue even though we are all facing this virus that has caused havoc around the world.

The National Command Council set up to deal with the coronavirus has mandated that there should be no evictions during the national lockdown. However, on each of the three times that we have been attacked our members' homes have been destroyed, and their building materials broken into pieces and then burnt. Each of these attacks has been very violent and numerous people have been injured. Five people were badly injured in the most recent attack and required hospital treatment. They are Masheke Gumede, Nkwelo Namile, Ayanda Mbuthuma, Nangamso Jona and Xolani P. Mabona. One of the five is still in a very serious condition.

The violence that has been waged against our movement by the eThekweni Municipality does not come out of nowhere. When our movement was formed in Durban fifteen years ago, when Obed Mlaba was the mayor, violent evictions and forced removals were an everyday reality. When James Nxumalo took over as mayor repression became much worse and we lost five leaders. Today in our branches we have people who are living with bullets in their bodies as a result of these attacks. When Zandile Gumede became mayor the situation became even worse and the killings escalated. By the time Gumede was finally forced out of office for corruption we had lost a total of 18 comrades to the police, the izinkabi and the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. Illegal and violent evictions continue under Mxolisi Kaunda. Under all four mayors evictions have been carried out violently, and without court orders, making them illegal and criminal acts.

The national government has acted against the corruption in the eThekweni Municipality but they have not acted against the municipality's repression and

violence against poor people in general, and the organised poor, the strong poor, in particular. They are reluctant to act against the municipality's well known and well documented history of repression. Their failure to act against the ongoing illegal and violent repression of the poor makes them complicit. If the national government wants to earn our trust in this time of crisis they need to act swiftly and decisively against the repression, violence and criminality with which the eThekweni Municipality engages the poor in general and our movement in particular. They also need to immediately suspend all operations by Calvin Security pending a full investigation into the activities of this notorious company.

There is also a national dimension to what is happening. Across South Africa impoverished black people are being humiliated, abused, assaulted and sometimes killed by the armed forces that have been sent into the townships, shack settlements and inner cities to enforce the coronavirus lockdown. We have received reports of similar situations from comrades in countries across the continent.

We support all measures backed by medical science to deal with this pandemic. However, we cannot accept that poor black people should be subject to these kinds of abuses. In fact, subjecting us to these kinds of abuse only makes the health situation worse. How can you stay at home when the government is sending out armed men to destroy your home? How can you trust the government when they don't treat you as a human being? How can you be expected to respect the law when the police, soldiers and private security openly break the law in broad daylight?

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon wrote that:

In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and 'bewilderers' separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the colonised and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge.

The reality is that more than 25 years after the end of apartheid impoverished black people continue to be governed by colonial forms of policing. This is also true in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia and many others. This has to stop, and it has to stop now. Every person has a right to be treated with respect.

The coronavirus pandemic is a serious social crisis. The violence and abuse to which our movement is being subjected at gunpoint, and the violence and abuse to which poor black people are being subjected across the country, is also a social crisis. Our movement has clearly stated that as shack dwellers we also love our country and we are prepared to work with the government to prevent the spread of the corona virus. However, we cannot work with a government that is shooting at us with live ammunition and destroying our homes. If the National Command Council wants to win and keep the confidence of the people it must address this situation as a matter of urgency.

We understand that it is not possible to call large public meetings at the moment, and that not all communities currently have democratic structures. But in the future if the police, the army and private security are going to come into our communities they need to work under the authority of democratic community structures and to be accountable to the communities where they work. Where democratic structures do currently exist they must immediately be given oversight over all operations by the police, the army and private security.

We are issuing this statement to serve notice that we will not accept the ongoing evictions, and other forms of abuse and violence being directed against our movement, and against poor black people in general. If it continues we will have no choice but to resist.

Busie
Mfanfikile

2 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eThekwini Municipality Evicts Again, This Time with the Backing of the Army

The eThekwini Municipality has just attacked the Azania settlement in Cato Manor again. This time Calvin Security was backed by the police and the army. A journalist was there and they chased her away.

Earlier today the minister for housing, Lindiwe Sisulu issued a press statement which said that:

Minister Sisulu and senior management of the Department of Human Settlements, had a video conference meeting with leaders of community organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations. During the meeting, she was informed of ongoing evictions, including in the eThekwini Metro. The minister has appealed for the practice to be halted, and instead for the municipalities and private property owners to prioritise measures aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We welcome the Minister's public decision to oppose the actions of the eThekwini Municipality. However, it is now clear that the eThekwini Municipality has gone rogue and is using the lockdown to wage a war against our movement. We are extremely concerned that the eThekwini Municipality is refusing to obey the law of the country, the lockdown regulations and a direct instruction from the Minister. We are also extremely concerned that this time the army was brought to join the forces launching the attack and that the media was not allowed to witness the attack.

If the national government cannot bring this rogue municipality to order we will have no choice but to make our own arrangements to defend ourselves from these ongoing attacks.

Mqapheli Bonono
Mafu Zwane

3 APRIL 2020

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

We Need a Democratic Response to the Crisis

As the Youth league of Abahlali baseMjondolo we are seriously concerned about the global crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We are really worried about what will happen now that this virus is in the shack settlements of the world where people live very close together, and often have no access to water, sanitation and refrigeration in their homes, and people often have no savings and do not get paid if they do not work.

In some cases 11 000 community members share one or two toilets. Even when there are less people sharing each toilet you still find that on normal days each toilet might serve 30 to 40 people per day. But now that it is lockdown and everyone is at home they use the toilets full time thus increasing the possibility of spreading the virus. It hasn't been easy on Abahlali because the majority of our people live out of selling in the streets or all ways of informal trading and casual work. Now that it is lockdown they haven't been able to put bread on the table. Besides that, many of the shops have ran out of stock. Our communities are the most vulnerable to the virus.

We are also worried that with school closed most learners in our communities don't have data or books and other study materials to be able to study at home. They are now having the challenge of a high possibility of repeating the same classes next year of which some of them won't be allowed to do due to their age.

We wish to express our deepest condolences to all the families who have already lost their members due to the corona virus. We wish to give hope to all those who are infected and affected by the virus and to wish everyone who is ill a speedy recovery. We wish to express our appreciation for all health care workers who are in the frontlines of fighting against this new disease. We are concerned by reports from some health care workers that they have not been provided with proper safety gear when treating patients. This is a serious violation of the rights of workers. As Abahlali youth we are in solidarity with all health care workers.

We support all the progressive measures that the government has put in place to combat this virus and ask everyone to do what they can to respect these measures. However, we are seriously concerned that as shack dwellers we have not been included in deciding how to deal with this crisis. Many of the measures that have been proposed can't work for us.

It is not possible to self-isolate when 7 or 8 people live in a one room shack which has no water, no toilet and no refrigeration and nobody is being paid because nobody can work anymore. The police, the army and the securities are humiliating, brutalising, and even killing poor black people around the country. Instead of working with our communities on a democratic and respectful basis our impoverishment is being criminalised. This is not acceptable and it needs to stop immediately.

We are pleased that the state has begun to provide water and sanitiser to our communities but we also need food, as well as data so that we can stay in contact with our families, community and comrades and keep up with the news.

In Durban the same state that has taken important measures to combat this virus, and is now suddenly providing water to our settlements after 25 years, is also attacking us and evicting us. The eThekweni Municipality has used this crisis to declare war on our movement and we are being attacked by the police, the army, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the notorious Calvin security company. We have repeatedly been attacked with live ammunition. The brutality that our communities are facing during the evictions that are happening during the lockdown are beyond imagination. The cruelty has never been on this level before.

All of those people that are attacking us, as well as the ward councillors and their committees, can move around freely. However due to lack of transparency in issuing travelling permits and the slow pace of issuing permits our leaders are not able to move around in this crisis. The state is playing politics to undermine us and to impose failed and sometimes violent councillors onto our communities. Abahlali is a democratic organisation with more than 70 000 members and we can do much better in helping fighting the virus.

We welcome the steps taken by the department of health to rapidly scale up testing. On our understanding isolation on its own will not be enough to fight the virus. There must also be mass testing. Shack settlements are always labelled as places of criminals and people who can't think. In reality there are

many unemployed graduates living in shack settlements, including graduates in health care. We are asking the government to give a chance to young graduates to take part which will give them a chance to get some practice and to make a contribution to our society and increase the capacity of the health department. Our country is in urgent need of more capacity in order to speed up the process of defeating the virus. It makes us loose hope as graduates if our government doesn't have plans to use us even during difficult times our country. Unemployed graduates must be given a chance to help and to show case their skills, humanity and willingness to fight for a better future for everyone.

We are calling on all progressive forces in society to isolate and oppose those forces in the state that are attacking us, and to engage the forces in the state that are supporting us during this crisis to encourage them to work in a democratic and consultative way. Trade unions, community organisations and popular movements must be included in democratic decision making. In this crisis society needs to be mobilised, not oppressed.

Mfanfikile Sindane
Busisiwe Diko
Lindokuhle Mnguni

3 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Impi ikhona: The War on our Movement Continues in Durban

The eThekweni Municipality attacked Ekuphumeleleni again today. Once again the notoriously violent and brutal Calvin security company was used to launch the attack. Seven homes were destroyed in this attack.

The attacks are now happening every day, sometimes twice a day. The eThekweni Municipality is ignoring the laws of the country, the rules governing the lockdown, a direct and public instruction from the Minister of human settlements, a letter from our legal representatives, the repeated statements from our movement, which represents more than 70 000 people in Durban, and statements from progressive organisations and intellectuals from across South Africa, and around the world, including the largest trade union in the country, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa.

The eThekweni Municipality has gone rogue and is using the lockdown as an opportunity to subject our movement to repeated violent attacks, including the repeated use of live ammunition against unarmed people.

We repeat our urgent call for the national government to act against this rogue municipality, and to immediately shut down Calvin security pending a full criminal investigation into its activities.

Mqapheli Bonono
OJ Majola

7 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Set Back in Court: The struggle continues under difficult circumstances

As we have detailed in a number of statements, and has been widely reported in the media, the Ekuphumeleni and Azania settlements were subject to repeated violent evictions, all carried out without court orders, during last week. The evictions, which continued until Sunday, were carried out by the notorious Calvin and Family Security Services which repeatedly fired live ammunition at unarmed people resulting in a number of people suffering serious injuries. On one occasion Calvin and Family Security Services were accompanied by the army, who forced a journalist to leave the scene before an eviction was enforced. Residents were also forced, at gunpoint, to delete their video and photographic evidence of evictions and violent attacks on residents.

The eThekweni Municipality has a long history of carrying out violent evictions without court orders. These evictions have resulted in serious injuries, and death, and are just one part of a broader problem of entrenched violence within the area governed by the Municipality. A recent news report notes that the “eThekweni municipality in KZN has seen at least 140 [political] assassinations over the past 10 years”. This is a city in which the rule of law is routinely violated by various actors including the police, the anti-land invasion unit, private security, armed members of the ruling party and the izinkabi.

It is often impossible for our members to report unlawful behaviour to the police when it is perpetrated by the police, the anti-land invasion unit, private security, or members of the ruling party, especially when they are ward councillors or members of Branch Executive Committees. It is common for people trying to open cases with the police to be insulted, chased out of the police stations, assaulted or threatened with arrest. However, the police are not all the same and sometimes possibilities are opened, usually via struggle, for certain police officers to act with fairness.

On Sunday we were surprised and encouraged when Sibusiso Khwela, the ward councillor for Ekuphumeleleni was arrested for assaulting an elderly woman. There have been other occasions when breakthroughs have been made with the criminal justice system. For instance, in 2016 two ANC councillors were convicted for the 2014 assassination of Thuli Ndlovu, who was our chairperson in KwaNdengezi. But in general, the police see their role as supporting the ruling party and the Municipality rather than being neutral actors who apply the law without fear or favour. It is common, for instance, for the police to threaten, assault or arrest people on the instruction of ward councillors. Khwela has now been released after appearing in the Pinetown court but, although Khwela has tried to force the elderly woman to withdraw her complaint, the case remains open.

When challenged on unlawful and violent evictions the Municipality routinely responds that the shacks that it is demolishing are not occupied. Over the years we have won numerous cases against the Municipality by collecting detailed evidence in the form of photographs, affidavits and various kinds of documentary evidence that prove long term residence. Given our record of success over many years it would be a shock for us not to win a case.

On Monday we took the eThekweni Municipality to the High Court seeking to interdict them against continuing the ongoing evictions in the Ekuphumeleleni and Azania settlements. It was not an easy day for us and our team. Judge Moodley asked both parties to discuss the matter and find solutions on their own. We asked the City to allow us to rebuild the shacks that had been destroyed, and to allow us to rebuild them on the same land where they had been when they were destroyed.

The City refused and offered us alternative accommodation in the emergency camps set up at the Durban Exhibition Centre and Pinetown for homeless people during the Coronavirus crisis. Our members did not want to accept this for many reasons, including the fact that there was no guarantee that they would be able to return to the land on which they had been living, where they were part of a community, and which is close to where they work and their children are at school. They were also worried about the conditions in these camps, including difficulties in social distancing and the high percentage of people there with serious untreated addiction issues. Some of the women who had been evicted did not feel that these camps would be safe for them and their children. We are

aware that today people forced into a similar camp for homeless people in Cape Town organised a protest at the conditions, including a lack of food as well as serious overcrowding that meant that social distancing was impossible, and were then attacked by the police with rubber bullets.

The City wanted us all to go on site to identify and verify people and their structures. But we said to our legal team that there is no point in doing that because people had already been evicted, and because the army was in occupation of the settlements and there was a climate of extreme intimidation.

Another issue on our side was that the Confirmatory Affidavits of the people who had been evicted were not commissioned as a result of lockdown. The City said that they have commissioned their papers in police stations and that we should have been able to do the same in the same police stations. However, when our members attempted to approach the police stations for support they were chased away and threatened with arrest. The hostility from the police, as well as the fact that the lockdown makes it impossible for those of our members with extensive experience in preparing legal documents to move around, made it difficult for us to prepare for the court hearing as we usually would. The matter was adjourned for the day.

Today the court dismissed our application for an interdict. Our Senior Council (SC) Adv. Suleman argued that in fact even the evidence brought by the City showed that homes were occupied prior to the evictions. The photographs that we have shared of the evictions, which can be seen on our Facebook page, clearly show beds, mattresses, other furniture and a fridge amidst the remains of the shacks that were destroyed. However, Judge Moodley was not convinced that people were occupying the shacks that were destroyed.

It is very unusual for us not to win an application for an interdict against evictions but we are operating in very unusual circumstances that make it extremely difficult for us to prepare for the court hearing in the manner that we usually do.

We don't yet have the written judgment and we will study it closely when we get it. We will also consult with our lawyers, and work out the best possible strategy for us to be able to continue to defend our rights in the courts during the lockdown. We will also continue to strategize about how we can organise against the shocking violence and cruelty that has been meted out by Calvin Family Security Services, and the serious intimidation from the army, during

the lockdown. We cannot accept that people can be subject to state violence or made homeless under any circumstances, but state violence and evictions became particularly urgent during this time of a worldwide health crisis in which impoverished people are most at risk.

We are disappointed by the outcome in the court today, and very worried about what will happen as the lockdown continues. Calvin and Family Security Services are now parading at Ekuphumeleni celebrating the finding of the court and hooting non-stop. They are being led by Khwela. People are really scared. They don't know what will happen tonight, or tomorrow, or the next day. We all fear that there will be more violence.

We appreciate all the solidarity that we have received over the last week and ask all our comrades and the media to keep a close watch on what happens in the eThekweni Municipality as the lockdown continues. It is particularly important that a close watch is kept on Cllr. Khwela, Calvin and Family Security Services, and the army.

The situation in which we have suddenly found ourselves is very uncertain. In this lockdown we cannot use the streets or the courts in the way that have done so successfully during fifteen years of struggle against evictions. However, amandla remains ours. We will focus all our energy and courage on finding ways to keep organising in the face of violence from a gangster municipality.

The struggle for land, housing and dignity continues. We will not lose hope. Like a cadre in a war we will soldier on regardless of the situation.

Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode

10 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Twenty-Nine Brave Women Arrested, Two Settlements Attacked

Yesterday the KwaMathambo settlement in Redhill and the Burnwood settlement in Clare Estate were both attacked by the eThekweni Municipality and subject to violent eviction.

As usual there were no court orders and the evictions were violent and illegal in terms of the both the ordinary law and the lockdown regulations that have placed a moratorium on all evictions. As has become routine since Calvin and Family Security were given the tender to evict a number of people were seriously injured.

KwaMathambo and Burnwood are both long established settlements that the eThekweni Municipality has wanted to ‘eradicate’ for years. KwaMathambo is not affiliated to our movement but we are sharing the information about the attack that took place yesterday at the request of residents there.

Also yesterday, twenty-nine courageous women were arrested in the Azania settlement in Cato Manor. This land was first occupied in February last year. The occupation has come under sustained attack from the eThekweni Municipality since March last year. People have rebuilt after each attack. However armed men from Calvin and Family Security prevented them from rebuilding after the last attack.

Twenty-nine women bravely continued to occupy the land by sleeping on the ground. Yesterday Calvin and Family Security arrested them. Some of them had babies as young as two years with them. The babies were taken with their mothers during the arrest.

The brave women were first told that they were arrested for contravening the national lockdown regulations. This is a joke! How are you supposed to self-isolate at home when armed men paid by the state have repeatedly destroyed your home? How can the City claim that this is a new occupation when they have been sending out armed men to attack Azania since March last year?

Calvin and Family Security then called the notorious Cato Manor police from the station known as KwaKito. In 2013 Nqobile Nzuza, a resident of the Marikana Occupation in Cato Crest, was murdered by Phumlani Ndlovu a police officer from KwaKito. After a long struggle he was convicted of murder in 2018. Our comrades have also been assaulted and tortured in KwaKito on a number of occasions.

The twenty-nine brave women were then arrested and taken to KwaKwito. They were detained in police custody and told that they would be charged with trespassing.

We sent our legal representatives to negotiate for police bail. However, the twenty-nine brave women were not actually charged with any offence so police bail could not be secured. After hours of negotiation with our legal team the police offered to release them on condition that they signed warning letters that say that they will not 'trespass' on the land where they had been living before the evictions. The women refused and made it clear to the police that they have nowhere else to go. They insisted that the City must engage with the leadership of Abahlali to find a solution. The police then made a second threat to charge them. The women refused to sign these warnings and reiterated that they cannot consent to have been trespassing when they have lived in the settlement since last year.

At about 21:15pm they were finally released without any charge being laid and without having to pay bail. Even the police at KwaKwito could find no credible criminal charge on which to detain the women. Of course the police have not arrested anyone from Calvin and Family Security for repeated illegal evictions and repeated violence, including the repeated use of live ammunition against unarmed people.

These twenty-nine brave women have been living under the constant threat of state violence since they were first attacked and had their homes destroyed early last year. They have been attacked and evicted more than thirty times.

This is a list of the dates on which the Azania settlement has been attacked and homes destroyed. We can confirm that all the dates given here are accurate but this list is not complete. Our full list of the dates on which the Azania settlement has been attacked are in our office and we cannot access it under the lockdown.

1. 27 March 2019

2. 28 March 2019
3. 02 April 2019
4. 04 April 2019
5. 10 April 2019
6. 16 April 2019
7. 20 April 2019
8. 25 April 2019
9. 27 April 2019
10. 05 May 2019
11. 10 May 2019
12. 11 May 2019
13. 15 May 2019
14. 17 May 2019
15. 22 May 2019
16. 29 May 2019
17. 6 June 2019
18. 13 June 2019
19. 18 June 2019
20. 30 June 2019
21. 10 July 2019
22. 20 July 2019
23. 01 August 2019
24. 07 August 2019
25. 15 August 2019
26. 21 August 2019
27. 31 March 2020
28. 2 April 2020

For the poor the price for land continues to be paid in blood, exhaustion, fear, further impoverishment and trauma. Is this kind of ongoing state violence not a kind of torture? It is a joke when people who have been through this kind of state violence are told by the Mayor that Durban is ‘a caring city’. It is a joke when the same state that says it is opposed to violence against women issues a tender to pay armed men to attack women.

The eThekweni Municipality is using the national lockdown as cover to attack our movement, and to attack settlements that it has wanted to ‘eradicate’

for years. In this dangerous time they are placing the most vulnerable people in society at even greater risk.

If the national government is serious about the moratorium on evictions it must move swiftly to arrest those responsible for the ongoing evictions in Durban in both the Municipality and in Calvin and Family Security. Calvin Family and Security must be shut down with immediate effect pending a full criminal investigation into its activities.

We will continue to resist these attacks. We will continue to occupy the land in all the settlements that are coming under attack. We will continue to speak truth to power in the media. We will continue to look for legal strategies that can be effective during the restrictions on organising imposed during lockdown.

We appreciate all the statements of solidarity that have been issued by different organisations in recent days. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Inkani iyo ezovula ndlela.

Onwards!

Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode

18 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The eThekweni Municipality continues to attack the poor; victory for shack dwellers in Cape Town

The ANC led municipality in Durban, under Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda, continues to attack the poor in these difficult times.

Yesterday at 2:30 the notoriously violent Calvin & Family security company arrived at the Azania occupation in Cato Manor, in Durban, with the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. They destroyed 17 homes. Today they returned at 11:00, fired live ammunition to disperse the comrades gathered on the land, and then destroyed the 13 shacks that had been rebuilt after the eviction yesterday.

The comrades in the Azania occupation have now had their homes demolished more than ten times since the lockdown began, and more than 30 times since the land was first occupied in February last year. Numerous people have been seriously injured in these violent attacks, and recently twenty-nine brave women were arrested by Calvin & Family Security and taken to the notorious KwaKito police station by the army.

Yesterday Calvin & Family Security also returned to Ekuphumeleleni and spray painted Xs on people's homes. This means that they will be returning to evict again there too.

Despite the moratorium on evictions during the lockdown there have also been attacks on impoverished and precarious communities in Johannesburg and in Cape Town. On Thursday a large number of shacks, and some homes built with bricks, were demolished by the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department and the notorious Red Ants private security company in Lawley Extension Two in the south of Johannesburg. There was no court order authorising these evictions. Last week the City of Johannesburg was found to have acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally when they evicted residents of the Van Beeck Hostel in the city centre without a court order.

Just before the Easter weekend residents of the eMpolweni occupation, close to Makhaza in Khayelitsha in Cape Town, were violently evicted by the City of Cape Town's Anti Land Invasion Unit. These evictions had already started before the lockdown, and some of the residents had been living on the land since February.

In Durban the residents of the Azania occupation were denied an interdict protecting them from ongoing violent attacks organised and paid for by the eThekweni Municipality on the grounds that the judge accepted the City's claim that the shacks that it was demolishing are new. The reality is that people have been living on that land since February last year and rebuilding their shacks after each eviction. A new shack does not indicate a new resident. The municipalities in Cape Town and Johannesburg have also justified recent evictions by claiming that the homes that they destroyed were not occupied.

However, we note with great pleasure the victory of the residents in eMpolweni in court. The judge ruled in favour of the eMpolweni residents after the City of Cape Town, led by the liberal and anti-poor Democratic Alliance government, demolished their homes on a number of occasions. We have been closely following the work that has been done by the Community Action Network (CAN) in fighting against these violent, illegal evictions. We celebrate with our comrades in Cape Town. Their victory is our victory. We are happy that our comrades who have been rendered homeless by the City will now be able to rebuild.

We also note with grave concern that while the judgement in Cape Town ruled in the favour of the poor in this time of lock down in Durban in a similar matter, with clear evidence of sustained occupation, the judgement was against the poor and favoured the brutality of a notoriously corrupt and violent municipality. This is a municipality that has been widely referred to as a gangster municipality for years. There have been more than 160 political assassinations in this municipality in the last ten years.

It is of urgent importance that lockdown regulations must be amended to ensure that all individuals and communities that are being subject to state violence are able to move around in order to prepare for urgent court cases. The lockdown makes it impossible to organise in the way that we used to, and if it also makes it very difficult for people to prepare for urgent court cases the poor will be left in an extremely vulnerable position.

Also, if the national government wants the poor to continue to trust them and to accept this lockdown they must move, immediately, to suspend and arrest all government officials and service providers involved in ongoing illegal evictions that violate the Constitution, the law and the regulations governing the lockdown. This should include the Mayors of the municipalities in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

Evictions are not the only crisis that we are facing. In Durban the municipality is also continuing to send armed men from Calvin & Family Security to disconnect people from self-organised connections to electricity. This undermines people's ability to ensure that all self-organised connections are safely done with insulated and buried cables. This is made worse during the Covid-19 crisis when people don't have the ability to travel to purchase safe replacement materials.

The Food Crisis

Across the country poor and working-class people are rapidly running out of food as a result of being unable to earn an income during the lockdown. The little food that is being made available from the government is being captured by corrupt ANC councillors who are either stealing it or only giving it to their supporters.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is making its own arrangements to provide food to our branches, starting with the occupations that have come under violent attack from the municipality in Durban. We are in the process of expanding our food security programme to other towns in KwaZulu-Natal, and other provinces.

However, it is critically urgent that the state needs to intervene in the food crisis. The state needs to:

1. Immediately provide food parcels to all communities and individuals in need, including migrants, whether documented or not, and without regard to party political affiliation. It is critically important that this support is provided directly to people in need and that it is not captured by corrupt councillors.
2. The existing grant system must be used to immediately provide emergency relief to all people who are already receiving grants.
3. The UIF system must also be used to provide immediate relief to all people who are not being paid during the lockdown.

4. People must be able to occupy land, including urban land, for the purposes of growing food. This will not provide immediate relief to the food crisis that is getting worse by the hour, but it will help to break the power of capitalism over the food system and ensure greater food sovereignty going forward.

Some ANC leaders have become a disgrace to all who fought against colonialism. The ANC is a corrupt organisation that is extremely violent in Durban, and is led by capitalists at the national level. These capitalists always put profit before people, the commercial value of land before its social value and are about to sell our country out to the IMF.

In the meantime, we will continue to rebuild after evictions, and we will continue to run our own food security programme to ensure that people can survive this crisis. After this crisis all progressive organisations of the poor and the working-class need to work together to break the power of the gangster politicians who have repressed us so violently and looted the state for their own enrichment. We also need to break the power of the system of racial capitalism that made us poor, and keeps us poor.

In this crisis it would be normal to think that when the government comes to the poor they would come with food, medicine and nurses and doctors. But the reality is that the government comes with guns to destroy people's homes. No human being can be expected to accept this.

Aluta continua!

Umzabalazo uyaqhubeka noma besidubula.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Mafu Zwane

22 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Impi Yokulwa Nabampofu! War on the Poor!

Impi yokulwa nabampofu iyaqhubeka eThekwini

The war against the poor continues in Durban

At around 6:30 last night armed members of the notoriously violent Calvin & Family Security Company arrived at the eKhenana occupation in Cato Manor, Durban, and started taking photographs of people's homes. The residents asked them to desist at which point they became aggressive and violent, and fired live ammunition at unarmed people. They were shooting all over. Doors were kicked open while old people and children were in their homes. People were insulted, assaulted, humiliated and robbed of cash and phones at gunpoint.

When the abuse, threats and theft were over a delegation from the occupation went to the Cato Manor police station, known as KwaKito, to open charges of theft, assault, and attempted murder against Calvin & Family Security Company. The police refused to open a case, called the people trying to open the case criminals and threatened them with arrest and assault. The residents were chased out of the police station.

Today, at around 12:45 Calvin & Family Security Company returned to the eKhenana occupation and began destroying homes. They destroyed 14 homes while the Durban Metro Police looked on.

In February 2019 the residents of this settlement secured an interdict from the High Court preventing the eThekwini Municipality from illegally evicting them. The evictions in Durban today were in violation of the interdict, the Constitution, the law and the lockdown regulations.

Just now, at around 6:00 pm, the Azania Occupation was attacked again by Calvin & Family Security. Four homes have been destroyed and two of the big collective houses (izitimela) that were built after the recent evictions have also been destroyed. The injured are being rushed to King Edward Hospital.

Right now, the Durban Metro Police are at the eKhenana occupation in numbers insulting people and threatening to attack.

In recent days there have also been a number of illegal and violent evictions carried out by the notorious Red Ants security company, and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police. A number of people have been injured and hundreds of homes, some made of bricks, have been destroyed.

When there were evictions in Cape Town the ANC expressed solidarity with the people under attack, and the minister of housing even visited the community, condemned the evictions and ordered that building materials be provided for the people who have been evicted. However, the ANC is silent on the evictions taking place in Durban and Johannesburg. This shows that their position in Cape Town is nothing but gross political opportunism. A principled politics would be against all evictions everywhere.

If the ANC were serious about the rule of law, and the moratorium on evictions during the lockdown, they would have moved to stop them from the first day, and they would have arrested the mayors of Durban and Johannesburg, as well as the bosses of Calvin & Family Security and the Red Ants. However, they do nothing. They say nothing. They pretend like they care about us when they are on TV but in really like we are treated like we are nothing, like we are not even human beings.

The failure of the ANC and the national state to act against the ongoing evictions in Durban and Johannesburg makes them complicit with these ongoing violent and illegal attacks on impoverished black people, attacks undertaken in a moment of global crisis.

In Durban it has been made very clear that our movement is being specifically targeted.

If you are poor and black in this country you do not count to the law. You are treated as if you are beneath the law. Your life and your family and your home and your dignity as a human being count for nothing.

In this crisis the government comes to us with bullets, not bread.

Umzabalazo uyaqhubeka noma besidubula.

Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni
Nomsa Sizani

23 APRIL 2020

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Why this Suffering?

Blood is running like a river through our homes. We are under constant attack from Calvin & Family Security, the police, and the eThekweni Municipality. Sometimes the army is also there during attacks. Our children are beyond traumatized when they see their only homes being demolished. They are full of fear and anxiety when they see their parents being brutally attacked and hunted with live ammunition like wild animals.

When our homes are destroyed we are made more vulnerable to coronavirus and rape. Our phones and money are also stolen during these evictions. How are we supposed to care for our children when we have to sleep in the bushes and live with no money and no phones to call for help?

The Azania land occupation has now faced more than 40 evictions since February 2019. After they were evicted last week 29 women were accused of contravening the lockdown, arrested and taken to KwaKito. Their crime was to sleep on open ground after their homes had been destroyed by Calvin & Family Security. Some had to leave children as young as two years old. This is so humiliating and sad.

In 2018 one of the officers at KwaKito, Phumlani Ndlovu, was convicted of murder after he killed Nqobile Nzuza, a 17-year-old girl, in 2013. Women in our movement have been assaulted at KwaKito and tortured with rubber tubes put over their heads and their faces pushed into water again and again.

Yesterday eKhenana was evicted in a violent attack in which live ammunition was fired at unarmed people running for their lives. In February 2019, after 30 evictions, eKhenana was granted an interdict by the Durban High Court. The community is still protected by that interdict. If you are poor and black you do not count to the law.

The government says that we are criminals because we occupy land. We occupy land because we don't have money to pay rent and we are tired of the abuse that we receive from government men. We need land for living. We build

homes for our children and cultivate the land to feed our families. We are proud of all the new land that we have opened to build new communities.

The government never says that the men that come to evict us, in violation of the Constitution, the law, court interdicts, and lockdown regulations, are criminals. These men insult us, beat us, sexually harass us, steal our money and our phones, and shoot at us with live ammunition. If we try and report these attacks to the police we are threatened and chased out of the police station.

We as the Women's League of Abahlali we want to know why does our government send armed men to attack us for building homes and cultivating land but no one from private security, the anti-land invasion unit, the police or the army is ever arrested for attacking and abusing us?

President Ramaphosa, Minister Sisulu, Premier Zikalala and Mayor Kaunda are all silent when we are attacked. They have all failed to protect us. It is clear that just as we do not count to the law we also do not count to the government as citizens. In fact, we do not count to them as human beings.

We as women of Abahlali baseMjondolo we have faced eviction, arrest, assault, torture and assassination from the ANC government since our movement was formed in 2005. We have buried our husbands and our children because of the violence of the ANC who are amabhunu amnyama.

Senzeni na?

We, as the women of Abahlali, we appeal to the women of the world to be in solidarity with us and to join us in the struggle to put an end to this abuse and brutally by the government of South Africa. We shout with hope. We need to stop the flow of blood running like a river through our homes. We need to be allowed to grow our children in peace. We need to abolish evictions.

Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Agnes Zoko
OJ Majola

24 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Victory in Court, Blood in the Occupation

Today we went back to the High Court in Durban to ask the court to enforce the interdict granted against evictions in the eKhenana occupation in February 2019.

The eKhenana occupation was violently attacked by Calvin & Family Security on Tuesday and Wednesday this week, while the Durban Metro Police looked on. Live ammunition was fired at unarmed people, homes were destroyed, money and phones were stolen and people were subject to serious abuse. These attacks were in brazen violation of the February 2019 interdict, the law, the Constitution and the lockdown regulations.

Mxolisi Kaunda, the mayor of the eThekweni Municipality, has been quoted as saying that he has warned Abahlali that land occupations are not acceptable. This had led many of our members to conclude that it is the mayor who has given the orders to repeatedly attack our occupations during the lockdown.

The court granted us our request today and the eThekweni Municipality was interdicted from any further evictions in the eKhenana occupation without an order of the court. But minutes after the judgment was issued the eThekweni Municipality's Anti-Land Invasion Unit attacked the occupation and shot one of our comrades, Yamkela Vezi. He has been rushed to King Edward hospital where he is in a serious condition.

We were reminded of 2009 when, shortly after we won our case against the Slums Act in the Constitutional Court, we were attacked in the Kennedy Road settlement by armed ANC supporters, acting with the support of the police, who destroyed our office and library, and attacked and destroyed the homes of our leading members in the settlement. At the time statements made by the John Mchunu, the then chairperson of the ANC in the eThekweni region, led a number of independent observers to conclude that the attack was a direct punishment for taking the ANC to the Constitutional Court, and then winning the case.

We are now wondering if the attack in eKhenana occupation shortly after the judgment against the City was issued was punishment for taking the City to court, and winning.

The struggle continues in the occupations, in the courts, and soon in the streets.

Umzabalazo uyaqhubeka noma besidubula.

Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode
Lindokuhle Mnguni

25 APRIL 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Impunity for Attempted Murder

Yesterday we secured an interdict against the illegal and violent evictions that the eThekweni Municipality has been carrying out in the eKhenana settlement in Cato Crest during the lockdown. We had previously secured an interdict against illegal evictions in this community in February 2019 but we had to return to court as the municipality was evicting in violation of this interdict, the law, the Constitution and the lockdown regulations.

Yesterday, immediately after we secured the interdict against the eThekweni Municipality, Mr. Mkhize, the leader of the city's notorious Land Invasion Unit went to eKhenana to continue his attack on the community. Mkhize went wild in anger at Abahlali winning in court and fired live ammunition at the community. This is not the first time that we have been violently attacked after winning in court.

Yamkela Vezi was shot and is fighting for his life in hospital. This is clearly a matter of attempted murder. Mkhize may wear a uniform and be paid a salary by the eThekweni Municipality but he is as much a hitman as any of the izinkabi.

We would like to remind the press that the ANC openly attacked our movement in the Kennedy Road settlement in 2009, with the support of the police and the senior politicians in the City and the Province. We would like to remind the press that in 2016 two ANC councillors Mduduzi Ngcobo and Velile Lutsheko were convicted of murder and given life sentences for the assassinations of one of our leaders, Thuli Ndlovu, in 2014. We would like to remind the press that in 2018 Phumlani Ndlovu, a police officer at the notorious KwaKito police station in Cato Manor was convicted for the murder of one of our members, Nqobile Nzuza, a 17-year-old girl. We would like to remind the press that since 2013 a total of 18 of our members have been murdered in Durban.

Last night Mkhize was seen at King Edward, the hospital where Yamkela is fighting for his life. There are strong fears that Mkhize was either there to intimidate the hospital staff into changing medical records to remove evidence or to have Yamkela poisoned.

This fear is not unfounded. On the 30th of June 2012 Bhekimuzi Ndlovu was shot in the Zakheleni shack settlement in Umlazi after a series of protests against the local councillor and for land and housing. The Unemployed People's Movement reported that the next day he was visited in hospital by a delegation from the local ANC. They said that they wanted to pray for him. Shortly after they left he became violently ill. The doctor diagnosed poisoning.

Murder is normal, in the capital of blood, KwaZulu-Natal. In the last ten years there have been at least 140 political assassinations in Durban alone. The situation is just as bad in smaller towns like Estcourt.

We pray for the speedy recovery of Yamkela.

This morning delegates from eKhenana went to the notorious KwaKito police station to report the attempted murder. They took the cartridges from the live ammunition fired by Mkhize as evidence. The police refused to open a case. This is the fourth time that officers at KwaKito have refused to open cases against the Land Invasion Unit or Calvin & Family Security. Captain Sibiya and officers Mahlangu and Cele all refused to open a case against Mkhize. They even refused to accept evidence in the form of the cartridges of the bullets fired by Mkhize.

It is typical for the police to refuse to open cases against ANC ward councillors, their committees, other police officers, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and private security companies working for the City. It is typical for police officers to think that their job is to enforce the rule of the City and the ANC, and not to impartially enforce the rule of law.

The spokesperson for the eThekweni Municipality, Musawakhe Mayisela, keeps insisting that the municipality only destroys new unoccupied shacks. This is an outright lie as anyone who comes to the occupations and observes the evictions can see for themselves. People's long-term homes are destroyed all the time. When an occupation has been attacked more than 40 times, like Azania in Cato Manor, a new shack does not mean a new resident. It means that a person who has been living on the land for a long time has had to rebuild as a result of the repeated illegal destruction of their home by the municipality.

Mayisela keeps insisting that Abahlali should report allegations of lawlessness to the police but he knows very well that the police are acting on the instruction of the City and that we cannot open cases with the police against the City, its Land Invasion Unit or Calvin & Family Security.

Mkhize is a hitman. Mayisela is a paid liar. Mkhize enforces violent state attacks on impoverished black people. Mayisela lies to defend those attacks. Both men must live with blood on their conscience.

This gangster City needs to be stopped. This gangster police station needs to be stopped. This gangster private security company needs to be stopped.

We repeat that the eThekweni Municipality is a rogue municipality where the politic of blood has replaced the rule of law. Here impoverished black people are beaten, tortured, shot and murdered with full impunity in the name of “siyidolobha elinakekelayo” (“we are a caring City”).

The violence is relentless. The attacks on our communities are relentless. The disregard for the law and our humanity is relentless.

The lockdown is being used as cover by a gangster municipality for an attempt to destroy our movement. The City has launched a war on our movement under the cover of the lockdown.

Today at 11:30am the Land Invasion Unit arrived in eKhenana. They came as if for a war. They threatened the community. They said that the court judgments do not apply to them. They said they run the City and not judges. We believe them because there are no consequences for their actions. They come, again and again, to destroy our homes, to burn and steal our possessions, and to insult us, beat us and shoot us. They have successfully subverted the law.

The judges issue pieces of paper in court. The Land Invasion Unit, and Calvin & Family security come to our communities with axes and guns. Durban is ruled by the gun, not the law.

When they were finished at eKhenana this morning the Land Invasion Unit then went to the Azania occupation in Cato Manor and destroyed multiple homes. Mkhize was there, in his uniform, burning people’s belongings.

There is always a price for silence. Too many people in our country pretend that killing impoverished black people is normal. Too many people pretend that the gangsterisation of the ANC in Durban, and therefore the gangsterisation of the City, is normal.

When Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated some ANC members were ululating and celebrating. When you can no longer see humanity and have no mercy you have become a monster. The eThekweni Municipality, its Land Invasion Unit,

many of its councillors, the police officers at KwaKito and Calvin & Family Security are all monsters. Monsters have no ubuntu. They always turn on each other.

We are facing a war in Durban.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni

1 MAY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo is in Solidarity with the Workers of the World

Our movement was started in 2005 as a movement of the poor. From the beginning we worked to build the power of impoverished people in order to confront and defeat the oppression that we faced. However, there is no strict line that separates the unemployed and people making a living through informal work from the formally employed working class. There are unemployed people, people working informally and formally employed workers in the same families and communities.

We have always tried to build solidarity with progressive groups of organised residents and informal and formal workers in South Africa and around the world. In recent years we have been very pleased to build a living solidarity with the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil and today we express our solidarity with the MST and all progressive formations in Brazil who are struggling against the dangerous far right-wing president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. We express our solidarity with all our comrades all over the world, from America to Zimbabwe.

When we started our movement some of the founder members had backgrounds in trade unions and in recent years we have been very pleased to start building a living solidarity with the progressive forces in the trade union movement. For us building this living solidarity is an essential political task on the road to undoing the system of racial capitalism and building a socialist society in which land, wealth and political power are shared, and the dignity of all people is respected.

Today as we celebrate Workers' Day under lockdown our usual forms of organisation are not possible. All over the world it is impoverished people and working-class people who are most at risk from this pandemic. It is also impoverished people and working-class people who are paying the highest price for the lockdown, including a sudden loss of income resulting in hunger, having

to undertake dangerous work, and, in South Africa, violent evictions and police brutality.

Workers lives are being put in danger by those who put the profit before lives. Our dedicated health workers who have been in the forefront since the outbreak of the pandemic are still working under difficult and dangerous conditions. Many hospitals have not provided workers with the personal protective gear. Some of the CEOs have forced nurses to continue working without ensuring their safety. We are in full support of the one-day strike that has been organised in South Africa today by organised nurses to demand that they are given all the equipment required to keep them safe from the coronavirus.

Workers, including those doing unpaid work in homes, create the wealth of the world and yet that wealth is monopolised by a few greedy capitalists while the majority of humanity remains impoverished and exploited. This has to stop. The wealth of the world needs to be shared, and the economy needs to be brought under democratic control. Just as we run our occupations and our movement by building democratic councils democratic organisation needs to be extended into all work places.

Even before the coronavirus hit us workers were being retrenched at a frightening scale in South Africa, and in both the public and private sectors. It is now estimated that between 1, 3 and even 7 million workers will lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic. Others will be forced to accept pay cuts or to work less hours. This is going to result in massive suffering. As people can no longer afford food and rent there will be more land occupations which will result in more state repression. There will be blood on the road ahead.

Capitalism has failed in South Africa and it has failed around the world. We cannot continue to put the profit of the few over the lives, security, well-being and dignity of the many. We will continue to build alliances that can strengthen the democratic power of the oppressed from below with the aim of bringing the economy under democratic control.

We welcome the long overdue income grant that will be provided to the unemployed. However, we feel that R350 a month is not sufficient enough. This new grant must be increased to R1 700. It is a joke that the government provides food parcels that are worth R1 200 yet they expect the poor to survive on R350 a month.

We welcome the arrival of 200 doctors from Cuba. Cuba is an example how a socialist state can improve the lives of the poor. Everyone knows how the Cubans defeated the apartheid army at the battle of Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola in 1988 and how well the Cubans dealt with education and health care after their revolution in 1959. A poor and black person gets much better health care and education in Cuba than in the United States even though there is much, much more wealth in the United States.

We have always looked up to comrades Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara as activists who were genuinely committed to breaking the power of imperialism and putting the interests of the poor and the working class before private profit. In fact, one of our branches in Durban is named after Castro.

Even though this is a dull workers day we continue to be in solidarity with the workers of the world. Without the workers there is no economy. We salute every worker from the home to the factory and every struggle to build the democratic power of organised workers. We salute the health workers of the world during this pandemic. It is through your bravery and dedication that we will overcome this pandemic. We are in full support of your demands for a living wage and safe working conditions.

Aluta continua

Umzabalazo uyaqhubeka.

Mqapheli Bonono

S'bu Zikode

8 MAY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Serious Concern at Escalating State Xenophobia

The crisis caused by the coronavirus is being exploited by the government as an excuse to repress those it has always wanted to repress. There have been illegal and violent evictions in all the major cities, and for weeks our movement was specifically targeted for violent daily attacks in Durban.

Our members, neighbours, comrades and fellow human beings who were born in other countries are also facing serious discrimination from a xenophobic state during this crisis.

From the time that our movement was first formed in 2005 we made no distinction between people based on the country or province in which they were born. The strength of our movement is in the occupations and the unity between families and neighbours. We have always worked on the principle that if you live in an occupation you are from that occupation and you have the same rights as every other resident of that occupation, including the right to participate in all discussions and to accept nomination for elected office. We are proud that people born in different provinces and countries hold elected positions in our movement. We invite migrant organisations to participate in and address our assemblies and rallies. When there have been xenophobic attacks we have always committed ourselves to shelter and defend the people under attack.

The politicians always try to divide us by telling people that they are not getting secure access to land, or services, or houses, because there are people born in other provinces and countries in their communities. We always resist this. A person is a person where ever they may find themselves. The strength of the oppressed is in our unity.

When the coronavirus crisis started the first thing that the government did was to build a very expensive wall along the border with Zimbabwe. Now people who were born in other countries are being denied access to food parcels. Communities that are being told that 'foreigners' will be deported before their settlements are 'dedensified'. Senior people in government are saying that when people are allowed to go back to work jobs must be reserved for South Africans and that businesses with 'too many foreigners' will not be allowed to reopen. All this talk from the South African government of 'putting South Africans first' is

no different to the language of Donald Trump. They are trying to divide the oppressed and to encourage us to blame our own neighbours and comrades rather than the government and the capitalists for the worsening impoverishment in which we find ourselves.

The government keeps saying that 'putting South Africans first' is not xenophobic but this is no different to racists wanting to be able to keep being racists while denying that they are racists. All things must be given their true names. The work to ensure that all things are given their true names is important political work. Just as racism is racism xenophobia is xenophobia and we wish to say clearly that our government is deeply and deliberately xenophobic.

After the escape from the notorious Lindela 'repatriation centre' people from African and Asian countries are being forcibly 'repatriated'. People from the UK and the USA are being treated with dignity and voluntarily sent home if they so wish. The racism that drives the government's xenophobia is clear.

We have been providing food to our members who are not able to access grants. We make not distinctions on the basis of the province or country in which people were born. In some branches we have also set up communal kitchens, in which men and women are encouraged to share the work of cooking, to make food available to all our neighbours. Many people who were born in other countries are eating from these communal kitchens. This is not a case of South Africans helping migrants. It is a case of residents and neighbours working together to build mutual aid and solidarity. There are people born in other countries who are helping with the cooking and people born in South Africa who are only eating because they have access to the communal kitchens.

We will never deviate from the principle that a neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade no matter where they were born.

We call on our comrades in the trade unions, residents' associations and all other progressive forces to join us and take a clear and strong position against the xenophobia that is being pushed by the government while popular organisation and mobilisation have been radically restricted during this crisis.

South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu.

Unyawo alunampumulo.

Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

25 MAY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Celebrating Being African Means Opposing Xenophobia

Today is Africa Day. The same politicians that repress popular organisation and make deals with capitalism and imperialism are all making speeches. As they make these speeches they forget that Pan-Africanism was a radical movement, driven from below, with a vision of a united and free Africa in which wealth and resources are shared and people's dignity restored. They forget that from Algeria to Zimbabwe it was ordinary people that made the revolutions against colonialism.

In South Africa the same politicians that encourage and enforce xenophobia from above are saying how much they love Africa. But what does it mean to say that you love Africa when you are sending the police to round up people from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, beat them, steal from them, and then take them to rot in Lindela before they are deported? What does it mean to say that you love Africa when you always put the profit of multi-national companies before people?

Across the continent the majority remain impoverished and states are neo-colonial formations rather than instruments of the people. From Nairobi to Harare and Johannesburg the Covid-19 crisis has been misused to abuse the poor with state violence.

Africa continues to be exploited by an alliance between imperialism and national elites who plunder resources leaving environmental and social devastation in their wake. War continues in the eastern DRC where many people are killed every day. Libya and Somalia are still faced with civil wars that are caused by those who want their resources. In Zimbabwe the dictatorship continues. Many of our countries continue to starve while our resources are extracted by imperialism.

The decolonisation demanded by the people was never achieved. Everywhere popular movements were repressed and progressive leaders targeted.

Amilcar Cabral and Chris Hani were both assassinated on the eve of the achievement of democracy. In the Congo Patrice Lumumba was removed from power in a coup and then murdered in 1960. In Ghana Kwame Nkrumah was removed from power in a coup in 1966. In Burkina Faso Thomas Sankara was also removed from power in a coup, and then murdered, in 1987.

No state can stand against imperialism on its own. We need to build popular democratic power from below. In our movement popular democratic power has always been built from the strength of families, neighbours and communities. We have always understood that the politicians fear this power and will try to divide us by turning neighbours against each other and dividing communities. We have always refused this and worked to build unity in struggle. Our record on this question is clear. We are not only Africans on Africa Day. We live and struggle side by side with our comrades from Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Membership and leadership are open to all. We believe in the words of Kwame Nkrumah 'I am an African because Africa lives in me'. We believe in solidarity and internationalism.

We all know that the borders in Africa were created by colonialism. We all know that before colonialism people moved around a lot, and that popular politics often took the form of moving away from an oppressive leader to create new communities. However, the ANC embraces these borders and spends millions to build fences and police the borders. The struggle for land, freedom and dignity might take some different forms in different countries but everywhere you find the same struggle.

You cannot say that you support Pan-Africanism or internationalism while you are simultaneously pursuing a top down politic of state xenophobia. We will remain committed to building a bottom up politics of solidarity that unites the oppressed in struggle.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
OJ Majola
S'bu Zikode

26 MAY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Organise or Starve

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic social movements have been in the forefront of building networks of mutual aid and solidarity. In Brazil our comrades in the Landless Workers' Movement, the MST, have already provided more than 40 000 food baskets to poor neighbourhoods. Here in South Africa our movement has been providing food to branches across the country, running community kitchens and growing organic and healthy food on occupied land in Durban. In Cape Town activists have formed Community Action Networks. Around the country there have been important local initiatives.

These networks have been of great assistance in distributing food, forming community kitchens and also, in some cases, democratising science by educating people about the virus and combatting fake news. In Cape Town these networks have often been formed by young people who are willing to risk their own health despite the increasing numbers of infections in the province. Unlike the state progressive grassroots activists make no distinction between people based on the country in which they were born when building solidarity and organising mutual aid.

Before the lockdown millions of people in South Africa were impoverished with the result that they were living in life threatening conditions in shack settlements and often going hungry. Many families have spent their whole lives living under inhuman conditions. It must be clear that the issues that have risen to public prominence during this period are not new. They have always been there. People who are not well organised have been unable to voice them beyond their own communities because the media was not there to report on them.

The lockdown has pushed millions more into impoverishment and radically worsened the situation of already impoverished people. Hunger has become an everyday reality for millions. Our comrades in Cape Town tell us that people get hugely anxious and stressed when the food provided by activists runs out before their turn comes. They don't know what they will say to their children when they get home.

In this situation of serious crisis impoverished people have been criminalised by the state. The police and the army have humiliated and beaten large numbers of people. Two weeks ago it was reported in the media that eleven people had been killed by the police and the army during lockdown operations. Once again we have been reminded that our lives do not count to this society.

As everybody knows Collins Khosa was killed in Johannesburg on Easter Friday after being severely assaulted by soldiers. Members of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department were also present during the assault. After Khosa's family successfully won an urgent application against the ministers of the police and the army Bheki Cele tried to get the family to abandon the most important part of the court order that they had won. As the proverb says the fish rots from the head.

The abuses that we have seen during the lockdown are not a new experience for impoverished black people. We are generally treated as if being poor makes us criminal and as if we don't count to the law. People are illegally and violently evicted from their homes all the time. Grassroots activists have often been assaulted by the police, tortured in police stations and murdered by the police on protests. In Durban political assassinations were an everyday bread when Jacob Zuma was President.

The problem of serious abuse and criminality by the police is also not new. All that has changed is that the media is now taking this seriously. Before the crisis the media would often ignore abuse and violence against impoverished black people by the police, or just report police press statements as if they were the truth. Even well organised communities have faced this.

When Nqobile Nzuza, an unarmed teenage girl, was murdered by the police in Cato Manor in 2013 the police claimed that they were the victims and most news reports repeated this without seeing any need to speak to anyone who witnessed the murder. This was despite the fact that we had issued a clear press statement, the truth of which was later confirmed in court when the police officer who murdered Nqobile was found guilty of murder and given a prison sentence.

The programme by the state to provide food in this time of crisis has been too late, too little and clouded by corruption and nepotism. Once again this is not new. The provision of food parcels, support after shack fires, government

jobs and government houses has always been inadequate and distorted by corruption and party politics. Usually the media ignore the corruption by ward councillors and their committees. But in this crisis the corruption and politicisation of access to food parcels is being covered.

Despite the relief that has been made available by the government, people continue to starve. Many people have had far more support from social movements, religious organisations and progressive NGOs than from the government. This is because social movements and some religious organisations and progressive NGOs have always been on the ground with communities. We are not aware of anyone in our movement or any of our communities who has received the promised R350 special grant. There are cases where ward councillors and ANC branch executive committees have had the names of well-known members of our movement scratched off lists of people due to receive the vouchers for Shoprite (R650) and Spar (R600). They make it clear that if you are with 'the red shirts' you will not get support.

This crisis doesn't only mean state violence and starvation. It also means that many people are being retrenched. Some experts think that millions of people could lose their jobs and that many people in the middle classes could find themselves falling into impoverishment. Progressive trade unions are doing their best to resist the wave of retrenchments but the neoliberals in government have made it clear that they will sell out the workers. For them the interests of the capitalists always come before the interests of workers. In this situation it is essential that progressive trade unions and poor people's organisations unite in struggle to insist that social concerns are given priority over the interests of capital and that the state puts the interests of impoverished and working-class people before those of the predatory elite within and around the ruling party.

Another problem faced by the working class is that many employers are rushing to open their businesses even though there are no safety measures in place. This is putting employees at serious risk. We have seen in the United Kingdom and the United States that the people most at risk from this virus are poor and working-class people of colour. But despite this our government has failed to put directives in place to force the bosses to ensure the safety of all workers. The inaction by the government makes employers feel that they can get away with exploiting workers and putting their health at serious risk.

Our government represents the interests of an elite. Since 1994 they have consistently sold out the interests of impoverished and working-class people to advance their own interests by making their own deals with capital and looting the state. In this crisis the situation of impoverished and working-class people is getting worse by the day. Many middle-class people will soon taste the bitterness of poverty too. Things will get much more difficult in the next few weeks and months.

There is always the risk that the government and the politicians will try to survive the hard times that are coming by turning the oppressed against each other. We have already seen a highly disturbing escalation in xenophobic rhetoric by senior people in the ANC. It is vital that all progressive organisations work together to build unity among the oppressed and to resist all attempts by the state and the ruling party to encourage xenophobia.

One good thing about this crisis is that, at last, issues like police brutality and the politicisation and corruption of welfare are starting to get taken seriously by the media. Another good thing is that a new generation of young activists is emerging in response to the crisis and the corruption and violence experienced from the state. When people started rebelling against their councillors and organising big protests from shack settlements around the country from 2004 a new generation of young activists came to the fore. Now we are seeing another new generation of young activists coming to the fore.

The only way out of this crisis is for impoverished and working-class people to build democratic popular power from below and to insist that we begin the process of building a genuinely just, equal and democratic country. The state and the economy must be brought under democratic control. Land, wealth and power must be shared. As the trade union slogan says we must organise or starve. If we fail to do this we will be destroyed by the coming storm.

The time to organise is now.

Yonk' indawo umzabalazo uyasivumela.

S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali

3 JUNE 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Politic of Blood Must be Stopped

If you are poor and black your life does not count to this society. It is often the state that will come to you with a gun. Your home can be destroyed, you can be assaulted, tortured and killed with impunity. This is the experience of impoverished people across South Africa. Our dignity is continuously vandalised by the state. Some people, like migrants and sex workers, are at even greater risk.

It has always been like this but during this lockdown the middle classes have suddenly started to take state violence against impoverished black people seriously. They have been shocked that at least twelve people were murdered by the police and the army in the first weeks of the lockdown. They have been shocked to learn that in South Africa the police kill more than three times the number of people that are killed by the police in the United States per capita. No impoverished person was shocked. This has always been our daily bread.

Threats from the state are also particularly targeted at people who think, organise and act independently from the ruling party. If you decide that from now on the oppressed should decide for themselves how to confront their oppression, and if you organise outside of the ruling party to build the power of the oppressed from below, you are likely to face severe intimidation, threats of all kinds, slander, wrongful arrest, assault, torture and, in some cases, assassination. Our movement has lost 18 to comrades to assassination and state murder.

We have been informed that after receiving repeated threats Ayanda Kota from the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM) in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape has had to go into hiding. This follows a court judgment in January that, following an application by the Unemployed People's Movement, ruled that the council of the Makana Municipality must be dissolved for its unconstitutional failure to provide services to its residents. There are now indications that other councils in other municipalities in the Eastern Cape might be subject to similar rulings.

The UPM did not take the decision to approach the court likely. There has been extreme looting by the ANC in the Makhanda Municipality and it is completely dysfunctional with water provision having collapsed, roads breaking up and rubbish lying uncollected in the streets. The fact that the Province decided to appeal the case is an indication that they are threatened by the existence of the UPM.

It is not surprising that threats have been made to Kota following this ruling. When an organisation of impoverished people becomes a threat to the ruling party and the state the first thing that they try to do is to discredit and remove its leader. Assassinations are no longer mostly just a problem in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. There have been numerous assassinations in Port Elizabeth recently, with a number of trade unionists having been targeted. This reality means that threats need to be taken seriously.

Our own experience in Durban is that violence can follow swiftly from victories in court. For instance, on 24 April we secured an interdict against the violent evictions that the eThekweni Municipality had been carrying out in the eKhenana settlement in Cato Crest in violation of the law, the Constitution, the regulations preventing evictions during the lockdown and an interdict that we had previously won against evictions in eKhenana. Immediately after we secured the interdict against the eThekweni Municipality, Mr. Mkhize, the leader of the city's notorious Land Invasion Unit went to eKhenana and fired live ammunition at the community seriously injuring one person.

In 2009 after we won an important case against the provincial government in KwaZulu-Natal in the Constitutional Court our members were attacked in the Kennedy Road settlement by armed men identifying as ANC, and acting with the support of the police. Our leaders were specifically targeted with the clear intention to kill them. They managed to escape but their homes were destroyed and they had to go into hiding. After the attack Willies Mchunu who was then in charge of the police in the province, went to Kennedy Road to announce the demise of Abahlali.

Our experience with the ANC is that they do not deliver the services that they promise, let alone a fair distribution of land, wealth and power. But there are two things that they are very good at delivering. One is to use public money to make themselves and their families rich. The other is to hire hitmen to do

the job of killing those who expose the corruption in the municipalities where they lead.

We write this statement as a warning to the national leadership of the ANC that if anyone in the leadership of UPM is assassinated we will hold the ANC accountable for this act.

Death threats are terrifying. People under threat often have to move away from their families, and stop going to work. If they can fall asleep they wake up at night with every noise, and have no appetite for food.

As a result of death threats people from Durban have had to go to the Eastern or Western Cape to hide. People from the Eastern Cape have had to come to Durban to hide. One of our leaders had to move from Durban to Cape Town. It has been normal, for many years now, for grassroots activists to sleep in a different shack in a different settlement every night when a struggle is running high and hot.

None of us deserve to go through these moments in life. We wish to express our solidarity and our support for comrade Kota and all those who go through a similar situation, and, of course, for all those who have lost their loved ones for trying to humanise the world. We understand the pain of growing children without fathers or mothers, the pain of being a widow, of losing a son or daughter. We call on all genuine democrats and progressive forces, even within the ANC, to reject the politic of blood and death.

Hit men and corrupt politicians must be exposed and prosecuted.

Today we are all Kota.

The people of Makana deserve clean governance. Demanding an end to corruption is no crime. In fact, they deserve much more than just clean government. They deserve land, housing, a decent income, the right to participate in all decision making that affects them, good education for their children, and the right to live in safety and to be treated with dignity.

Kota must be very careful. We know what some councillors and politicians are capable of.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali
Nomsa Sizani

5 JUNE 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We offer our full support to the American rebellion

People dying from the coronavirus can't breathe in their last hours. They die suffocating. It is a terrifying illness. In the United States black people are dying from this virus at a much higher rate than other people. This is due to the long history of racism.

George Floyd, who die at the hands of racist police in the United States, also died suffocating, saying that he couldn't breathe. For more than four hundred years Africans have been dying from racism in the United States. Racism kills with everything from poor housing, too overwork, inadequate healthcare, stress, bullets and the knee of a police officer on a person's neck.

Coronavirus is a terrible disease. Racism is much worse. It has killed much more people than the coronavirus ever will. When ordinary Americans go to hospital with coronavirus the nurses and doctors and other hospital workers don't even have the right safety equipment. Yet when Americans take to the streets to protest against the disease of racism they are met with police and soldiers with millions and millions of dollars of expensive equipment. It is very clear what is important to the elites in the United States, and to the racist in the White House.

The first Africans were bought to the United States as slaves in 1526. They revolted and most of them escaped and went to live with the indigenous people. That revolt has never stopped. Today American cities are in open rebellion against racism. Thousands and thousands of people are saying that enough is enough! We are in full support of this rebellion.

In our political education work, often organised in self-built classrooms on occupied land, we discuss the history of racism, and the history of resistance, including the revolt of enslaved Africans in Haiti in 1804. We have learnt that racism was invented in American and taken to the rest of the world from there. We all know that to kill a snake you must cut off the head. We will not put a final end to racism until it is defeated in America.

The struggle against racism is a global struggle. If you are an impoverished black person in South Africa or Brazil your life counts for nothing to the state, or to most of the rest of the society. From South Africa to Brazil our leaders are

assassinated with impunity when we organise to build our own spaces to think for ourselves, to decide for ourselves and to build our own power from below. The comrades in South Africa, Brazil, England, Palestine, Turkey, India, Ireland and around the world are all in solidarity with the comrades in the streets of the cities across America.

People across the world mourned the death of George Floyd. People across the world are ablaze with hope as we watch the rebellion returning, day after day, to the streets of America.

From the early days of our movement we have received invaluable support from comrades in the United States, especially when we have faced repression. If we were not in lockdown due to the coronavirus we would be heading, in our thousands, to the American consulate in Durban and the embassy in Pretoria, to show our support for the rebellion. Today all we can do is to send this letter of support to all our comrades in the United States. But this letter is a promise, a promise that we are with you and will remain with you and will take direct action to support you when we can. We also promise that we will do all that we can, working with other progressive organisations, to make sure that Donald Trump is never able to set foot in South Africa. Every American comrade who is on the streets in this rebellion is welcome, at any time, in any of our occupations.

Our movement began from a series of road blockades organised from shack settlements around South Africa in 2004 and 2005. Our movement grew from this courage, organised disruption, burning tyres, arrests, rubber bullets and police dogs. Today we have a movement of more than 70 000 paid up members that can occupy land, build homes, meeting halls and gardens, organise road blockades, win battles in court and, most importantly, create a space where everyone's dignity is respected and everyone can participate in making decisions about our lives and our struggle.

We hope that a powerful movement, or many powerful movements, will emerge out of the courage, disruption, fires, rubber bullets, teargas and police dogs of this rebellion.

Be strong. The oppressed people of the world are with you.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono
Zanele Mtshali
Nomsa Sizani

16 JUNE 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

Today We Mourn

Today the Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth are mourning all the comrades who lost their lives in the struggle against oppression.

We mourn the courageous young people who lost their lives in the 1976 uprising. The uprising that began on 16 June was not just about Afrikaans being imposed as the language of education. It was an uprising against a whole system of oppression. These brave young people were prepared to lose their lives to fight against the system that they had seen oppress their parents.

The struggle against apartheid was never just a struggle to replace a white government with a black government and a white elite with a black elite. The struggle was also for real democracy, land, housing, good education, decent work, safety and everything else that is required for people to live in dignity and with hope for their lives.

On 16 June 2020 it is not yet Uhuru for us, the youth who are living in shacks. Now that winter is here our shacks are burning, as they do every year. There have been three major shack fires in Durban in the last few days. Many of us continue to be excluded from quality education. Few of us will find jobs. Many of us suffer from anxiety and depression. Some try to ease their pain with whoonga.

The problem is not just that the government has abandoned us in terms of land, housing, education, health care and work. The problem is not just that we continue to live in the mud like pigs in shacks of indignity. The problem is not just that impoverishment is getting worse as the years pass. The problem is not just that every year there are more shacks and fewer jobs.

The problem is also that the government continues to actively oppress us. Like the youth of '76 we continue to see the government violently and brutally attacking our parents. We see our homes being demolished and burnt down by the eThekweni municipality. We see our parents being humiliated, abused, beaten, robbed and sometimes even killed.

When we say we are mourning today we mean we are mourning for the lives of all comrades who lost their lives in the struggle against oppression including

those who were killed by the apartheid regime and those who were killed by the ANC.

We remember Comrade Nqobile Nzuza who was murdered by the police during a protest against evictions organised from the Marikana land occupation in 2013. She was 17 when she was murdered. We do not accept that a life lost in struggle in 1976 must be remembered but that a life lost in 2013 must be forgotten. Each human life is a human life and must count as a human life. Oppression is oppression whether it is carried out by the apartheid regime or the ANC.

Today we also remember all the comrades in our movement who have been assassinated, brave comrades like Nkululeko Gwala from Cato Crest and Thuli Ndlovu from KwaNdengezi. These comrades were murdered because they exposed corruption in their areas. We also remember comrades like Samuele Hloele from Ekukhanyeni who was murdered by the Anti Land Invasion Unit during an eviction. The reality is that for most of us there will be no work. When there is work it is usually precarious and exploitative. Even those of us with degrees can sit at home year after year. The neoliberal policies of the ANC are making impoverishment worse. Instead of providing opportunities to us the ruling party and the state use the izinkabi, the police, the anti-land invasion and private security to brutalise us. They try to divide us with xenophobia and ethnic politics. We do not matter to this government. During the lockdown we have seen lives of ordinary black people taken by the army and police. This is the reality.

There is also a very serious problem of violence against women. Women are not safe in the streets or in their homes. Women are not safe from the police, from the councillors or their partners. When impoverished women work to build their power in struggle they are met with repression and not support by the state. Today we also remember and mourn all the women who have been murdered, whether they have been killed by the ANC, like Thuli Ndlovu, or murdered by their partners. We are committed to building women's power in struggle and to putting women's issues at the centre of our struggle.

The corona virus has shown how unequal our country is. The poor and the working class are most affected by the pandemic. We continue to live under the situation where water is a privilege not a necessity. We are unable to self-isolate, or physically distance ourselves as required in order to stop the spread of the pandemic because we live so close to each other, often in one room shacks.

Shack fires make things worse. Instead of coming with measures that will stop the spread of the pandemic our government is putting the lives of children and teachers at risk by opening schools in the midst of a pandemic. They continue to evict us.

However, we do not despair. We have taken responsibility for our own lives. Our branches which are led by young people are creating means of surviving, and building democratic forms of progressive and co-operative power from below. In eKhenana, eNkanini and Ekuphumeleleni our young comrades are working hard creating gardens to grow food on occupied land. Our branches have also created community kitchens for those who are in need in our communities.

We are in full support of our comrades in the US who are calling for the banning of the police because the police are used to protect the interests of the elites. We have seen comrades being killed by the police, as well as private security, in protests and during evictions and disconnections. The police have killed at least sixty unarmed people on protests in the last twenty years and thousands of other people. The police must be banned. Private security companies like the Red Ants and Calvin & Family Security that are used to attack the poor must be banned. All anti-land invasion units must be banned.

The struggle against the police is the same from South Africa to Brazil, Kenya and the United States. Everywhere the police can attack and kill you with impunity if you are poor and black. The police are not the answer to the social problems in our communities. Social justice and democratic forms of self-management are the way forward. Popular feminism and democratic socialism from below are the way forward.

Today we also remember and mourn the lives of Collins Khoza, George Floyd and all the others all over the world who have been killed by the police.

The government talks about the 1976 uprising as if oppression is something that is in the past, as if it stopped in 1994. We remain impoverished. We continue to be repressed. We continue to be murdered by the state when we stand up and insist that our human dignity must be recognised. Oppression has not yet been defeated. The struggle continues.

Lindokuhle Mnguni
Nhlakanipho Mdiyata
Busisiwe Diko

27 JUNE 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

The Lives of Women & Girls Are Not Respected

If you are poor your life counts for nothing to this society and this government. You can be abused and killed with impunity. Often it is the government that will come to vandalise your humanity.

Poverty, starvation and humiliation are terrible diseases for all impoverished people in on our so-called democracy. The situation is even worse for women and girls. We are subject to constant abuse by the government and men in our own communities. Our motherly is not respected.

Like all other women we have been shocked by the recent attacks on women in our country. This thing is very painful. It is so painful that again and again women are beaten, raped and killed by the men who they have trusted and who are close to them. We grieve for Anene Booysen, Uyinene Mrwetyana, Sumaya Hoosen, Tshegofatso Pule and so many other women who have been murdered. We grieve for Nqobile Nzuza, Thuli Ndlovu, Robyn Montsumi and all the other women killed by the police, the anti-eviction units and the gangster politicians.

The ANC led government has failed us as women of this country. It is only concerned about supporting the politicians and the capitalists to become richer and richer. It is not concerned about making the country safe for women and girls. The police are there to protect the interests of the politicians and the capitalists and not for the protection of the women and girls in our country.

We as women living in shacks are suffering because of the way we live with families of children and a father in one room. We have no electricity and no water and our homes can be destroyed by the government at any time. We are also robbed and raped in our houses. Not all communities have been able to build and run crèches and crèches are also destroyed in evictions. When there are no community built and run crèches we really worry about our children when we are at work.

During this time of lockdown women who are being attacked in their homes have had nowhere to run to. When there is violence in the home we cannot ask for the movement to intervene in the way that we used to because travel

and meetings are impossible under the lockdown. We are plagued by worrying about the men who are killing us, beating us and sexually abusing us and our children.

Our whole existence is difficult for us as mothers. We are not seen as human beings. We are not seen as people who belong. Nobody wants to help and take care of us when they know where we stay. If we go to the police they chase us away. If we go the councillor they won't help us. If we go to the reporters they don't listen to us. All we have is each other and our movement, which is built on the strength of women in movement, of mothers in movement.

For centuries women have worked for men and children. We have been cleaning, washing, ironing, and bringing up babies. When our fathers got sick in the mine and came home coughing like trains our mothers had to take care of them. We were never paid for this work. We were never even recognised for this work, work that the whole country depends on.

In our political education discussions we have talked about how racial capitalism in South Africa has always depended on the work of black women, but that our work is not paid or recognised leaving us exhausted and poor.

Women were in the forefront of the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. Women like Dorothy Nyembe and Florence Mkhize are recognised for their work in the struggle. But when we struggle for land, homes and dignity we are treated as criminals by the same government that celebrates people like Dorothy Nyembe and Florence Mkhize who struggled for the same things that we do.

We are tired of living in fear. We cannot be vulnerable anymore. Enough is enough. It is time for us to take action, together. We need all progressive forces to have serious discussions on how to deal with the crisis of violence against women and girls.

We have knocked on all the doors that we were told to knock on. They have chased us away, ignored us or abused us. Councillors and police officers are also abusers. It seems like we are on our own as women. If we don't support each other we will perish. Building women's power in struggle is the only way forward.

We are inviting all women in South Africa to come together to say enough, to say that the beating, murder and sexual abuse of women and girls must be stopped. As the Abahlali Women's League we pledge to work together for a

society where we live in peace and harmony with each other, irrespective of age and gender. It is the responsibility of all members of Abahlali to join the struggle to ensure that women are respected as equals everywhere, in homes, communities, workplaces and on the streets.

Zanele Mtshali
Babhekile Mhlongo
Nomsa Sizani
Busisiwe Diko

3 JULY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Minister Sisulu is Playing Dirty Politics with our Lives & Dignity

If you are poor and black your life does not count to the government. Your dignity can be vandalised at any time. Your home can be destroyed at any time. You can be humiliated, robbed, assaulted and murdered by the police, the anti-land invasion units, private security or the army.

It is assumed that you are beneath the law, and that law enforcement and the state as a whole are above the law. Unless we go to court the law is not applied to us. We are evicted all the time in violation of the law but there are no consequences for the people who give the orders to attacks us, or the people who carry out those orders. We can be humiliated, robbed, assaulted, tortured and murdered with impunity. If we try to open a case against a police officer or government official at a police station we are most likely to be insulted and chased away. We might also be assaulted.

This reality is our daily bread. This reality is often ignored by the elites. It is taken as something normal.

Just as the video of the police murder of George Floyd shocked the world the video of the eviction of Bulelani Qolani in eThembeni, near Empolweni, in Khayelitsha has shocked South Africa. It spread like a wild fire.

What happened to Bulelani was not just illegal. His humanity was vandalised by the state.

Speaking to Newzroom Afrika he said: “Liphi ilungelo lo mntu omnyama apha eKapa?”

Speaking to GroundUp he said: “I will stay at eThembeni – I need my rights. I want my dignity. Where is my dignity in the City of Cape Town? I want my dignity, I want my house, I want to be safe.”

The politic of dignity has always been a foundation of ubuhlali. The question of dignity is at the centre of our struggle.

We extend our full solidarity to Bulelani. We are deeply saddened by what happened to him. He is always welcome to visit any of our occupations. He has a guarantee that he will be received with respect and dignity. We also extend our full solidarity to all communities under attack by the state across the country.

We are encouraged by the outpouring of grief and anger after people saw the video which shows, so painfully, how the state treats poor black people. We hope that more and more people will start to understand why we need to abolish evictions, decommodify land and affirm the right to the cities. We hope that more and more people in society will start to turn against the state and capital, and start to put human dignity before private property and private profit. Land, cities, wealth and power need to be shared.

However, we are very concerned with the hypocrisy and double standards of Minister Lindiwe Sisulu. She issued a press statement saying that she is “appalled by the victimization and abuse of residents of Empolweni in Khayelitsha Cape Town by the Metro police led by City Councillors”. She described the eviction of Bulelani as “barbaric”. She indicated a clear intention to take the side of the residents.

This is what we expect of any progressive government. However, Minister Sisulu is silent when people in Johannesburg and Durban are subject to violent and illegal evictions. She only speaks up when people are evicted under the DA. When people are evicted under the ANC, under her party, she says nothing. Of course, she is not alone in this silence. The National Command Council led by the president of the country has also been silent.

In Durban the eThekweni Municipality has not just been humiliating and evicting people who are already poor and vulnerable. In the eKhenana occupation there was an attempted murder in broad day light. Comrade Yamkela Zezi was shot by Mr Mkhize of the eThekweni Land Invasion Unit shortly after their actions were ruled unlawful in court. Mr Mkhize continues with his daily duties as we speak. We have written to Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda who has not responded to us to date. The City refused to suspend Mr Mkhize because he was acting on their official instruction. Minister Sisulu has never said a word about this. She has never come to Durban to meet the people who have suffered from repeated state violence. She does not even say a word when her ANC comrades are killing people in KwaZulu-Natal.

It cannot be right that an illegal and violent eviction is barbaric in Cape Town but acceptable in Johannesburg and Durban. There is one law. There is one humanity.

We wish to say very clearly to Minister Sisulu that she is a hypocrite, a hypocrite who is playing politics, dirty politics, with people's lives and dignity.

Every person must be counted as a person and respected as a person. On this point there can be no compromise.

Minister Sisulu's silence on all the illegal and brutal evictions carried out under the ANC is a disgrace to the long struggle of the oppressed that brought her to power. We are saying that the Minister must stop cheap politicking. She must not only be the Minister of the City of Cape Town. The Minister must be consistent in the pursuit of justice. Abahlali have buried 18 mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, all killed by the state, private security employed by the state or the ANC. The Minister has not said a word about this.

We call on all progressive forces to work together against the twin monsters of the DA and the ANC. They have gone too far.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Mfanfikile Sindane

9 JULY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Unite Against Xenophobia

Since our movement was first formed fifteen years ago we have opposed all forms of repression. We have opposed capitalism, and its enclosure and commodification of land. We have opposed political gangsterism in party politics and the government which turns the state into a killing machine used by politicians to get rich. We have also taken an internationalist perspective and organised in solidarity with comrades in countries like Palestine, Haiti, Turkey and elsewhere.

We have also opposed forms of repression that occur within oppressed communities such as violence against women and xenophobia. We understand who our oppressors are. We have never been confused by those who want us to fight among ourselves as the poor. We have said that a neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade irrespective of the country or province in which they were born.

Powerful people in the government and the twin monsters of the ANC and the DA try to divide the poor by turning us against each other. Many people have been told that they are unable to receive services, houses or jobs from government because of “foreign nationals”. As a result, there is a sometimes a strong hatred for people who are born in other countries that regularly erupts into violence.

The poor have always lived in a state of crisis. That crisis is now getting much worse due to the coronavirus situation, retrenchments and increasingly violent evictions – sometimes including the army. People are already hungry. People have already been killed by the security forces. Thousands of people have already been evicted across the country. Thousands are being retrenched. The government is responding with an austerity budget and more soldiers on the streets so the crisis will get even worse in the coming months.

In this situation some forces are using social media to call for new attacks on people born in other countries. One poster gives a deadline for all “foreigners” to leave South Africa. We have heard reports of attacks on truck drivers who are considered to be “foreigners”.

This is a clear attempt to try and make sure that the poor fight among themselves rather than organising to build their power against the state, the political elite and capital. We live in a society in which the five richest people have more money than millions of impoverished people. We live in a society in which millions of people are without land, work or homes. We live in a society in which impoverished people who organise themselves to be able to participate in decision making about their own lives and communities face serious repression. This is the problem. A neighbour from Mozambique or Pakistan is not the problem.

The enemy are those who have killed our fathers, uncles, brothers, and husbands in Marikana. The enemy are those that give the orders to evict us every day. The enemy are those that are responding to an economic crisis with austerity. The enemy are those that oppose a living wage. The enemy are those that repress the struggles of the oppressed.

The enemy are those that use the state to get rich instead of allowing it to be used as a tool of the people. The enemy is the corrupt and violent political class in South Africa. The enemy is capitalism. The enemy is imperialism, which organised and supported the coups in countries like Haiti and Bolivia and continues to support the oppression of the Palestinian people.

We were not made poor, or kept poor, by people who have come to South Africa from other African countries, or Asia, to work. We were made poor by colonialism and racial capitalism and kept poor by capitalism and the ANC and its mixture of neoliberal economic policies and political gangsterism. If we are not able to correctly identity our enemies, and if we allow our enemies to turn us against each other, we will stay poor for ever.

A person is a person where ever they may find themselves. Every human life must be counted as a human life. South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

Those who encourage xenophobia and ethnic prejudice are dividing the oppressed and doing the work of our oppressors. In this time of crisis we call on all progressive forces to unite against xenophobia. Let us work to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below.

Waziwa isitha sakho. Know your enemy.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
S'bu Zikode

16 JULY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Hamba Kahle Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba

On Wednesday morning we received the news that Professor Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba had passed away in Kinshasa. Baba Wamba was a good friend to our movement, he engaged the shack intellectuals with great care and respect and we always enjoyed our deep discussions with him. When we were facing repression, he would send us personal messages of support and care.

Baba Wamba understood that the oppressed have to organise themselves for their own liberation, and he understood that, as well as being open to the whole world, we also have powerful tools within our own culture and history to draw on in the struggle.

Baba Wamba-dia-Wamba never had pride, yet he was highly educated. We can all draw huge lessons from his humility. We wish that there were more professors of his calibre who were committed to use their education to empower the oppressed.

We express our deep condolences to his family and our solidarity with his commitment to struggle and the vision of society that he stood for. May his soul rest in peace.

Hamba kahle solwazi.

S'bu Zikode
Mqapheli Bonono

27 JULY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

We continue the fight against Gender Based Violence

Gender Based Violence is a pandemic in our society. As women we are still living in fear in our homes and communities, in the streets and at work.

Today the Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League, together with other women activists, were in the Durban High Court to support the women who were victims of a serial rapist. These attacks on women took place in 2013 and 68 women were attacked, with 28 in wards 16 and 17. Today in court the victims were devastated and depressed when, for the first time, they had to encounter the man who took away their dignity and relive their agony. Among those who were victims of the serial rapist is an Abahlali baseMjondolo branch chairperson.

Rape is an attack on our dignity and our sense of safety. It is a cruel vandalization of our humanity. It is a tool of oppression.

The matter was adjourned today. We will be back in court when the case continues to support all the women who were attacked by this man, to stand with all women everywhere you have suffered rape, and to demand that the state and society take serious action to stop the ongoing attacks on women. We will be back in court to ensure that justice is served. We are committed to ensuring that the struggle against violence against women, against sexual harassment and against rape remains at the centre of our struggle against all forms of oppression.

We are also calling on the government to provide psychological support for the victims. We will monitor this case closely in order to hold our government to account when it comes to the abuse of women. We are tired of being victims. We want a new life, a life where women are safe and respected.

Contact,
Nomsa Sizani
OJ Majola
Zanele Mtshali

28 JULY 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Violent, Criminal Attack on the eKhenana Occupation

Violent, Criminal Attack in the eKhenana Occupation

Today, at 10:00 am, the eThekweni Municipality launched a violent, criminal attack on the eKhenana Occupation in Cato Manor.

The residents of this occupation are protected by a court order that was granted on 27 December last year, and then reaffirmed on 24 April this year after the municipality repeatedly attacked the settlement in violation of the court order, the Constitution, the law and the lockdown regulations.

The ANC has waged an all-out war on this occupation. There have been regular armed attacks, all illegal, by the City since 2018. On 13 February last year the local ANC councillor Mzimuni Ngiba attempted to violently take control of the occupation. On 14 April last year Siyabonga Mngadi, a comrade on the occupation, was shot by an unidentified man. On 10 November last year 24 women were arrested and detained by the police. At the same time three comrades were injured during an attack by the Metro Police and the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and had to be admitted to hospital. Landu Tshazi was shot in the testicles at point blank range.

Shortly after the interdict was secured on 24 April this year, Mr. Mkhize, the leader of the City's notorious Land Invasion Unit went to eKhenana and fired live ammunition at the community seriously injuring one person. The occupation was repeatedly attacked during the lockdown. On a number of occasions the army participated in these attacks along with the Metro Police, the City's Anti-Land Invasion Unit and the notorious Calvin & Family Security. These evictions were all illegal and violent.

eKhenana has recently been in the news a lot because the occupiers have established a democratically organised co-operative and are running a successful urban farming project, including vegetables and chickens, to build food

sovereignty. They fly the Abahlali and the MST flags at this occupation, and are implementing the farming methods used by the MST in Brazil.

The ANC is unable to understand the self-organisation of the oppressed, even though it was the struggled led by women like Dorothy Nyembe and Florence Mkhize in Cato Manor in 1959 that first made the ANC popular in Durban. Msawakhe Mayisela, the spokesperson for the City, has told the media that there is a 'third force' by the eKhenana Occupation.

Today the occupation was attacked by the Metro Police, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit and Calvin & Family Security. They destroyed 13 homes and stole the building materials. They also stole people's personal property, money and lots of cellphones. Two people were seriously injured in the attack and are now in King Edward Hospital.

Phumelele Mkhize, 29, was severely beaten with back of the guns carried by the attacks, and chopped on the arm with bush knife while sitting inside her home. Msawakhe Magwaza 30, was also badly injured after being assaulted with the back of guns. The chairperson of the occupation, Lindokuhle Mnguni was also injured. Kwanele Mhlongo, a 15-year-old with epilepsy was also severely beaten.

The following people were evicted in the attack this morning:

- 1.Ntombifuthi Jama
- 2.Sbongile Luthuli
- 3.Sbongile Thabethe
- 4.Sakhile Mtambo
- 5.Landiwe Radebe
- 6.Mlindeni Mtshali
- 7.Nkosingiphile Nsele
- 8.Nokuthula Mbuthuma
9. Philisiwe Mahlaba
- 10.Ntombiziyekhaya khanyile
- 11.Dumisani Dlangamandla
- 12.Ntuthuko Dlamini
13. Nokuthula Mabaso

The eThekweni Municipality is a rogue municipality engaged in a criminal and violent war against the organised poor. They are waging this war as the pandemic reaches its peak in Durban, as millions of people have lost their jobs

and people are starving. They are not just attacking the homes on the occupation, they are also trying to destroy the co-operative that the residents have built which is producing food and has funded toilets, sanitizers, face masks and transport costs for the community.

Impi ibuyile. Sizomelana

Lindokuhle Mnguni

Mqapheli Bonono

Nomusa Sizani

14 SEPTEMBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Solidarity with the Comrades Under Attack in the Philippines

Our movement has experienced serious repression, including the targeted destruction of our members' homes, assault, torture and murder. We have received solidarity from popular movements around the world, and have always offered our own solidarity to comrades under attack elsewhere in the world.

When we say that every person must count as a person we mean that every person must count as a person everywhere. Solidarity does not stop at any border.

We have been informed of the assassination of two well-known activists in the Philippines, Randall 'Ka Randy' Echanis and Zara Alvarez.

Today Abahlali joins Karapatan in Philippines, and their comrades, in solidarity as they organise a Global Day of Action. This day coincides with the 45th UN Human Rights Council session, calling for an international investigation into human rights violations in the Philippines.

Randall Echanis was involved in the struggles of impoverished people in rural areas for land reform. He was also a co-founder of the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) member organisation Karapatan. Randall was murdered around 1:30am on 10 August 2020, when 5 men entered his apartment in Novaliches, Quezon City. He was stabbed to death. His neighbour Loui Tagapia was also killed in the attack.

Zara Alvarez was involved in struggles against the repression of the Rodrigo Duterte regime.

She was the chairperson of Anakbayan-Negros, and previously served as a deputy general secretary of BAYAN-Negros as well as campaign and education director of Karapatan Negros. On the night of Monday, 17 August 2020 she was shot and killed by unknown hitmen (izinkabi) in the Barangay Mandalagan neighbourhood of Bacolod City. She had previously received death threats through anonymous phone calls, a tactic of intimidation that is also common in

South Africa Both Randall Echanis and Zara Alvarez had previously been imprisoned for their political work. They were also both labelled as ‘terrorists’ by the state in 2018.

These attacks are part of a wider pattern of attack on activists in the Philippines, which is similar to what we experience here in South Africa. We have lost 18 comrades to state murder and other kinds of violence since 2013. Today it was reported in the media that there have been at least 38 assassinations and 14 attempted assassinations in areas in KwaZulu-Natal in which mining companies, often working with traditional authority, are destroying the land to make a few people rich. The murder of activists has become an everyday bread in South Africa.

Abahlali cannot stand by when human lives are vandalised in this manner. Humanity has no borders. A person is a person everywhere. We must value all human beings as treasure. If we don’t act in solidarity with all people facing repression we will be heading to a human catastrophe in which governments, ruling parties, corporates, and other forces, can murder grassroots activists with impunity.

Just as oppressors learn from each other, and work together, so to the oppressed must learn from each other and be in solidarity with each other. An injury to one is an injury to all.

We call on all our comrades in South Africa and around the world to stand in solidarity with the comrades in the Philippines.

Mqapheli Bonono
S’bu Zikode

24 SEPTEMBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo to hold Annual Thuli Ndlovu lecture

We will this morning hold our Annual Thuli Ndlovu lecture. The Thuli Ndlovu lecture is one of our revolutionary moment to honour and commemorate our fallen heroes.

Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated on 29 September 2014 at her home in KwaNdengezi while she was carrying her baby boy Freedom. Next to her was Sphe Madlala a teenager who was visiting Thuli's daughter to help her with her school home work. Thuli was shot dead by a hitman. Sphe was also shot but survived with serious wounds.

The hitman who murdered Thuli was hired by two ANC councillors serving in eThekweni Municipality. These ANC councillors were Ward Councillor Mduduzi Christian Ngcobo, also known as Nqola, and his PR comrade Councillor Luvelile Lutyeku. As a result of sustained struggle they were prosecuted and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Durban High Court.

The ANC has become a dangerous organisation. It did not stop with this murder. More of our leaders have been murdered through the Metro police, Land Invasion Unit, the SAPS party structures.

Thuli Ndlovu is one of 18 activists in our movement that have been murdered since 2013. Today, Abahlali and the families of late comrades meet to honour and celebrate the lives of these heroes. Honouring them will mean that we recommit ourselves to make the ultimate sacrifice if necessary as we continue the work they had begun.

Today we will be asking difficult questions to our own comrades about how these heroes would confront today's Calvin and Family Security? How would they confront state corruption that has robbed us and our children of a better future? How would they confront dangerous self-hate like xenophobia and violence against women?

The lecture will be held at Prince Edward Hindu Sural Memorial Hall from
10:00am

Land, power and wealth must be shared equally.

Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Mqapheli Bonono

2 OCTOBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Celebrating 15 years of Revolutionary Struggle for Land, Decent Housing and Dignity

Tomorrow, Saturday, 3 October Abahlali will be holding our first in a number of seminars and reflections under the theme Sifike kanjani la? (How have we come here?). The seminar will bring together 100 cadres from across the country where Abahlali has a presence. It will also bring together friends and comrades of the movement. The aim will be to reflect together on the 15-year revolutionary journey of our movement in order for to deliberate, learn and take stock of lessons of the last 15 years of organisation and struggle to prepare for the revolutionary journey ahead of us. This seminar is one of series of events that we will be holding to reflect on the past and prepare for the future. This process will be filmed and documented as a tool to help Abahlali, and comrades in other organisations in South Africa and across the world with the process of continuous collective reflection that is essential to any revolutionary project.

Speakers and participants will be coming from Abahlali branches and communities, from comrades in other organisations, and from comrades who have journeyed with us in struggle over the years. All the speakers on the programme have made important contributions to our movement and our struggle. This seminar will connect new comrades with the history of the movement and with the comrades that founded the movement and supported our struggle along the way.

This seminar will start at 9:00am tomorrow at the Diakonia Conference Centre, 20 Diakonia Avenue, Durban.

Sunday, 4th October 2020, marks exactly 15 years since the birth of our movement. Five years ago, we celebrated our 10th anniversary with a mass rally at the Curries Fountain stadium. However, because of the mass restrictions imposed by lock down regulations we have postponed the mass rally to celebrate 15 years of organisation and struggle to early 2021.

However, we will mark the 15th anniversary of our movement with the re-launch of the eKhenana branch. For a branch to remain in good standing it must hold an assembly each year at which it reflects on the journey of the branch, elects a new branch council and recommits to the principles and praxis of ubuh-lali.

The eKhenana branch is a land occupation that has survived repeated state attacks, and, despite these attacks, has been able to develop an impressive urban farm and a democratically run collective to run the farm and distribute the fruits of their labour.

We look forward to celebrating 15 years of organisation and struggle on this land occupation, a site of intense and ongoing struggle. The eKhenana branch will provide leadership on what living politic looks like 15 years after we first began our struggle.

The launch will be held at the eKhenana branch in Cato Manor, next to Intuthuko Junction in Durban. We will start at 10:00am.

Land, wealth and power must be shared equally.

Lindokuhle Mnguni
Busisiwe Diko
Nomusa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali

16 OCTOBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to march to the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal to demand an end to state corruption, forced evictions and violence

We as Abahlali baseMjondolo, as umbutho wabampofu, exist because we have a great responsibility. A responsibility to our members, a responsibility to our country and the world at large. Covid-19 has taken the world by storm and has shocked us all. Many lives have been lost and many economies have collapsed.

Huge resources have been invested to fight this pandemic and protect lives.

However in South Africa many thugs in suits and ties at high levels of government have seen this crisis as an opportunity to enrich themselves. They have stolen vast amounts of public money in broad-day light. There have been shocking media reports that R25 million allocated by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development to provide food relief to the poor has gone missing. It is reported that this money was meant to provide food relief to about 88 000 people in distress, and yet only 1 026 people benefited. We are not just calling for the investigation and prosecution of the culprits. We also demand that the Department of Social Development recover the money and redirect it to people who are still in need of food relief.

It is a well-known fact that former eThekweni mayor Zandile Gumede is alleged to have corrupted almost R430 million rand from a Durban Solid Waste tender. It is now reported that at least R700 million rand meant to provide water and sanitation has also gone missing within the eThekweni Water and Sanitation unit. This is very disturbing. It exposes our communities to greater health danger. It robs our communities of the potential to develop and improve living conditions. It denies our communities the right to life. The act of corruption in the middle of pandemic should be viewed as an attempted murder and the culprits should be charged as such.

While we welcome all the arrests and swift action taken by law agencies against the politicians and officials who have looted public funds in this crisis.

But we still feel we have the responsibility to assist and to expose corruption at municipal level. We simply cannot keep quiet when more than R2 billion is lost from the eThekweni Municipality while millions cannot to suffer without basic service. We are disturbed by the silence of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs with regard to this massive corruption. What happened to Manase report which reported that billions of Rands in the City were looted without anyone being held accountable?

Violent forced evictions during the State of National Disaster have displaced hundreds of families. The state decided to wage a war on its poorest citizens in the middle of deadly pandemic. We demand all that have been displaced during the State of National Disaster be reinstated on their lands. We demand that they be compensated for the destruction of their property. We demand that all the municipal officials and private security workers who engaged in violence during the evictions be held accountable for their actions. We demand, also, that the positive role of land reform from below, and grassroots urban planning be recognised, and that we swiftly towards the decommodification of land.

The economic crisis has seen huge numbers of people losing their jobs, deepening poverty and inequality, and growing anxiety, anger and hate. This has manifested itself into gender-based violence. It has manifested itself into xenophobia and multiple forms violence against the most vulnerable groups in our society including LGBTIQ+ communities. We call on the state and all progressive forces to join us as we unite to expose and isolate these crimes of hate. We call on all progressive forces to work together to build a politics of solidarity.

The march will be held on Monday, 19 October in Durban. We are going to assemble at King Dinuzulu Park, on the corner Berea and Umbilo Road at 9:00am and proceed to the Durban City Hall. The Memorandum will be received by both the Premier of the province, Mr Sihle Zikalala and KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Mr Siphso Hlo-muka.

Busisiwe Diko
Lindokuhle Mnguni
Nhlakanipho Mdiyata
Ayanda Ngila

19 OCTOBER 2020

Memorandum · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Memorandum of Demands Handed Over at the March on 19 October

MEMORANDUM OF DEMANDS TO THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, THE HONOURABLE MR SIHLE ZIKALALA AND THE MEC FOR COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, THE HONOURABLE MR SIPHO HLOMUKA

Handed over by Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA in Durban on Monday, 19 October 2020

Stop corruption, forced evictions and all forms of violence against Abahlali members, migrant communities, women and LGBTIQ+ people. We are members and supporters of Abahlali baseMjondolo. We are street traders, hostel dwellers, poor flat dwellers, fisher folks, residents of polluted areas, migrants and workers.

We are residents of this city. We are democrats committed to the flourishing of this country. We speak for ourselves and direct our own struggle. We have no hidden agenda. We have been mobilised by our own suffering and our hopes for a better life, a better South Africa and a better world.

Many of us are landless. Many of us do not have decent housing. Many of us do not live in safe neighbourhoods. Many of us have no jobs. Most of us that do have some work do not have secure jobs that pay a living wage and provide medical aid. Most of us are living in deep poverty.

In every disaster – whether it is floods, fires, pollution or disease – we are most at risk. The state does not treat us like other people. We are regularly ignored, insulted, harassed, assaulted and robbed by state officials. The state regularly destroys our homes and our street stalls at gunpoint. Some of our neighbours and comrades have been murdered by the state. Across the country the state regularly abuses and murders poor black people.

But this democracy was not won by the politicians and it does not belong to them. It was won by the struggles of the people and that includes people like us, people like Jabu Ndlovu, Dorothy Nyembe, Florence Mkhize, Johannes Nkosi and Zulu Phungula. It was won by organisations like the ICU, Fosatu, the UDF and Cosatu, organisations with members who were people like us. This democracy belongs to the people, and we are part of the people.

The wealth controlled by the state was not built by the politicians. It is not their private property. It comes from our dispossession and exploitation. We were made poor so that others could be made rich. That wealth belongs to the people. It is public property.

Public funds must be used for the public good. Corruption is theft from the public, theft that hits and hurts the poor the hardest. Corruption is always an attack on the people. It always robs our communities of the potential to improve our living conditions and to develop.

But even after all the corruption that we have seen, year after year, the huge scale of the theft of public money during the Covid-19 lockdown was still a shock. This corruption, perpetrated during the pandemic, was a direct attack on our right to health and life.

We have made a number of attempts to engage our municipalities and our provincial government on this issue only to be ignored.

We all agree that there is a serious crisis in our country and in the City of Durban. People are losing jobs and being pushed off their land at gunpoint. People are going hungry. The new grants are not reaching us.

Corruption has vandalised our communities. The councillor system has not only become a system of top down political control. It is also a threat to future stability in our country. Some councillors are a danger to our democracy and our communities. In some wards people are terrorised by the councillors and their committees.

Today we are marching against corruption, violence and forced evictions. Today we unite behind the following concrete demands:

1. The R25 million allocated by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development to provide food relief to the poor must be recovered from those individuals and companies that have stolen it and be directed to impoverished people in an open and transparent manner and via freely elected community structures subject to the right to recall. The thieves must be called to justice.

2. The R430 million stolen from the Durban Solid Waste budget, allegedly by the former eThekweni mayor and others, must be recovered and redirected, in an open and transparent manner, to projects to clean our settlements and our townships run under the authority of freely elected community structures. The thieves must be called to justice.

3. The R700 million allegedly stolen from eThekweni Water and Sanitation Unit must be recovered and redirected to support the water and sanitation needs of our settlements and our townships under the transparent authority of freely elected community structures. The thieves must be called to justice.

4. Many of our members have been illegally and violently removed from their homes during the State of National Disaster making them even more vulnerable. We demand that all those who have been evicted be reinstated on their land and in their homes. They must be compensated for their losses and suffering. All government officials who ordered and carried out illegal evictions must be called to justice.

5. The eThekweni Municipality's Land Invasion Unit is a militarised structure with no purpose but to violently repress the poor. It has killed people. Now the Calvin and Family Security company is also doing this dirty work. We demand the immediate closure of the Land Invasion Unit, and a full investigation into the Calvin and Family Security company including how it got the tender to attack us, and why it has been allowed to engage in violent and illegal actions in broad daylight. All officials in these organisations who have carried out illegal evictions and other illegal acts must be called to justice.

6. Many of us live in substandard housing conditions like pigs in the mud. Some of us live under dangerous electric wires. Some of us live in the dangerous pollution of the oil refineries. We demand decent housing, safe neighbourhoods and the provision of all basic services

7. Many of us have already been living for too long in RDP houses but without any tenure security. Without this security councillors and party committees can remove us from these houses at any time. We demand immediate tenure security.

8. We demand genuine participation in all decision making that affects our lives.

9. We demand recognition for grassroots urban planning.

10. We demand the full disclosure of the Housing budget and the list of beneficiaries in eThekweni and from the Provincial Department of Human Settlements.

11. For too long the promise of houses has been downgraded to forced removal to transit camps. These transit camps are more like prisons than homes. Therefore, we demand an immediate end to all transit camps so that the dignity of the people that have been taken to transit camps can be immediately restored.

12. For too long the municipality has terrorised street traders by confiscating their stock and failing to provide necessary permits while they are struggling to be allowed to make a fair living. We demand an end to all harassment of street traders.

13. For too long poor people have been turned against one another. Therefore, we demand an immediate end to all forms of discrimination against people born in other countries.

14. For too long women have been harassed, abused and murdered with impunity. We demand immediate action to secure the equality, safety and dignity of all women.

15. For too long there has been discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ people. We demand immediate action to secure the equality, safety and dignity of all LGBTIQ+ people.

Furthermore, just as people around our country and the world are uniting in support of our struggle we express our support for our comrades elsewhere in the country and the world.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone who has journeyed with us over the past 15 years of our struggle.

Handed over by _____ on 19 October 2020 at Durban

Signature _____

Received by _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Contact: _____

27 OCTOBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Picket outside the Durban City Hall to demand an End to Budget Cuts

Tomorrow morning Abahlali will join comrades in pickets to be held around South Africa to issue a clear rejection of the ongoing budget cuts by the national treasury. Austerity is not the solution to the economic crisis. We have seen, around the world, that austerity, which is a new name for structural adjustment, has had a devastating impact on the poor and the working class. What we need is massive investment in our people and in our society – investment in schools, libraries, hospitals, housing, community halls, safe houses for women facing abuse, grassroots urban agriculture and much, much more.

The picket is being held tomorrow because the Minister of Finance, Mr Tito Mboweni, is set to announce the long-awaited Medium-Term Budget speech. We have already seen the signs of cuts in public expenditure amid Covid-19 pandemic and in the middle of economic crises facing South Africa and the world and we fear that tomorrow's budget will be another step on the road to austerity.

People are already out of work. People are already hungry. The conditions in many schools and hospitals are already a disgrace. Millions are already without land and housing. Austerity will make all this worse.

We reject all cuts to social expenditure, and every budget that promotes inequality, impoverishment and mass unemployment. We will be demanding the creation of decent jobs for all. We will be demanding well land to build decent housing for all and to plough food to feed our families. We will be demanding a guaranteed income for all. We believe that all of this is possible if the government can tax the rich and big corporates that dodge their responsibility to pay taxes, and put an end to the massive looting of the state.

The kleptocratic faction of the ANC looted public funds on a massive scale and repressed popular opposition with violence and murder. The neoliberal faction of the ANC aims to cut social spending, which will be devastating for the

poor. We are opposed to both factions of the ruling party. We are for society.
We are for justice. We for an end to oppression.

Land, wealth and power must be shared.

We will assemble at the Durban City Hall at 10:00am for the picket.

Ayanda Ngila
Busi Diko
Lindokuhle Mnguni

27 NOVEMBER 2020

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Women's Camp to Build Women's Power in Struggle

The Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League will hold a camp from 18:00 on Saturday night to 6:00 on Sunday morning.

Camps are an important space for members of the movement to think together. This camp will create a space for us to cough out our experiences of suffering, to be in solidarity with each other and to think together about our lives and struggles in the context of the wider campaign of 16 days of activism.

During the Covid-19 lockdown many women found themselves under attack from the state as their homes were repeatedly and violently destroyed. Many women lost their livelihoods and struggled to find food for themselves and their families. Many women were faced with domestic violence in their homes. Very few people living in shacks received the Covid-19 grant.

Our motherly is not respected. Our homes are not respected. Our dignity is not respected. Our intelligence is not respected. Our lives are not respected.

In July when uMthwalume Women, an organisation set up to oppose violence against women, marched in protest at a number of murders of women on the South Coast their leader, Hlengiwe Gasa, was arrested. In April twenty-nine brave women were arrested on the Azania Land Occupation in Cato Manor, when they continued sleeping on the land after repeated violent evictions.

The government does not see women who organise, speak out and struggle for a better world as partners in a democratic process. They see us as an enemy to be crushed. Popular democracy is treated as a crime. We are only supposed to listen and to obey.

We survived the Covid-19 lockdown by shifting some kinds of organising and discussion to Whatsapp, developing community gardens and community kitchens, cooking and eating together, developing a national food solidarity program, and making sure that everyone could speak out and get care and support if they were going hungry.

You never know how strong you can be until being strong is your only choice. We build and keep our strength in our togetherness. This is how we survive and resist oppression.

The program for this camp includes discussions on economic oppression, social oppression and oppression at work with a special focus on racism and capitalism. There will also be sessions on gender-based violence, women and land and women and livelihoods.

We are in solidarity with all women facing evictions across the country, and with all our sisters who are born in other countries and are now facing violent xenophobia in South Africa.

A woman is a woman where ever she may find herself. Solidarity has no borders. Our strength is in our unity. Building women's power in struggle – democratic bottom up power – is the only way to defeat oppression.

Nomza Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Zandile Nsibande

14 DECEMBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Building Autonomy & Solidarity from Below on the eKhenana Occupation

The eKhenana Occupation now has the Frantz Fanon Political School, the Thuli Ndlovu Community Hall, the Sifiso Ngcobo Poultry Solidarity Project and the Nkululeko Gwala Food Sovereignty Garden.

Since our movement was formed in 2005 we have been committed to building organic organising from below. Our movement was built settlement by settlement and occupation by occupation. From the beginning we also worked to build a living solidarity with other struggles. In the early years we offered solidarity to comrades in countries like Haiti and Zimbabwe. When our movement was under attack we received international solidarity from organisations as far away as the United Kingdom, the USA and Turkey.

During the last five years we have been sending our comrades to the MST political school in Brazil. Through working together with the MST comrades, and other comrades at the school, we have learnt the ways of organising in different countries. From the MST we have learnt about agroecology and the importance of making our occupations sites of production, as well as places to live, build community and access the cities.

There were gardens in our branches before we developed our relationship with MST. In 2008 the strong women in Motala Heights founded the Motala Diggers. But from the MST we have learnt to organise urban farming on a much bigger scale and how to organise co-operatives to manage the farming and to distribute the produce on a democratic and collective basis.

Yesterday we officially opened the garden and poultry farm at the eKhenana occupation in Cato Manor, Durban. This work came as a result of learning exchanges with our comrades in the MST. The seeds for the garden came from the MST. This garden serves the community. It feeds many families that are headed by children and do not have anyone employed. The money that is made from selling the excess produce via the shop run by the cooperative has paid for all

kinds of important things such as PPE and transport for people needing to go into central Durban. The cooperative recently donated a mobile sound system to the movement.

Food sovereignty is now a very important part of our work in our movement. We believe that we can create our own food and not rely on the government, who come with unhealthy food parcels when elections are coming and pay people small grants that can just keep them alive. Mostly when people receive the grants they take the money straight to the supermarkets owned by the big capitalists. The grants are not a subsidy for the oppressed to build autonomy. They are a subsidy for the capitalists.

The politic of autonomy is always dangerous, and has created many enemies in the ruling party and the state in the past. This is because as the poor we are supposed to rely on the state for everything, including land, housing, services and food. When we create our own autonomy by organising ourselves; occupying land; building our own homes, halls and community infrastructure; arranging our own access to services; and developing our own capacity to disrupt, march and engage the media the politicians say that we 'are running our own authority' and our efforts are met with violent repression.

In 2009 our movement was attacked in Kennedy by the ANC in the presence of the police. One of the reasons why we were attacked was that at that time we had a drop in centre which provided various kinds of support to people in the settlement including bread for many families. The ANC said that 'Zikode is running his own authority' and celebrated when we were attacked.

Our ideology of Ubuhlalism is about working together as the poor to build our own democratic power and to find solutions to our own problems. We believe that as the poor we are our own solutions. We believe that a neighbour should not sleep when their neighbour does not have something to eat.

The eKhenana occupation has faced serious repression, including more than twenty armed and violent attempts at eviction. The state used the Covid-19 lockdown as cover to wage regular attacks on the occupation. Women were most abused and targeted in these attacks. Despite the devastating effects of police brutality towards women during violent evictions, the women on the occupation have never lost sight of the fact that meaningful change for them cannot come through appealing to elites for reform from above but only through unity from below. Women took the lead in building and sustaining solidarity on the

occupation. Women's power has always been the foundation of our struggle and today women remain in the forefront of the struggle in eKhenana.

The food sovereignty project in eKhenana that was officially opened yesterday was named after our late comrade who we lost in our struggle, comrade Nkululeko Gwala. Gwala was the chairperson of the Cato Crest branch. He was assassinated in 2014 after threats were made against him by senior leaders in the ANC in Durban.

We also officially opened a poultry farming project that was named after Sifiso Ngcobo. Sifiso Ngcobo was the chairperson of Ekukhanyeni branch. He was assassinated in 2018 after he received many threats from the ANC.

We also opened the Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Hall in honour of our late KwaNdengezi chairperson and member of the National Council who was assassinated by two ANC ward councilors in 2016.

The names of the of these fallen comrades were engraved in this living struggle so that this history remains with the movement.

From the local to the global level solidarity among the left is very important. We need to ensure that we work together as the human race.

Mqapheli Bonono
Lindokuhle Mnguni
Joyce Majola

21 DECEMBER 2020

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Bleak Year for the Poor and the Working Class

The year 2020 has exposed the cruelty of the corrupt and capitalist ANC government, a repressive and predatory government that makes the political and economic elites richer while making the poor poorer.

During the lockdown poor and working-class black people were openly murdered in the streets by the army and the police. Our movement faced repeated illegal and violent evictions during the lockdown despite the supposed moratorium on evictions. Live ammunition was used against unarmed people. Most shack dwellers did not receive the Covid grant. Millions of people lost their jobs. Others were not able to continue with their livelihoods. Across the country people went hungry. The government did not deal with the capitalists whose interest in making profit at all costs led to them putting their workers at risk during a pandemic. The lives of health workers who are in the frontline in the fight against this pandemic were disregarded by the government which failed to provide enough protective gear.

The money that the government allocated to deal with the Covid crisis was stolen on a massive scale. Many companies were started with the sole purpose of looting Covid funds. Huge amounts of money were taken in fraudulent tenders by senior ANC members, including people close to the president and ministers.

Corruption always hits the poor and the working class the hardest. For example the working class in Khayelitsha in Cape Town is unable to travel to work in cheap affordable transport because the thieves in the ANC ran Prasa to the ground. The only affordable form of transport for the working class is no more because of greedy politicians.

We are ruled by thieves. This was not what was meant when the Freedom Charter said ‘The people shall govern’. This is a government of counter-revolutionaries. They have captured the people’s struggle to make themselves rich.

We continue to live under difficult conditions in shacks while those in the ANC are living in luxury. The Freedom Charter said that “All people shall have

the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security” but more people are living in shacks than ever before. Across the country violent evictions are an everyday bread.

Instead of dealing with all of these issues the ANC is using this time to fight its own factional battles in the party. Those who are involved in corruption are promoted in order to please a certain faction. The ANC does not care about the lives of ordinary poor black people. We only count during the elections. When we ask for the promises that were made to us to be kept we are met with bullets. They openly say that we should not be living on land that is near the gated communities of the rich.

Why do people continue to vote for these thugs?

This will be a bleak Christmas. Children who used to have Christmas clothes every year will not receive them this year because their parents have lost their jobs or livelihoods. Many families are now without a bread winner. There are families that will go hungry on Christmas day.

Steve Biko, who was born today 74 years ago this month, said ‘Black man you are on your own’. Today if you are black and poor you are on your own. Solidarity is imperative. Building the power of the poor from below is imperative.

We have done our best to build the democratic power of the poor from below, settlement by settlement, and occupation by occupation. Our membership in good standing is currently 82 056 with 76 branches counted so far, and four branches still to count.

This year we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of our movement. We celebrated all that we have achieved despite serious repression and saluted all the heroes who lost their lives during our struggle. We thanked all those who have been brave enough to stand up for their humanity and to resist oppression. We noted that women are in the forefront of our movement as members and as leaders and stressed the need to continue to build women’s power from below. We held many meetings to reflect on the last 15 years and to discuss what we have learnt in struggle.

During the lockdown we resisted evictions, developed a food solidarity programme in four provinces and worked to build the social infrastructure in our occupations and to turn them into spaces of production as well as land for living. We have pushed hard to build food sovereignty from below.

We have also done our best to build living solidarity with other organisations and struggles of the poor in South Africa and around the world.

As the poor we are on our own. We will continue to build a living politics, to occupy, to produce and to resist. We will continue to insist that our humanity and right to dignity are non-negotiable. Biko said that “We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority, there shall just be people. And those people will have the same status before the law and they will have the same political rights before the law. In this instance it will be a completely non-racial egalitarian society.” In 2020 the government treats us as if we are beneath the law.

They just ignore the law when it comes to us. There is no equality.

The ANC was brought to power by the struggles of the people but it has betrayed every tradition of liberation in this country. It is now up to the oppressed to liberate ourselves.

We express our solidarity with the residents of Masiphumelele in Cape Town. Over a thousand homes were lost in the terrible fire on Thursday last week. More than a quarter of a century since the end of apartheid we are still left to burn because we are still not counted as human beings.

Mqapheli Bonono
Joyce Majola
S'bu Zikode

17 JANUARY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo is opposed to the closure of borders

Since our movement was formed 15 years ago we have always opposed the systems that make people poor and keep them poor. We have always opposed all attacks on the poor. We are in solidarity with all oppressed people regardless of the country or province of their birth, the language that they speak, the religion that they follow or the colour of their skin. Any oppressed person who accepts the principles of abahlalism and the philosophy of ubuhlali is welcomed into our movement and can be elected into any position.

We have always said that a neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade without regard to where they were born, what language they speak at home, etc, etc. We have also always noted that someone can be born in the same place as you, speak your language and be your oppressor.

No one in South Africa is poor because their neighbour was born in another province or country. The scarcity of jobs has nothing to do with migrants. We were made poor by colonialism and capitalism, and are we kept poor by the corruption of the ANC and its alliance with capital. We continue to suffer because of this filthy, bloody capitalism. It will continue to destroy human beings and the world until it is defeated.

Xenophobia is a politic that is encouraged by elites with the aim of dividing the oppressed and turning us against each other. Both factions of the ANC encourage xenophobia. Now they are using xenophobia to distract us from how they have failed to deal with the Covid crisis.

The recent announcement by the president of our country that the borders with the SADC countries will be closed is an act of xenophobia. The Covid crisis was not caused by people from Zimbabwe or Mozambique. Covid is in every country in the world. In fact the situation in South Africa is much worse than in most other African countries.

Anyone can contract the virus from anyone else. A virus knows nothing about borders and nationality. The idea that people are kept safe by borders and

walls is the politic of Donald Trump. We will be kept safe by a huge commitment to support public health. There needs to be support for preventative measures like high quality masks, social distancing and sanitising. Employers need to be forced to keep their workers safe. People who are infected need to receive the best possible medical treatment. The vaccine needs to be rolled out to as many people as possible as soon as is possible.

Instead of supporting the poor through the crisis the government attacked us. During the first lockdown people were beaten to death by the police and the army. There were regular violent and illegal evictions.

The ANC used to be considered as a liberation movement. Now they disgrace the history of Pan Africanism by embracing colonial borders and harassing, beating, robbing and jailing migrants.

The ANC is now a party with many leaders who are thieves who made themselves rich by making others poor. It is also a party with many leaders who have been made rich by their accommodation with capitalism, a system that continues to destroy the world and to keep the majority of humanity poor.

The battles in the ANC are battle between oppressors. The party dominates the people. It does not represent them. Removing those who became rich by stealing from the state will not solve our problems. Black capitalists are also oppressors of our people. We have seen workers in Marikana who were asking for a living wage being killed like animals by a government that they have voted into power. During apartheid the life of a black person was cheap. Today if you are an impoverished black person your life remains cheap. Before 1994 black people were landless and millions were living in squalor in shacks. Today we remain landless unless we occupy. When we occupy we are met with bullets and death from a Black government. Many more people live in shacks now than in 1994. People need to ask why these things are still continuing even after we have changed from a white government to a black government.

In our settlements we live peacefully with our brothers and sisters from different countries. A number of our leaders were born outside of South Africa. This is the spirit of *ubuhlali*. *Ubuhlali* leads naturally to Pan Africanism and internationalism.

Patrice Lumumba was assassinated sixty years ago today. Like Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Chris Hani and many others Lumumba stood for Pan-Africanism and internationalism. The ANC disgraces this history.

Ramaphosa is the chairperson of the Africa Union but he is no Pan Africanist. What Pan Africanist would close the borders during a time of crisis? Ramaphosa is an embarrassment to all Africans who have struggled for freedom.

In this time when we are faced with a pandemic, and our continent continues to be robbed by corporations, dominated by the West, and looted and oppressed by corrupt and authoritarian politicians, we reject the nationalists in the ANC. We need to unite as Africans and build a future in which everyone's dignity is respected and the wealth of our continent is used to build homes, hospitals, parks, cultural spaces and schools and universities worthy of our humanity.

Our humanity cannot be confined to any borders. We must remember that the colonial borders were created to divide us. Nkrumah once said, 'I am not an African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me'.

In our movement we continue to maintain that a human being is a human being wherever and whenever they find themselves. We will continue to work with all progressive forces to oppose xenophobia and build solidarity among the oppressed.

It must be made clear that those among the elites who continue to promote xenophobia in the name of the poor do not speak for us. It must be made clear that every xenophobic person, rich or poor, is part of the system of oppression.

Every human life is fragile and precious. Every human life must be counted as a life. On this point there can never be any compromise.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the people of Uganda who, like the people of Zimbabwe and Zambia, are struggling against a brutal dictator.

We also express our solidarity with the friends, colleagues and comrades of Vusimuzi Cibane, a Numsa shopsteward from KwaNdengezi who recently passed on.

We also express our deepest solidarity with the Zikode, Mkhize and Luvela families in their time of mourning.

Mqapheli Bonono
Joyce Majola

28 JANUARY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Impoverishment Continues to Threaten the Safety of the Poor During the Pandemic

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, we as the poor and marginalized in the townships, rural areas and urban shack settlements have been concerned that once the virus is spread in our areas, it will hit us worst.

When the president of the country first announced the lockdown, it became clear that he was acting as if everyone in the country is a rich or middle-class person. We do not all have access to water and proper sanitation, or the space to effectively social distance.

The president spoke as if he was not aware of the conditions of people who are living in the rural areas who have to fight for water with animals. He spoke as if he was not aware of the inhuman conditions that we face in the shacks. This is not surprising as the president, like other politicians, only comes to our areas when it is time to seek votes. That is the only time that we are important in the eyes of this government.

Sometimes when politicians do come to the poor they insult and threaten us rather than listening to us and engaging us as citizens. Earlier this month the minister of housing, Lindiwe Sisulu, who has a long history of authoritarianism, visited the Taiwan settlement in Cape Town. She shouted at Nkosikhona Swartbooi, a local activist. Her bodyguards tried to force Swartbooi into a car, took his phone and tried to force him to delete footage of the minister shouting at him. Later the minister said that she would open a criminal case against Swartbooi, whose only “crime” was to say that: “Let’s hope, minister, you won’t do the same as at Empolweni. You promised structures to be built, but you never built them.”

Then, also this month, Lindiwe Zulu, the minister of social development, watched from an armoured police vehicle as the police used a water canon against disabled poor people who were waiting for the social grants in Bellville in Cape Town.

When the government sends the state to us they often come with guns and attack us. During the first lockdown the police beat a number of people to death. There were violent and illegal evictions in Durban, and in Cape Town too.

The reality of our country is that if you are poor and black you are ignored by the politicians and abandoned by the state. But when you occupy land, organise or challenge authority you are then attacked with threats, intimidation and violence. Insults, threats, arrests, beatings, torture and murder have all been common forms of repression under the ANC. This is a truth that cannot be denied.

During this pandemic we in the shacks of indignity continue to suffer and die while the political elite and their families live in luxury. We share dirty and dangerous public toilets with more than 2 000 people. We spend hours in queues for water. We burn when there is fire. We are washed away during tropical storms. This has become our daily life. We have no access to roads for emergency services to use.

We are always the last ones in line when development takes place. We suffer because we do not count in the society. Those who are politically connected and those that are rich are the ones who get first priority, and we are only considered once they have had enough. Only then the government remembers that we exist. When we do get something they only give us just enough to survive, not enough to be able to live well.

The ANC have become oppressors but they continue to claim to be a revolutionary movement. Lindiwe Zulu likes to wear a beret with the Cuban flag. One of our occupations was named Fidel Castro by its residents. There will never be an occupation named Lindiwe Zulu. Never.

Castro did not send his soldiers to defeat the apartheid army in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola for this. He would be deeply ashamed to be associated with someone like Lindiwe Zulu, and what the ANC has become.

The only good thing is that no one is fooled anymore. No normal person can believe that someone like Lindiwe Zulu is a revolutionary. Anyone who said this would be taken as a joke.

We are concerned that the same contempt that we always receive from this government will be shown when the vaccines eventually arrive. The first problem is that the vaccines will arrive far too late as a result of the government's failures. The second is that it is we strongly suspect that they will first be used

for those who are politically connected and those who have money. Even the Covid grant was hardly accessed in the shacks. The worst off in society are always treated the worst by the government.

How can we expect a government that is failing to provide basic services to the poor in the time of a serious pandemic to provide a vaccine for the poor? How can we even expect a state that humiliates, threatens and murders the organised poor to even care about getting the vaccine to us?

Since we were made and kept poor by colonialism, capitalism and racism we have been dying from diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and diarrhoea. This is why we fear that we will continue to die from the corona virus. We fear that even when most of the world has managed to control the virus, this pandemic will remain for the poor.

Vaccines cannot only be for the rich. They cannot be a profit-making business. All medicines should be for all of humanity. They must be made free for all people. Medicine cannot be a business. That is anti-human. Medical knowledge should be organised like a library, not a business. The ANC should learn from the health care system in Cuba instead of wearing the Cuban flag while repressing the people.

We will continue to suffer as long as we continue to vote for a corrupt and violently repressive government that holds us in contempt and is driving a neo-liberal agenda. The only way forward is to build democratic popular power across the country.

One of the few things that the ANC ever got right is the ARV treatment programme for people living with HIV. This success came out of a pressure from a social movement, the Treatment Action Campaign, strongly backed by trade unions and other progressive forces. We need the same progressive popular organisation and unity to struggle to ensure that everyone receives the Covid 19 vaccine as quickly as possible, that all infected people receive the best possible care.

The ANC have no excuses for failing the country during this pandemic. Governments with a strong communist or labour history have done much, much better such as we see with the state of Kerala in India and New Zealand.

Nomsa Sizani
Thuso Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

19 FEBRUARY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Collective Reading of the Communist Manifesto

On the 21 February 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels published the first edition of the Communist Manifesto. Progressive movements and organisations around the world are holding workshops on the Manifesto, and as part of this global project our movement will hold a political education workshop at the Frantz Fanon school at the eKhenana occupation in Durban from 21 February to 1 March.

Our members in eKhenana have faced with brutal armed attacks from the state through evictions. In most cases these evictions were carried out by the city's Anti-Land Invasion Unit. They have also come under serious pressure from ANC thugs. On 22 December 2018, when the occupation was in its early stage, Senzo Gumede was murdered after he was threatened by the local ANC councillor and the taxi association.

Despite all this the comrades on the occupation have developed a democratically managed vegetable farm, as well as a poultry project, built a youth centre and a community hall, and built and established the Frantz Fanon Political School to enhance knowledge of Ubuhlalism and socialism. All of this has been planned, developed and run by the community. This is self-management. It is also important to note that in eKhenana there is no selling or renting of shacks. Land and housing, as well as food production, have been decommodified.

Fanon had a very clear understanding of political education. He argued that: To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a hero that will save them with his magic hands, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the hero is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.

In our movement we are clear that it is only by building the democratic power of the oppressed that the world can be humanized. Ubuhlalism is the philosophy that we developed in our struggle. It has carried us through fifteen

years of struggle, and enabled us to organise many land occupations, win many victories and build a membership that now exceeds 80 000 people.

When our movement first started there were discussions about how Ubuhlalism, the philosophy of humanism, community and struggle that we had built, and the living politic that we had built as a form of praxis, could lead to something like a living communism, a democratic communism of the people, by the people and for the people, built from the ground of the occupations upwards and outwards.

Today our movement is no longer on its own. We have comrades around the world. The seeds that were used to start the planting by the co-operative that runs the farm on the eKhenana occupation were given to us by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil.

Our struggle has led us from the shacks of Durban to the world, and ubuhlalism – which has always held that land, wealth, cities, power and, indeed, the world, must be shared – is leading us into a ongoing engagement with communist ideas in conversation with comrades around the world.

Our struggle is against the colonial way of thinking that still means that we do not count as human beings – that we can be left to live like pigs in the mud and be murdered when we organise to defend our humanity. It is also against the political gangsterism of the ANC. And it is against capitalism.

Ubuhlalism, which draws a lot from African ideas and practices, has always said that land should not be bought and sold, and that it should be allocated on the basis of human need rather than private profit. This idea connects very well to communist thought. So does the view of Marx that communism is an expression of humanism at the global scale.

Theory does not lead to struggle. The insistence on human dignity in the face of oppression leads to struggle, and struggle leads to theory. At this point theory can change struggle and struggle can change theory.

In our movement we believe in building the democratic power of the oppressed, which is why we work to try and ensure that the people on the ground are able to engage in constant political discussion. We need to work together – to think together – to become more fully aware of the systems of oppression. This is revolutionary work.

The political education workshop that will run from Sunday will include performances by the Abahlali Choir, a discussion on Ubuhlalism, a discussion

on the thought of Frantz Fanon and then a close and collective reading of the Communist Manifesto over several days. We have an isiZulu translation of the Manifesto and we will be reading and discussing it in isiZulu.

Just as Ubuhlalism connects to communist ideas, it also connects us to thinking about political education in terms of Paulo Freire's theories, theories which have grounded the MST political school in Brazil, which a number of our comrades have attended. Our political education workshops are run on Freirean principles, principles that are very similar to the ideas that we developed about living learning as a part of Ubuhlalism.

Capitalism, which is always a racial system, allows a small elite to become rich while making the majority poor. It is an economic system that developed from slavery and colonialism. It continues to put private profit before the needs and dignity of the people. The struggle against the gangsterism in the ANC is a local and national struggle. But the struggle against capitalism has to be global. We need to ensure that we all are armed with the knowledge of how to deal with capitalism.

The great African leaders like Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, and then later Thomas Sankara, accepted the mission that confronted their generations. Every generation must do the same. We cannot rest until the working class and the poor in our society receive full emancipation. Economic emancipation cannot mean the replacement of one elite by another. It has to mean the end of poverty.

The close and collective reading of the Communist Manifesto over the coming week will happen on the ground where the people are, and where the people are in struggle. It will happen on a land occupation that is also a democratically and self-managed community, a community with elected leaders subject to the right of recall and where there are twice weekly meetings to discuss issues together. The land occupation is a commune.

It is often said that Marxism is an ideology that is too complicated for an ordinary person from the shacks. This is because those who are regarded as scholars are often detached from the people on the ground. They often want to think for the oppressed instead of humbling themselves to think with the oppressed. They fail to understand Marx's point that 'communism is the real movement that abolishes the present state of things'. Theory without struggle does not change anything. Struggle without theory can easily be co-opted or

settle for local gains. Genuinely radical thought must be worked out in struggle, in the movement of the oppressed.

Comrade S'bu Zikode, a founding member of our movement and our elected President, often says, "We must break down the complicated politics so that even an old Gogo from the rural areas can understand". Theory must enable people to understand the world and their struggle better. It must never be used to make the people seem ignorant and to monopolise knowledge just like how land, cities, wealth and power are monopolised by a small elite under capitalism.

This workshop will take place at a very difficult time when our country is faced not with only the pandemic, but also with an economic crisis where the unemployment rate continues to rise. Many people have been retrenched and as a result many households are without a bread winner. We are in a state of social disaster.

We are urgently in need of a way to lift us out of this situation. The ANC is a mixture of political gangsters and neo-liberals. Both of these factions are anti-poor, and can only make the poor even poorer. There has to be a democratic and radical alternative.

This is why we are embarking on a programme to learn and discuss together. We need to understand how the capitalist order operates so that one day we can, working with movements around the world, be able to overthrow it and build an economy and society that starts and ends with human dignity.

In South Africa the people that call themselves communists have been captured by the ANC. They have become part of the system of oppression. We do not see them on the ground and in struggle.

This is why a new communist politics has to be built from the ground up, and in struggle. We all need to be able to understand and analyse politics in the languages that we speak in ways that make sense to us and fit with our lives.

The programme for Sunday – which deals with Ubuhhlaliso, Frantz Fanon and radical pedagogy will run from 8:30 to 17:00. The programme from Monday to Sunday the following week will run from 8:30 to 15:00. The close reading and collective discussion of the Communist Manifesto will take place every day from Monday to Friday.

Contact persons:

Lindokuhle Mnguni
Mqapheli Bonono

15 MARCH 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The State Continues to Murder with Impunity

Abahlali baseMjondolo expresses deep solidarity with the family and friends of Mthokozisi Ntumba, who was murdered by the police in Johannesburg on Wednesday last week as he passed by a student protest. We join all progressive forces in refusing to accept that, more than twenty-five years after the end of apartheid, the state can continue to use murder as a routine form of social control.

The police in South Africa kill almost two and a half as many people per capita as the police in the United States yet there is no mass movement here against police violence. In 2012 the Marikana massacre shocked the world but the police in South Africa kill someone every twenty hours. There is a permanent slow Marikana. People are killed on road blockades, during evictions, in the holding cells in police stations and on the streets.

And it is not just the police that are used to govern the oppressed with murder. We are also killed by private security, anti-eviction units and izinkabi. If you are poor and black your life does not count to this society and you can be murdered with impunity by the state and the ruling party.

Every year we bury people that have lost their lives in the hands of the police. This is a symptom of a government that is prepared to use force, even the barrel of the gun, in order to protect the interests of the elite. The police do not follow the law. They take orders from councillors and other politicians.

Over the years the police have threatened us, assaulted us, stood by as we have been attacked by party thugs, arrested us on trumped up charges and tortured us.

State violence towards impoverished black people is a serious crisis in South Africa. In our understanding the reason for this crisis is that the ANC has no regard for the poor and marginalised in our country. It puts the profit of the politicians and the capitalists before the lives of ordinary people.

During Jacob Zuma's time as president we were ruled by gangster politicians. They stole from public funds. Striking miners were massacred and grassroots activists were assassinated.

Now we have a President who believes in supporting business more than taking care of the poor. We have a minister of finance who is arrogant and prepared to justify major budget cuts on social grants, education, wages and housing. This is done to protect the elite from paying tax that would benefit the poor.

The Freedom Charter said that "There shall be houses, security and comfort". It said that "The land shall be shared among those who work it". It said that "All shall be equal before the law". It said that "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened". The ANC has abandoned all these promises and focussed on making the politicians rich. The poor are turned against each other with xenophobic and ethnic politics, and controlled with patronage and violence.

Impoverished black people have been in a permanent economic crisis since colonialism. Today that crisis is even worse than usual. Instead of responding to the needs of the poor with solidarity this government is patronising and mocking the poor. The minister of finance who has pleased the right-wing DA in his budget speech tweeted about the beautiful sky in Johannesburg while students were being shot at and an innocent man was killed.

Capitalism has no morals. It is anti-poor, anti-black and anti-women and should not have a place in our society. We must do whatever it takes as the poor and working class to deal with capitalism. Racial capitalism made us poor and it keeps us poor. It has the blood of our ancestors on our hands. It has the blood of the workers massacred at Marikana on its hands. We cannot let it also have the blood of our children and their children on its hands.

There is an urgent need to replace the corrupt and violent capitalist government of the ANC if we want to see a democratic socialist society. We can longer watch as we continue to perish in the hands of the police and army used to protect the interests of the rich. We need to use the collective power of the oppressed to occupy the streets and build a movement against police violence.

The biggest pandemic that we are faced with as the poor is the ANC. Just as in Zimbabwe voting for old liberation movements that are now corrupt and violent will keep us poor, and keep us governed by the politic of blood. There is no hope in restoring the integrity of a party that is rotten to the core, a party that

steals from the poor even in the middle of the pandemic. We need to remove the ANC from power and do away with the whole top down system of corrupt political authority. We need to organise to build democratic popular power from below.

Police stations needs to be answerable to directly and democratically elected community councils with representatives given mandates at open assemblies and subject to the right of recall. The head of each station must also be directly elected and subject to the right to recall. No police officer must be above the law.

The police officer who murdered an innocent person on Wednesday last week must be arrested, charged with murder and brought before the courts. There must be equally serious action against those in senior positions who ordered the use of potentially lethal force against a peaceful protest by students who were marching for a noble cause.

Everyone human life must count as a life.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

21 MARCH 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We Are Still Struggling for our Humanity to be Recognised

Today is Human Rights Day, a day during which we are always told that we should celebrate the human rights that were included in the 1996 Constitution.

As everyone knows the origin of Human Rights Day is the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe, the Pan Africanist Congress organised a non-violent protest against the pass laws that were used to exclude African people from the cities, and to keep them under white control in the cities. Sobukwe was clear that the protestors would “observe absolute non-violence” and that the protest would be the beginning of a campaign for “life abundant”. Around five thousand people joined the protest, and 69 were shot down like animals. Another three people were murdered by the police during protests against the massacre in Cape Town.

The Sharpeville massacre in 1961 was followed by the Soweto massacre in 1976 and then the Marikana massacre in 2012.

As we noted in our previous press statement there is a constant slow massacre of poor black people on protests and during evictions and as a result of political assassinations. Mostly these murders carried out by the police, armed eviction units and the izinkabi are not even reported in the media and do not receive any national attention.

More protestors have been killed over the years in this slow massacre than in any of the three major massacres since 1961. We must all accept the fact that more than a quarter of a century after apartheid poor black people continue to be murdered like animals.

Many of the rights enshrined in the constitution have yet to be realised for all. They include the rights to protest, freedom of speech, association, safety, housing, food, equality, dignity and life.

There are no more passes but poor black people continue to be excluded from the cities with armed eviction units. State violence is used to prevent all of us from enjoying the right to the cities.

The insistence on the human dignity of all, and on building a world in accordance with the recognition of the human dignity of all, is at the centre of our movement. But the realities of oppression must be faced clearly.

What dignity is there for those of us who are left to live like pigs in the mud? What dignity is there for those of us whose homes can be destroyed at any time? What dignity is there for those of us who can be violently attacked by the state or the ruling party at any time?

We have asked ourselves serious questions, and we put that same questions to society: What do human rights mean when millions continue to be impoverished and to live in indignity? What do human rights mean when poor black people are regularly brutalised by the police and killed like animals?

The government likes to deliver speeches to honour the fallen at Sharpeville in 1961 and Soweto in 1976. But what does it mean when this same government committed its own massacre at Marikana in 2012, and commits a continuous ongoing slow massacre against poor black people?

The idea of 'life abundant' is beautiful. Why were people murdered for associating themselves with such a beautiful idea? Why do people continue to be murdered for associating themselves with a demand for dignity?

Our movement refuses the vandalization of humanity and insists on the recognition of the full and equal dignity of all people everywhere.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

29 MARCH 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Corrections to Minister Lindiwe Sisulu's Statement Congratulating S'bu Zikode on the Announcement of the Per Anger Prize

On 25 March it was announced that S'bu Zikode will be awarded the 2021 Per Anger prize. Per Anger was a courageous anti-fascist and the prize is awarded by the Swedish government "for humanitarian work and initiatives in the name of democracy".

The award was greeted with great joy by the movement and there were celebrations in three provinces – and from the streets to land occupations, halls and even a high school.

On 26 March Minister Lindiwe Sisulu issued a statement congratulating S'bu Zikode on the award. The statement said that "We will continue to work closely with our various stakeholders including Abahlali". It also said that the Minister is "the Patron of Abahlali baseMjondolo".

Abahlali welcomes and appreciates the Minister's congratulation to our leader on the occasion of this important award – an award that recognises the integrity and courage of our leader, as well as the courage, dedication, sacrifices and achievements of the movement as a whole.

However, there are a few claims in the Minister's statement that are misleading and need to be corrected. The Minister claims that she is a patron of Abahlali. This is not true. Our movement does not have a patron. Moreover, all our efforts to engage the Minister on violent and unlawful evictions in eThekweni have failed. Even during the Covid lockdown when all evictions were stopped by law by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development and the UN had announced a world-wide ban on all evictions she did not bother to stop the eThekweni Municipality from evicting Abahlali.

During the lockdown S'bu Zikode personally approached the Minister to intervene and stop the violent attacks on Abahlali members by the eThekweni

Municipality. Instead the Minister ran to Cape Town and pretended to be supporting evicted residents there. She did this to score a political goal. This is because Cape Town is governed by the Democratic Alliance. In eThekweni where the City is run by the African National Congress she refused to intervene. Even when a woman of the KwaMathambo occupation in Durban was shot by the City's Land Invasion Unit with live ammunition she refused to condemn or stop the evictions, or support the woman who was shot. She was playing party political games instead of standing in solidarity with the oppressed.

At the time when eThekweni's Land Invasion Unit shot Yamkela Vezi with live ammunition on the eKhenana occupation the matter of the evictions was being heard by the Durban High Court. These evictions were carried out in contempt of a court interdict that was secured a year ago. S'bu Zikode reported this incident at a virtual meeting with the Minister and she said she had written to eThekweni to stop the evictions.

But the evictions did not stop. Mr Mkhize, the municipal employee who allegedly shot Yamkela, was never arrested. He was not even suspended from his duties despite evidence being brought before the police. There was no investigation at all. Once again it was clear that in the eyes of the eThekweni Municipality we do not count to the law and that our humanity can be vandalised without any consequence.

Abahlali have lost 18 activists to violence by the police, the Land Invasion Unit and the izinkabi (hitmen). Thuli Ndlovu, one of our leaders, was murdered by two ANC councillors working for the City of eThekweni. Both the Minister and ANC have not said a word about these murders. More people, including children, have been killed in shack fires, floods and even by rats. In all of these deaths the Minister has never mourned with us. We are stunned to find that, today, the Minister claims that she is a patron of Abahlali.

Such a statement is an attempt at damage control. Why would the Minister wait for the Swedish government to recognise Abahlali if she really recognised the legitimacy of the movement? Why did the Minister not give S'bu Zikode a call before she went public? Clearly this not a sincere congratulation to S'bu Zikode but a deliberate attempt to mislead the Swedish government, the people of South Africa and the world at large.

Clearly the Minister is embarrassed by this award and feeling pressure. If the Minister really wanted to engage Abahlali she would organise a genuine meeting with Abahlali leadership and discuss all human rights abuse pertaining to housing everywhere – in Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, Gqeberha (formerly known as Port Elizabeth) and Durban, etc. It cannot be that when the DA evicts it is an outrage but when the ANC evicts it is a non-issue. This is opportunism, not principle.

In her statement the Minister goes on to mention big housing budgets and money we have never seen, nor heard of. Why is this not discussed with Abahlali? Why is budgeting, housing provision and urban planning not undertaken in an open and democratic manner? Surely in a real democracy budgeting and planning would be a participatory process?

We hope that the Minister can commit to a genuine and democratic working relationship with Abahlali, other democratic formations and the poor people of South Africa and the working class in general. The politic of blood and the politic of lies have no place in our democracy.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomusa Sizani

18 APRIL 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Fire renders 49 families homeless

A fire that broke out in the early hours of the morning today in Cato Crest (Marikana) has taken the life of a 38-year-old woman, Nomasamson Dlamini, and injured a 16-year-old, Cebo Mpiliso, who is in a critical condition in hospital. More than 45 households were affected by this fire. Nomasamson Dlamini was the mother of two children, who are at her home in Lesotho.

Winter is upon us and many people will be trying to find ways to keep themselves warm. For those living in shack settlements this is very difficult as we have to watch our homes not to be burnt by fires. The situation in Cato Crest at the moment is difficult as people have lost everything including the food for the month. Their homes have become ashes, they do not have materials to rebuild their homes at the moment. Shack fires start in the night and in the early morning when people have nowhere to go and nowhere to seek help. In most cases there is no response from emergency services. People's home burn until there is completely nothing left. Often even the Disaster Management takes a long time to respond to these fires.

The community has been struggling to get the settlement electrified by the municipality. Promises have been made but have not been honoured. We are often blamed for being irresponsible or abusing alcohol that results in the cause of these fires.

However, the fact of the matter is that we are burning because of the conditions we live under. We are burning because basic services are not provided to us by politicians who see us as banks for votes. We continue to live in the shacks of indignity. We do not count in the eyes of this government. We are only important when it is time for elections.

Cato Crest has been facing a lot of repression from the municipality. The area where the fire took place is the Nqobile section of the Marikana occupation, named after the late Nqobile Nzuza who was shot and killed by a police officer during a protest against evictions.

We are calling for people who can to assist this community that is destitute. Many of the people who are affected are women. We will need food, clothing and building materials.

We also note that the Municipality discriminates against people born in other countries when, usually after years of struggle, some services are provided. For instances when the Foreman Road settlement was eventually electrified after a long struggle residents who were Lesotho nationals were left out. We reject this as immoral discrimination, and a tactic by the state to divided the oppressed.

Abahlali recognises every person as a human being and the pain of the Dlamini family is our pain

Duduzile Hlephu
Siphokuhle Makhwenkana
Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono

20 APRIL 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Live Stream of the Award of the Per Anger Prize to S’bu Zikode on Wednesday 21 April at 15:30

Live Stream of the Award of the Per Anger Prize on Wednesday 21 April at 15:30

On 25 March it was announced that S’bu Zikode will be awarded the 2021 Per Anger prize. Per Anger was a courageous anti-fascist and the prize is awarded by the Swedish government “for humanitarian work and initiatives in the name of democracy”.

The award was greeted with great joy by the movement and there were celebrations in three provinces – and from the streets to land occupations, halls and even a high school.

The prize will be awarded at the Swedish Embassy in Pretoria at 15:30 on Wednesday 21 April. The ceremony, which will include a speech by S’bu Zikode and a performance by Sisanda Nilsson, will be livestreamed on the Living History Forums Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/levandehistoria/> The ceremony will run till 16:30. It will be followed by reception at the residency of the Swedish Ambassador from 17:30 to 18:30.

Mqapheli Bonono
Nomusa Sizani
Thapelo Mohapi

6 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Our Deputy President Mqapheli Bonono and Siniko Miya are in Detention – a call for solidarity

On Tuesday late morning three police officers arrived at the Durban offices of our movement. They arrived with Siniko Miya, a member of our movement and a resident of the eKhenana occupation, in their custody. They then arrested our Deputy President Mqapheli Bonono (who is often known as George). They said that they were arresting him on a charge of ‘conspiracy to commit murder’ following witness statements made about the content of a meeting chaired by Bonono.

This meeting was called by the Deputy President to ascertain the views and experiences of the residents of the eKhenana Occupation with regard to a murder that happened on a road in Cato Manor in March. The movement was not in a position to take an informed view of the matter without enabling all the residents of the occupation to share their views, experiences and knowledge. The meeting that Bonono called was open to all residents, and was well attended. There are numerous people who can give a credible account of the purpose of the meeting, and the content of the discussion. Of course, Bonono’s action in calling the meeting was an entirely correct response to the situation.

Bonono was not the only senior person in the movement to be present in this meeting, yet he is the only senior leader to have been targeted for arrest by the police. The claim that Bonono called an open meeting of residents to plan a murder is just bizarre. Even the izinkabi who have murdered us with impunity do not discuss their plans in well attended formal meetings open to all people interested in a particular matter. Everyone knows how the politic of blood works – murders are planned in dark corners.

We all know that for the ANC the self-organisation of the poor is always taken as a conspiracy. We have continually faced this paranoid and oppressive logic over more than fifteen years of struggle. While there is intense hostility to

autonomous organisation of any kind that hostility reaches fever pitch when it is able to start to meet people's needs outside of the state. When people occupy land, organise their own access to services, move towards using occupied land for production and build their own community infrastructure such as creches, community halls, communal kitchens and political schools, they became a direct threat to the way that the state sustains its power by simultaneously creating deprivation and dependency. When a movement builds its autonomous capacities that is also a threat to the authority of the ANC and the state. For instance, after the recent fire in Cato Manor it was Abahlali baseMjondolo – with support from our comrades in the street traders' organisation and elsewhere – and not the ANC or the state, that provided relief to the victims of the fire.

The ANC takes this as a direct threat. When our movement was attacked in Kennedy Road in 2009 the ANC said that "Zikode is running his own authority". Every step that you take towards reducing your dependency on the state increases the risk of repression. An occupation like eKhenana, that moved forward to begin to produce on occupied land and to become a commune, does not need the government because they are their own government. Bonono has been a key figure in the work of organising and supporting these forms of autonomy and self-management.

The recent award of the Per Anger Prize brought great and collective joy to our members. There were spontaneous celebrations of all kinds, and organised celebrations across three provinces. Bonono led the organisation of these celebrations. While congratulations came in from around the world the South African state was completely silence. These arrests have ended that joy and pushed us back into resistance against repression.

The arrest of Bonono and Miya was entirely preposterous and a grossly malicious misuse of the power of arrest granted to the police – a real murder was used to fabricate a false case. It is another crude frame-up, another political plot against the movement and one more incident in a long history of activists in our movement being arrested on entirely trumped up charges, a history that goes back over fifteen years.

These arrests do not result in convictions. Usually people are forced to return to court six or seven times and then the charges are dropped without the case ever going to trial. In the famous case of the Kennedy 12, who were arrested on trumped up charges of murder in 2009, the case did go to trial. However, in

2011 the magistrate threw the case out of court and described the witnesses for the prosecution as “belligerent”, “unreliable” and “dishonest”. Amnesty International noted that the court had found that “police had directed some witnesses to point out members of Abahlali-linked organizations at the identification parade”.

It is also important to note that since the beginning our movement has faced constant attempts at penetration by state intelligence, NGOs aiming to rule or ruin popular struggles and strategic offers of person enrichment to our members from the ANC. An early example of an effort to penetrate the movement was the failed attempt by state intelligence to recruit comrade Fazel Khan after he was forced out of his academic job at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2005 for his role in a strike. He was approached by intelligence who offered him a generous salary and a gun if he would inform on our movement. Khan is a highly principled person and of course he refused the offer even though he lost his whole career and paid a steep personal price for his political commitments.

We are currently facing a situation in which a person, previously unknown, arrived in the left spaces in Durban claiming to be on the run from political threats. No one has been able to confirm the veracity of these threats to us, or to explain what struggle he was in when these threats were supposed to have been made.

People in our movement and other left organisations have been asking questions about this person for some time now. After his sudden arrival in the left spaces in Durban he claimed to be representing a number of organisations (at least five) that he had no mandate to represent – including our movement. Sometimes he would claim to represent a different organisation each time he came to a meeting.

He has misrepresented himself to at least one NGO in Cape Town as someone that lives in the eKhenana Occupation and as a leader in the occupation. It is true that at one point he asked to be given a space to build in eKhenana but his request was denied because he was contemptuous of democratic processes and tried to make personal deals with NGOs without any sort of democratic participation, mandate or oversight.

We do not know if this person is working alone or with other forces but it is clear that he is at the centre of a set of recent events that are cause for serious concern. We are trying to find out as much as possible about his history, his

character and his role in left spaces. Our comrades in other left organisations are doing the same.

Bonono and Miya appeared in court today. The prosecutor said that at a meeting held at the Diakonia Council of Churches on 14 March Bonono and Miya had conspired to have a witness to the murder in Cato Manor killed. The meeting was in fact held on 21 March. The prosecutor also said that there could not be a discussion about bail because no evidence had been provided to support the charge. He asked for more time for the police to gather the evidence. Bonono and Miya were remanded in custody until a bail hearing set for 13 May. We know that our members are in serious danger in Westville Prison and Mr. Padayachee, the lawyer who was asked by the movement to represent Bonono and Miya, was able to secure an agreement that they would be detained in the Durban Central Police Station rather than Westville Prison until their next appearance in court on 13 May.

Mqapheli Bonono is one of the greatest organisers of his generation, a committed socialist, a courageous activist and an indefatigable comrade in the struggle for land and dignity. He is well respected in the left across South Africa, and from Brazil to Ghana. This arrest will be an international scandal and we are calling on our comrades around the country and across the world to stand in solidarity with Bonono and Miya.

Our movement has won many important victories in court, most of them defensive. But these arrests are an outrageous abuse of the justice system and the powers granted to the police by the state. The 'case' that Bonono and Miya are supposed to answer is a complete farce. Both comrades have our full support and solidarity. The fact that two grassroots activists remain in police custody on a joke of a charge is a disgrace to the criminal justice system and to democracy in South Africa.

If we have to walk through the fire of repression once again the ANC and the state must know that we will do so, and that we will come through that fire more determined than before. We have survived numerous periods of severe repression – including assault, organised slander, wrongful arrest, torture, the destruction of our homes by party mobs and the state, open death threats, and murder.

Each of those periods of repression was aimed at breaking us. But today we are stronger and more numerous than ever before, while the political credibility of the ANC is in tatters at home and around the world.

When Bonono and Miya climb the stairs from the holding cells to the dock on 13 May they will see a courtroom full of comrades in red. If, as we hope, the laughable charges are dropped, or they get bail, they will be escorted from the court with a red guard of honour. Bonono loves the Internationale, a song he first learned from the MST in Brazil. We will sing it for him when he returns to his family and comrades.

S'bu Zikode
Thapelo Mohapi

10 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eKhenana: A background provided in the context of the arrest of Mqapheli Bonono

The arrest of our Deputy President, Mqapheli (George) Bonono, on trumped up charges is related to the longstanding attempts by the ANC to crush the eKhenana Occupation in Cato Manor, an occupation that is now a working commune. These attempts have been formally organised through the armed force of the eThekweni Municipality, and informally organised through local political actors connected to the networks of patronage and accumulation around ANC politics at the ward level, some of them with criminal connections.

The achievements of the eKhenana Occupation have been extraordinary. There is a community hall, a farm with vegetables and poultry, a political school that is used by the movement as a whole, self-organised access to services such as water and electricity, a place specially built for young people to relax and socialise, a self-built road, and more. The next building project is a creche.

The occupation is run on a democratic basis with a co-operative managing the farming. The labour required to sustain the work of the commune is shared, as militant work, following the model of the MST in Brazil. All residents commit to share two meals together a week.

The commune has extensive political links outwards, including to other branches of our movement, other progressive organisations of the oppressed, and comrades and movements elsewhere in the world. As we have noted before the seeds that were used to start the vegetable farm were a gift from the MST in Brazil.

The community received a tractor in solidarity from church leaders who are friends of Abahlali. This is after they visited the community and saw the lovely work where the community lives. They were impressed that the residents have been building a life that does not only rely on state provisions. Many times when the City has failed to evict people despite repeated violence and unlawful attacks, they then refuse to provide basic services and infrastructure to these people as a

punishment to communities that have occupied land for living. This community has defied the City, created its own commune, provided its own services and infrastructure and used the land to produce food. This has angered many in the ANC, including in the Provincial Committee. It has clearly been decided that an effective way to attack the commune is to trump up carefully targeted criminal charges to undermine and delegitimize the occupation.

Bonono has played a very significant role in supporting the occupation to become such a remarkable space and for it to move towards democratic self-management, develop a capacity for production and resist constant attacks.

The ANC has seen eKhenana as a direct threat because it is a site of autonomy from their local authority and networks of patronage and accumulation, and because it has effectively resisted repeated violent and illegal attempts by the municipality to crush the occupation. The commitment to not allow land to be bought and sold, or shacks to be rented, is also a threat to other local actors that try to profit from impoverishment. Some of these people have a dangerous capacity for violence and direct criminal connections are not unusual. Land to build a shack is sold from between R15 000 to R17 000, and land with a completed shack can sell for up to R22 000. A lot of money can be made this way. This is a key reason why opposition to autonomy and decommodification comes on horizontal as well as vertical axes.

It is important to stress that the eKhenana Occupation has not been an easy occupation and that the road to its current achievements was very difficult. The land was initially occupied in August 2018 by people who were made homeless when a corrupt housing development happened nearby. Some were backyarders and there were also some young people who needed to have their own homes after years of living with their parents. The occupation was not organised by or in consultation with our movement. The people who occupied did so quickly, and in conditions of crisis, and had not worked out a clear system of self-management and a clear set of political commitments around which to organise the new occupation.

From the beginning the occupation faced regular state violence and repeated illegal evictions. The local ANC councillor Mzi Ngiba was usually present when the occupation was attacked, homes destroyed and burnt and the residents beaten, tear gassed and shot at with rubber bullets and, at times, with live ammunition. Many people were seriously injured in these attacks. For instance, on

8 November 2019 Lando Tshazi was hospitalised after being shot with live ammunition during an attack on the occupation by more than two hundred armed men from the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, private security and metro police. They arrived as if for a war. In eKhenana and elsewhere in Durban autonomous initiative by the oppressed has routinely been met with militarised force by the local state.

On 16 November, there was a brutal state attack on the nearby eNkanini land occupation. The attackers used a helicopter and brought police from as far away as Bloemfontein. As individual homes were raided numerous people were severely beaten by the police. Teargas was thrown into homes without regard for who was inside and many children were affected. Nonhlanhla Nzama, a resident in the occupation who was seven months pregnant, collapsed and was admitted to hospital for five days after inhaling the teargas. While she was in hospital her child was stillborn. The eNkanini occupation was targeted for this kind of militarised brutality because of its strong support for the eKhenana Occupation.

After the eKhenana occupiers approached the movement for support we worked with them to approach the court and on 13 February 2019 the Durban High Court granted us an interdict against the eThekweni Municipality's repeated violent and illegal attacks on the eKhenana Occupation. The local ANC, led by Ngiba, the ward councillor, responded to the interdict by organising their own occupation, carried out in ANC t-shirts, on 19 February. This has been a common tactic by local ANC structures in recent years. If an occupation cannot be destroyed through violent action by the various armed forces available to the municipality they try to take it over or undermine its political strength by either moving their own people into the space or supporting local thugs to invade the space with the aim of appropriating the space to sell or rent land and shacks.

The occupation organised by Ngiba caused a lot of anger from nearby middle-class residents. In response the municipality got a court order to evict Ngiba's people and then went ahead and evicted them. During this eviction they left the homes of the Abahlali members which were protected by the interdict. This is the first time in Durban that the municipality has evicted through the law. The eviction of Ngiba's people resulted in huge protests against him in Cato Manor, and more violent attacks on the eNkanini and eKhenana occupations from the state. It humiliated and deeply angered the local ANC structures

and was a direct threat to their monopoly over the distribution and commodification of land.

After this the municipality returned to ignoring the interdict that we had won – something that has been common for years now – and continued to regularly attack the occupation with armed force in an attempt to physically destroy it. On 24 April we returned to court and won an interdict against the Municipality preventing them from continuing to carry out illegal evictions in this community in violation of both the law and the interdict obtained on 13 February.

Immediately after we secured the interdict against the eThekweni Municipality on 24 April, Mr. Mkhize, the leader of the city's notorious Land Invasion Unit went to eKhenana to continue his attack on the community. Mkhize went wild in anger at Abahlali winning in court and fired live ammunition at the community seriously injuring one person. This is not the first time that we have been violently attacked after winning in court. Mkhize was never suspended or disciplined for firing live ammunition at unarmed people.

On 14 April the Abahlali baseMjondolo eKhenana branch was launched, and a cow was slaughtered in celebration. The night before the launch Siyabonga Mngadi, one of the residents, was shot dead by an unknown person who just arrived and started shooting wildly at our members while the tent that would be used for the launch was being erected. Another resident was murdered, also by unknown people, two weeks before the launch. We do not know who was responsible for this murder, and if it was political. It is certainly possible that it was political but we have no information on who was behind the murder, or what the motive was.

Division emerged in the branch. Any occupation that chooses to affiliate to our movement has to accept certain principles. Four of these principles became horizontal lines of conflict within the occupation.

As noted above one of these principles is that there can be no commodification of land – land and shacks cannot be sold and shacks cannot be rented. Another is that all positions must be determined via annual public election and that all people who are elected to office must be subject to the right of recall. Decision making must be organised via public meetings open to all at which all participants are encouraged to speak and the person chairing the meeting runs the process with a view towards achieving maximum inclusion in the discussions, ensuing that everyone is engaged respectfully, and the aim of slowly and

carefully moving towards achieving consensus. A third principle is that if there are incidents of violence against women, sexual harassment or rape they must be dealt with swiftly and effectively. A fourth is that everyone must contribute equally to militant work such as, in eKhenana, working in the gardens and the poultry project. The same principle is intended to apply with regard to childcare when the planned creche is built.

There was a small group, around five people, who did not want to accept that land would not be bought and sold, and that shacks would not be built to be sold or rented. They wanted to profit from the occupation of the land. These same people did not want to participate in the consensus-based meetings that were being used to organise the occupation as a democratic project – to turn an occupation into a working commune. They refused to share meals and to participate in militant work. It was said that there were links to criminal networks. Matters came to a head when around twenty women, who had been up all-night discussing the situation, came to the movement's office in central Durban the next morning to complain about repeated abuse and harassment from these five. There was an allegation that there had been rapes.

As a result of the failure of the branch to address these issues swiftly and effectively it was shut down and the membership of all the residents was terminated. The residents were advised to organise an assembly open to all to discuss the issues, to work to resolve the issues, and then work towards relaunching the branch. The assembly was held, the allegation of rape and other abuses was discussed. Following the assembly, the five were asked to leave the community. Women took the leading role in this process but were supported by male leaders.

When the national Covid-19 lockdown was imposed on 27 March 2020 there was a clear moratorium on evictions. However, during the initial hard lockdown eKhenana came under relentless violent attack from the local state in violation of that moratorium. The lockdown was cynically exploited by the municipality to try and crush the occupation. Under lockdown conditions it was difficult to gain legal support and for solidarity to be organised from other occupations. Large meetings and all protests were temporarily illegal. But, due to extraordinary collective courage and determination – *inkani* – the residents held the land and the occupation survived the regular attacks, attacks that were all violent and illegal.

On 5 October 2020 the branch was relaunched, and a new committee elected. There was now general commitment to all the principles that must adhered to

in Abahlali occupations. Since then the branch has made inspirational progress and, as noted above, developed an occupation into a commune, begun to use land for production as well as housing, and undertaken all kinds of other initiatives – such as building a political school that is used by the movement and other progressive organisations as a general resource. The branch has become a model for the political strategy of building a network of linked communes on occupied land, working from the communes to support and build solidarity with other progressive organisations of the oppressed, and developing relationships with the established formations of the working class in the form of trade unions.

The part of Cato Manor where the occupation holds decommodified land is not easy terrain on which to organise. There is regular violence perpetrated from within the communities in the area – including violence in homes and on the streets. It is rare for a weekend to pass without the sun rising over a body. Some of this violence is directly linked to contestation over opportunities to make money within Cato Manor via the commodification of land and housing, the taxi business and so on. Most of this violence is not political. This reality has been extensively covered in the isiZulu media.

In mid-March Vusi Shezi was murdered on a road at the edge of Cato Crest. He had been part of the group of five that had been expelled from the occupation following the women led process organised via the open assembly. He had many enemies. Because of this, because murders are so common in the area, and because he was not murdered in the occupation nobody saw any connection between eKhenana and the murder.

Two days later Lindokuhle Mnguni, an elected leader in the occupation, was arrested in connection with the murder. A second person, Lando Tshazi (the same person who was shot by the police in 2019), was also arrested. He suffered a broken leg during the arrest and was taken to hospital. Later on Ayanda Ngila was arrested when he attended Mnguni's appearance in court.

The three have been detained in the notorious Westville Prison for close to two months. They have faced such severe harassment, violence and threats from ANC thugs that the prison decided to place them in isolation.

These arrests were a complete shock to the residents and to movement. The residents supported the three who were arrested and have collected money for them to survive in the prison. The position of the movement on the arrests was as follows:

We condemned the killing of any person by any person. We made and continued to make strenuous arguments for building a culture of peace in the area. This is a matter of public record.

While we knew that the eKhenana occupation has been under attack from both the City and ANC since its formation we assumed that because the murder was committed outside the settlement and against a person with many enemies this was a criminal rather than a political matter – and that justice must be served. We took the view that because the murder was a purely criminal matter the police needed to be assisted with any relevant information that could be found in order apprehend those responsible. Our members were asked to bring any relevant information forward. Although we had no information on who was responsible for the murder we were clear that if it was true that our own members were involved then all the facts must be brought to light, a fair judicial process held and justice delivered. We were crystal clear that this was our position irrespective of whether or not the people involved in the murder were our members.

We do not just rush to defend people because they happen to be our members, or leaders. We always take time to carefully find the truth for ourselves before we take a stand and speak out. In such a serious matter it is imperative to be as slow, careful and inclusive as possible while ascertaining all the facts before taking any position.

As part of the work of trying to find out happened Bonono called an open meeting of residents on 21 March to try and establish the facts of the matter. We have still not been able to establish the facts of the matter. As of today, we have no credible information as to who committed the murder, or why.

The police claim that they have a witness or witnesses to the murder. If they do have a witness statement or statements we have no knowledge of the content of that statement, or statements, and cannot, therefore, assess the credibility of any evidence that the police may present to the prosecution.

However, we have been told that each time that the three have appeared in court for a bail application there has been a postponement because the prosecution say that they don't yet have any evidence from the police. If this is correct then it is not clear that there is credible evidence implicating the three.

There is, though, a person who is claiming to have witnessed the murder and has been trying to mobilise others to his side. He has been pointing out people that he says are suspects to the police. We do not know if he has made a

statement to the police. However, what we can say is that he is the same person that, as we noted in our previous statement, has been acting in a very strange way – in a way that many people have started to think is typical of an intelligence agent.

We must be clear that we cannot confirm that he is in fact an intelligence agent, but he has certainly behaved like one. We are exploring this matter carefully, as are all the other organisations on the left with which we work. We are rapidly receiving reports from other organisations and, so far, they have all reported strange behaviour on the part of this person, and a tendency to make false claims about belonging to and having a right to represent a long list of organisations.

Another point to note is that his girlfriend's brother is a notorious hitman for the taxi industry. The hitman appeared at our Unfreedom Day event.

But it is also important to keep in mind that a lot of money can be made when occupied land is bought and sold and that this can easily persuade people to oppose a decommodified and democratic occupation, especially if the local ANC offer to support a takeover. It may be that this person who has behaved so strangely is only motivated by the possibility of financial gain and is willing to work with the local ANC to achieve control of the occupation. At this point we cannot be certain.

However, if this person is a witness implicating our members then it seems that there is clearly a possibility that their arrest was in fact political, and part of the attack on the occupation.

The ANC have been very, very angered and humiliated by the eKhenana Occupation. They have tried to crush it with the armed force of the state, with a counter occupation and with informal forms of violence. But this small occupation has survived everything, and has done amazing things and won world-wide respect for the commune that it has developed. The ANC won't rest until they have dealt with eKhenana, and that means dealing with Bonono as well as the residents on the occupation because Bonono has done so much work to support this occupation.

When Bonono was arrested at our office on Tuesday the police arrived with Siniko Miya in their custody. Miya is a member of our movement. At the time we had no idea why they had arrested Miya. We were completely perplexed because he was not at the open meeting chaired by Bonono on 21 March with the aim of establishing the facts related to the murder and arrests. As noted the

police have made the ludicrous claim that a conspiracy to murder a witness to the murder of Shezi was planned at this meeting. The fact that they have the wrong date for this meeting shows that their grasp of the basic facts is very poor.

Conspiracy is defined as a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful. Now in the case of Bonono, though he chaired a meeting of eKhenana residents he is arrested alone and charged alone. In this case we have a list of state witnesses, received from the police. Bonono does not know these people. You cannot conspire with people that you do not know.

On Thursday night, 6 May, we were able to speak to Bonono in the Durban Central Police Station. He is detained in the same cell as Miya and he was able to explain to us that Miya had been arrested in court, where he was appearing for another very serious matter – a murder. There are no claims that the alleged murder has any political connections. Immediately after arresting Miya at court the police came with him to arrest Bonono at our offices. It now seems to us that Miya was brought into this solely because he has another case pending and that the police and whomever they are taking direction from thought that this could delegitimize Bonono, and our movement, by association.

Our position is that the original charge against Miya must be fairly and thoroughly investigated and that the law must then proceed according to the evidence. It is also our position, though, that the second charge brought against Miya, the same charge that has been brought against Bonono, is part of a political frame-up and must be withdrawn immediately.

We stand with Bonono, and we do so with great pride. We will offer him our full solidarity until this frame-up is thrown out of court and he can return to the care of his family, friends and comrades. He, his family and our movement and its supporters deeply appreciate the wonderful solidarity that has been expressed by people and organisations all over the world.

S'bu Zikode
Thapelo Mohapi

12 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Blood of the Palestinians is our Blood

Our struggle is rooted in the principle that the recognition of our full and equal humanity is non-negotiable. We also insist that this principle is applied to all people everywhere. There can be no group of people whose humanity is denied.

As everyone knows a shared experience of colonial dispossession and oppression – and of apartheid – means that most South Africans have a deep understanding and concern for the suffering and struggle of the Palestinian people.

As poor black people in South Africa today our homes continue to be violently destroyed, we continue to be governed with armed force, often militarised force, and we continue to be attacked with state violence, arrested on trumped up charges and assassinated. Our humanity is constantly denied and our dignity is constantly vandalised.

Because of our past and our present we have a deep sense of solidarity for the Palestinian people who continue to suffer under an extremely brutal colonial occupation. Their pain is our pain. We know what it means to live not knowing whether your home and that of your children will be destroyed. We know what it means to live without the protection of the law, and under a state that considers you outside of the law. We know what it means to have innocent people in jail, people whose only crime was to stand up for justice.

The Israeli state is a criminal state, guilty of a long crime against humanity. Its system of apartheid, and the everyday violence and brutality with which it is enforced, must be condemned by all in the world. It is racism that leads many of the powerful countries in the world to be quiet when Israel continues to oppress and murder the Palestinians. It is the same racism that leads some of the world's media to refuse to accept that what is happening in Palestine is a matter of brutal colonial oppression and not 'clashes' or an issue of 'disputed' neighbourhoods and land.

Many people have lost their lives in the current attacks. These attacks are motivated by hatred and a deliberate attempt to undermine the dignity of people.

Those who support the attacks on the Palestinian people, or who remain are silent as they witness repression, are as guilty of the atrocities as the government of Israel. Zionism became political dominant through war and remains dominant because of the global system of imperialism. In 2019 the government of the United States US provided \$3.8 billion to the Israeli military. One settler colonial state supports another. African-Americans are shot on the streets by the police and migrants are treated like criminals in the United States while in Palestine people suffer extreme day to day oppression and have their homes stolen and destroyed, their sacred places vandalised and their people murdered.

The world must be humanised.

We stand with the people of Palestine. We will work with all other progressive organisations to support the work to build solidarity with Palestine in South Africa and elsewhere. Any Palestinian activist who is in South Africa and wishes to meet with us will be treated as an honoured guest in our occupations.

Nomusa Sizani
Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

12 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Attack on our Movement Continues – More charges, Bonono & others in court tomorrow

Another comrade appeared in court today on trumped up charges of conspiracy to murder, another comrade has been charged with the same offence and there has been more violence and armed intimidation at the eKhenana Occupation.

In the early years of our movement Shamitha Naidoo and Louisa Motha led a brave struggle against the notorious thug Ricky Govender in Motala Heights in Pinetown. Govender, who was widely referred to as a gangster and claimed to have a personal connection to Jacob Zuma, was illegally and violently evicting poor people from their homes to build houses for middle class people. He was commodifying land for private profit. He repeatedly acted in a wide variety of illegal ways with complete impunity. The police answered to him, and not to the law.

Govender was in business with a senior police officer and the Pinetown police openly acted on his instructions. He made death threats against Shamitha and various other people. On one occasion his sons made a death threat against a journalist. This struggle went on for years and the whole history is well documented on our website. Through this struggle Shamitha and Louisa emerged as powerful women leaders in our movement.

In recent months Shamitha, who has been working in trade union education, has returned to her organising and community work in Motala Heights. Shamitha led a defeat of Govender before and her return is a threat to his control over the area.

In 2009 a young man in Motala Heights was tragically killed as a result of a fight between a group of young men. The police made no accusations against Shamitha as a result of this tragic murder. However now, all these years later, she has been charged with ‘conspiracy to murder’ – the same charge brought against Mqapheli Bonono and Siniko Miya. It is clear that the state is using real

murders to bring fake charges against our leaders. This is outrageous and we will fight this every step of the way in and out of the courts.

Today another resident of the eKhenana Occupation, Maphiwe Gasa, was charged with conspiracy to murder. The police informed her that they wanted to arrest and so she handed herself over at the police station. S'bu Zikode accompanied her. She has a 16-month-old baby, who is ill. The police intimidated her and threatened to detain her with the baby. After a long argument they eventually agreed not to detain her today. She will join Bonono and Miya in the dock tomorrow.

It is not just our leaders that are under attack. Our occupations are also under attack.

As we explained in our last statement the eKhenana Occupation is under sustained vertical and horizontal attack with formal and informal forms of repression. This is not a new strategy – the same tactic was used during the attack on our movement in Kennedy Road in 2009. That attack came from both the police and ANC aligned thugs acting with impunity.

Along with attacks from the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, Calvin & Family Security and the police – including the recent arrests – the occupation continues to face attacks from people who want to see the commune destroyed and the land to be used to extract private profit. In our view the local ANC is the pivot connecting these two lines of attack.

On Monday evening one of the members of Abahlali in the occupation, Musawenkosi, was attacked by the brother of the notorious hitman for the taxi industry who we mentioned in our last statement. As we noted this hitman appeared at our Unfreedom Day event at the occupation on 25 March this year, and is also brother to the girlfriend of the man who has, as we noted in our last two press statements, been behaving very strangely in a very long list of organisations of the left – to the point where many people are assuming that he is an intelligence agent. We also made it clear that although these suspicions are widely held we cannot confirm that he is in fact an agent.

This man, his girlfriend and her two brothers – one of whom is the notorious hitman – are organising the local forces against the occupation. Our understanding is that this man is a central player in producing the witness statements against our members.

When Musawenkosi was able to defend himself, his attacker took out a gun and started firing it in the air. This was clearly an act designed to frighten and intimidate our members. Our members face a situation in eKhenana in which there has been sustained state violence against them, their leaders have been arrested and continue to be arrested and people linked to a notorious hitman are now acting with impunity because they feel that they have the force of the state, the ruling party and a very dangerous local criminal on their side. Already these people are moving to build on the occupation with the clear aim of trying to take it over.

When Musawenkosi was attacked his attacker kept asking him why he was on the side of Abahlali while they come from the same rural area. He was implying that as a Zulu person he should not support a movement that is multi-ethnic. This is exactly what happened in the attack on Kennedy Road in 2009, and this kind of division is often encouraged by politicians, including senior politicians. Politicians have said that Abahlali are “bringing people from the Eastern Cape to build shacks in Kwazulu-Natal.” They speak as if the Bantustan system is still in place and that Xhosa speaking people do not belong in KwaZulu-Natal. Our principle has always been that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. The fact that our movement has members and leaders of various ethnicities, and born in various countries, is one of the reasons why the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal hate us.

Many of our members grew up in the '80s when there was a civil in KwaZulu and Natal between Inkatha and the UDF. This has left deep scars and trauma for many of our members. They do not want their children to be brought up in the same way. Nobody wants to bring their children up in a situation in which gunshots are a normal part of life.

This is why we are committed to building a politic of peace, a point that our President made very strongly at the recent Unfreedom Day event in eKhenana, a point made while a notorious hitman stood staring at him from the back of the crowd. We will continue to work for a politic of peace, but we cannot do this on our own. Other social forces in society need to work with us to build a consensus that it is unacceptable for impoverished black people to be ruled by the gun, whether in the hands of the police, private security, local structures of the ruling party or local thugs. We are calling for solidarity in this work.

When our members are ruled by violence and criminality, whether from the state or other forces, liberals always tell us that we must report the matter to the police. The police and the politicians always speak as if the fact that we don't have an open case means that we are not telling the truth about our lives. The reality is that, over fifteen years, many of our members have been arrested on fake charges and assaulted or tortured in police stations. Again, and again, when people have tried to open cases in periods of intense repression they have been insulted, threatened with arrest, thrown out of the police stations or even assaulted. If people are able to open a case it will never be taken seriously. Anyone who wishes to be in solidarity with us in this time, or even to really understand what is going on, needs to understand this reality.

We are calling on the police to stop being an armed force for the politicians and to stop working with local thugs. We are calling on the police to speedily and fairly investigate real instances of crime – including people who carry guns and use them to terrorise communities – and to arrest the real criminals. How can it be that these marauders are free to do whatever they want while the police are arresting and jailing the people who are peacefully advancing the rights of the community?

Everyone who takes democracy seriously must ask themselves what kind of country we are living in when a notorious hit man walks freely, and a deeply and internationally respected leader of the oppressed sits in the cells in a police station?

We deeply appreciate the outpouring of solidarity that we have received, and continue to receive, from comrades around the world – from Brazil, Ghana, Benin, Mali, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, Tunisia, the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. It shows how widely respected Mqapheli is on the international left. It has humbled and deeply moved us, and we have been able to share some of the statements with Mqapheli in the cells.

Our membership recently passed 100 000 people. We now have 86 branches in good standing across five provinces. Our movement has much more power than it did during the 2009 wave of repression. But when it comes to holding land, and defending the non-commodified democratic self-management of land, we are still very vulnerable to the combination of violent vertical and horizontal repression, a form of repression involving the police and local thugs and criminals working in a pincer movement.

Solidarity helps to keep us safe, and to keep the space open for us to organise, mobilise and build.

To all the comrades and organisations around the world who have sent statements of solidarity we thank you, we thank you, we thank you. We will always answer the call when our comrades are under attack anywhere in the world. An injury to one must be an injury to all.

The many statements of solidarity that we have received can be seen by scrolling through our Facebook page. Please be aware that there is a fake page set up by someone who we do not know that regularly advertises financial scams. The real page is at <https://web.facebook.com/Abahlali baseMjondolo/>

Bonono, Miya and Gasa are scheduled to appear in the Durban Magistrate' Court tomorrow – Thursday 13 May – at 9:00 in court 10. Abahlali members and other comrades will be in attendance.

In Gauteng comrades will gather at the Constitutional Court in Braamfontein at 9:00am.

In Cape Town comrades will gather at the magistrates court.

In London comrades will gather at the South African embassy.

In Durban contact

Nomsa Sizani

Thapelo Mohapi

S'bu Zikode

In Gauteng contact

Melita Ngcobo

In Cape Town contact

Sibusiso Xabangela

In London contact

SJ Cooper-Knock

13 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Repression Machine Continues to Grind

Today our movement was at the Magistrates Court in Durban to demand the immediate release of Mqapheli Bonono and Siniko Miya, the dropping of all charges against Bonono, Miya and Maphiwe Gasa and an end to political repression. There were solidarity protests at the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, the Magistrates Court in Tembisa, the Magistrates Court in Cape Town and the South African Embassy in London.

There were six hundred comrades outside the court in Durban. Abahlali members, many taking a day off work, came from as far away as Mpumalanga province. We saw old comrades that we hadn't seen in years. We were joined by people from The Coalition of the Poor – including organised street traders, flat dwellers, hostel dwellers, residents of south Durban, etc – as well as a sex workers' organisation, representatives from feminist and environmental organisations, Numsa, Saftu, the Amadiba Crisis Committee and more.

Our comrades had to protest on the grass alongside the road outside the court and were not allowed into the grounds of the court complex. No one wearing a red shirt was allowed into the court room.

Our lawyer had advised us that the appearance today would be a simple technicality in terms of bail as all the requirements had been met and that Bonono and Miya would be able to return to their families and Gasa would be able to remain with her child.

However, there was a sudden change of prosecutor and things did not go as we had expected. It is with great disappointment that we report that the Durban Magistrates Court has yet again refused comrade Bonono and Miya bail. Gasa, who had not previously been in custody, was also denied bail. After the magistrate's ruling she was separated from her unwell 16-month-old baby and taken into custody.

There are no clear grounds for the refusal of bail other than to say that the matter will be moved to another court – that is court “D” – for bail application on Monday, 17 May.

Despite the fact that police did not oppose bail the prosecutor refused to grant it.

There seems to have been an instruction from above that said that she should keep Bonono, Miya and Gasa in custody for as long as it is possible to do so.

These kinds of delaying tactics keep people in prison for no reason, consume our resources, time and energy and force us to redirect the focus of our organising to solidarity work. The personal cost for the people in detention and their families is very high. The forces of repression know very well that the costs of transport to and from court, days away from work or jobs lost, lawyers and support for incarcerated people place huge stress on poor people, their families and organisations. People who cannot afford these things are quickly ground into destruction by the system.

Bonono, Miya and Gasa were all taken to the notoriously violent and corrupt Westville Prison. Our lawyer was, though, able to secure an agreement that all three would be held in isolation cells due to the severe risk that our members face in the prison.

We wish to extend our sincere and heart-felt gratitude for all the warmth, love, solidarity and support that so many people have shown at this time.

Together, we stand for dignity, respect and democracy. We are all people that count.

We will return to court on Monday.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

17 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

‘This stinks to high heaven’.

It is with great disappointment that we report that state was successful in its application to postpone the hearing of the bail application for Mqapheli Bonono, Siniko Miya and Maphiwe Gasela that was set down for today. The state’s request was based and granted on the prosecutor’s statements that (1) the Investigating Officer was not available as he was testifying in another matter in High Court and that (2) the affidavit that she has from the investigating officer was, in her words, ‘not to my liking’. The bail hearing was adjourned to 9:30 on Thursday, 20 May 2021.

Our lawyer, Jimmy Howse, is a highly respected advocate known to be a measured man who carefully follows the evidence. He said, in open court, that the case ‘stinks to high heaven’, that it was ‘a travesty’ and that there were ‘serious anomalies’ in the argument made by the prosecution.

We now have a clear idea of the ‘evidence’ against Bonono, Miya and Gasela. The state claims that at an open meeting held at the Diakonia Council of Churches the three conspired to have a witness in another case murdered. The state has two witness statements to this effect.

The date of the meeting was given as 14 March. In fact, it was held on 21 March. Miya was not at the meeting. Bonono and Gasela were present. As we have stated before this was an open meeting that all residents of the eKhenana Occupation were invited to attend. As Advocate Howse noted in court the fact that two people have made affidavits hardly constitutes serious evidence when the rest of the people in the meeting can all testify that their claims are, in Howse’s words, ‘a pack of lies’. When seen in the light of the long, ongoing and repeatedly unlawful and violent attack on the eKhenana Occupation by the state, as well as the long history of repression of our movement by the state and the ruling party, the purpose of these lies is very clear. This is not the first time that false witness has been borne against us.

These arrests are a politically motivated farce, nothing more or less than a brazen, crude and cynical misuse of the criminal justice system to repress

activists. If anyone can make an evidently dishonest and malicious allegation against activists that results in arrest and imprisonment it will be open season on our movement, and other organisations and struggles. This needs to stop, and it needs to stop now.

In Durban around 500 people, many of them taking a second day off work and some travelling between provinces, gathered at the gates of the court complex today to demonstrate solidarity with the three political prisoners and opposition to repression. In Johannesburg comrades, many also taking a second day off work, gathered at the head office of the National Prosecuting Authority to demonstrate their anger at the capture and misuse of the criminal justice system to repress popular democratic organisation and mobilisation.

Our movement fully supports the attempts to reform the NPA, and restore its professionalism and integrity after its political capture during the Zuma period. However, that reform needs to be extended to the systematic use of the criminal justice system to harass activists. Over the last 15 years hundreds of our members have been arrested on ridiculous criminal charges and then often forced to come to court 6 or 7 times before the charges are dropped. As we noted in a previous statement when the high-profile Kennedy 12 trial did go to court the judges threw the case out and made extremely damning statements about the state's case. It was crystal clear that the state's case in that matter was a crude frame-up.

At the same time our members are systematically denied the right to open cases with the police when they are confronted with criminal acts by the state, local ANC structures or local thugs linked to ANC structures.

The justice system is failing the poor in this country, and it ruthlessly represses the organised poor.

In Cato Manor, where the eKhenana Occupation is, the station commander has said that he is tired of our movement and that he will not open cases for our members because we block the streets. On Friday, a group of young women in eKhenana, all members of our movement, were harassed and attacked in broad daylight while going to fetch water at the communal tap. The attackers have direct links to the notorious hitman that we have previously mentioned.

When they went to the police, they were told to first go to a hospital to prove that they were assaulted. When they returned from hospital they were told they would be arrested if they continued to try to open the case. This is not

the first time that our members in this occupation have tried to open cases with the police without any success. Numerous attempts to open cases against the Anti Land Invasion Unit were never taken seriously even though people were shot with live ammunition. There were many attempts to open cases against the notorious Mkhize from the Anti-Land Invasion Unit – who has used live ammunition against unarmed people – but these attempts were all refused by the Cato Manor police.

The situation regarding the police in eKhenana is not anomalous. In fact, the situation is systemic.

We remember that in 2006 when S'bu Zikode and Philani Zungu (then the Deputy President of our movement) were held in custody on trumped-up charges they were attacked by the notorious station commander of the Sydenham Police Station Glen Nayager, who was also known as 'Rambo'. S'bu Zikode was severely beaten by the station commander who banged him against the wall many times. Philani was attacked by more than 7 police officers and beaten unconscious. When Nayager was banging Zikode against the wall, he kept saying 'You think you are Jesus Christ, you think you are the saviour of all these jondolo people'. Nayager then took an Abahlali shirt and said that the police would use it as a cloth to wash the floor in the station. When residents of the nearby Kennedy Road community protested that night they were shot at with live ammunition. A peaceful protest against wrongful arrest by the police was met with police violence. A middle-aged woman was shot in the knee.

In 2009 when our movement was attacked in the Kennedy Road settlement by an armed mob affiliated to the ANC the police stood by and allowed the attack to happen and then, when it was over, arrested innocent members of a dance group known to be linked to our movement.

After the attack then MEC Safety and Community Liaison Willies Mchunu came to the settlement and announced that our movement had 'been disbanded'. The link between the armed mob, the police and the high-level politicians was clear, as was the aim was to destroy our movement.

Many homes were destroyed in the attack, and for months ANC members would gather on a Sunday and openly destroy the homes of our members. Throughout this time the police refused to intervene, or to allow people to open cases after their homes were destroyed and looted.

In Briardene in Durban North, Bheki Ngcobo, a notoriously violent police officer, used live ammunition on a protest and wounded one person. The attempt to open a case was refused by the Green wood Park Police station. This is just one of a very long list of cases where Abahlali were attacked by the police and then the police refused to open cases and never arrested anyone.

A number of our members have been tortured in police stations.

In most cases when our leaders have been assassinated their cases were never investigated, even when we appeared at the Moerane Commission.

In 2021, after more than fifteen years of struggle, our movement continues to face repression and attack from the police. We have explained the reasons why the eKhenana Occupation is being so brutally and ruthlessly targeted. But we are also aware that we are being targeted because of the award of the Per Anger Prize. The recognition that we have received internationally has created more enemies from the state.

This is why we are calling for serious and effective reform of the criminal justice system – which routinely functions as a mechanism to repress activists.

The function of this kind of repression is to delegitimize activists and organisations, to place huge stress on individuals and their families, to place people at risk from employers, to exhaust individual and movement energies and resources, and to redirect movements away from their usual political work.

Oppression is meant to destroy us and make us give up in the struggle for land, housing and our dignity. However, despite the huge costs of repression, and the very high personal price that many people have paid over the years, our movement has always emerged stronger than before. We have grown over the years even though we are killed for the work to defend our occupations. We continue to fight and expose the failures of the ANC led government as well as the bigger structural forces of neocolonialism and capitalism.

The support coming in for Bonono, Miya and Gasela from around the world, from organisations in South Africa and individual figures of the highest integrity, like Bishop Rubin Phillip, is just incredible. We are not alone nor are we suffering any delegitimation. And we are not stopping our political work. We continue to launch branches, run induction workshops for newly elected leaders and do our day to day organising work on the ground. However, this repression is placing a very high cost on the individuals in prison and their families. As we

noted in our previous statement Gasela has a seriously unwell 16-month baby, recently discharged from hospital.

We will hold a third protest at the Magistrates Court in Durban on Thursday. Our comrades in Ghana, where Bonono is a respected comrade and teacher, will hold a protest at the South African embassy. Other actions are currently being planned.

We thank everyone for their support. Please keep the fire burning.

Nomusa Sizani
Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

20 MAY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Bonono and Gasela out of Prison, Living Solidarity with Palestine on the Docks

There was much to celebrate in Durban today. At the Magistrates Court our Deputy President Mqapheli Bonono and Maphiwe Gasela, the secretary of the eKhenana branch, were given bail and, amid scenes of great collective jubilation, returned to freedom, their families and comrades.

Bonono, Gasela, and Miya, who remains in prison, received incredible solidarity from around the world following their arrest.

Internationalism was also on display on the docks where workers organised via the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) refused to offload the Zim Shanghai, a ship owned by the Israeli state-owned company Zim Lines. This action follows a call by the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) for workers and trade unions to refuse to unload Israel ships and goods from sea and airports. Dock workers in Durban have a long history of radicalism and we salute their principled action today. Tomorrow morning we will be joining the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) who will be picketing with the dock workers.

Every step towards building living forms of solidarity between the organisations and struggles of the oppressed, in our country and across the world, must be celebrated.

Today more than 500 members of our movement took time off from work, braved the sun and sacrificed time with their families to spend eight hours outside the court to show support for our comrades who had been imprisoned on false charges. Many of the people who spent the day outside of the court were there for the third time, and some had travelled long distances to be at the court.

Bonono had been held for 16 days before finally being released on bail. Comrade Gasela was separated from her seriously unwell baby while she was in prison. Siniko Miya was denied bail and remains in prison because he has an outstanding case that he is attending in court. This case dates back to before he

joined the eKhenana Occupation and our movement. As we have noted Miya was not at the open meeting where the state, farcically, claims that Bonono, Gasela and Miya publicly conspired to have a person murdered. We assume that the only reason why he was arrested in this crackdown on our movement is because he has a prior case open and it was thought that this would delegitimize the other accused in the eyes of the public.

Addressing the Abahlali members outside court, Mqapheli was very emotional and thanked Abahlali and comrades around the world for the support received during this difficult time. He said that he has learnt during his time in prison how the system of oppression works, and that seeing another side of the cruelty of the system has encouraged him even more to fight for justice and dignity for all.

Mqapheli, Gasela and Miya will be back in court on 16 July 2021. The red river will be with them at the court, of course.

We would like to thank all our comrades across South Africa, across Africa and around the world who have shown such powerful solidarity with our movement during this time. We will be honoured to be in solidarity with the Palestinian people on the docks tomorrow.

The struggle goes on.

Nomusa Sizani
Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

7 JUNE 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The country goes deeper into crisis as the unemployment rate increases

Abahlali baseMjondolo has always understood and taught that the poor were made poor and are kept poor by oppression. Our ancestors were made poor by the loss of their land and cattle and the destruction of their autonomy by colonialism. They were kept poor by the system of racial capitalism that developed out of colonialism. We have been kept poor by the ANC which has fought for themselves and their families to become part of that system rather than to build a new society in which the human dignity of all is recognised.

The reality is that the poor are getting poorer and that the inequality between the rich and the poor is getting worse.

There are no jobs for most of us and when we establish our own communities, build our own homes and grow our own food we are violently attacked by the state. Autonomy is taken as a crime. They want to keep us poor, dependent on welfare for survival, under the political control of gangster councillors, and existing only to be a vote bank for the ANC.

We want a safe, full and dignified life. We want to know that there is a future for us, and especially for our children. We want a world in which every person counts as a person.

During the pandemic starvation and hunger became the order of the day for many families in shack settlements and in the rural areas. Today children continue to go to sleep without food. Those who have food for the whole month are surviving by God's grace.

Our country is in turmoil. Hope is what we have been living for and it seems like hope has been lost. This is the hope we as the shack dwellers carried with us in 1994 when almost all of who were eighteen or older at the time voted for the ANC and the so called 'freedom' was attained. We waited for freedom to reach the shacks. We were patient. But that freedom never reached the shacks.

Day after day and year after year we lived with rats, uncollected rubbish, fires and without toilets, electricity, enough water, or safe and dignified housing. When the state started to come to the shacks they came with guns to evict us, to destroy our homes and force us off the land. When we organised to resist they said that we were criminals or the 'third force' and brutally repressed us.

Today we continue to live in this indignity. We continue to be treated as if we are not part of this democracy, as if we are outside of it and under the law. Our lives continue to be terrorised by the state, by the police, the army and the Anti-land Invasion Unit. From the beginning the ANC has used the police to arrest us on trumped up charges. Since 2013 the local structures of the ANC have used the izinkabi to assassinate us.

Today our country is in a deep crisis of unemployment. It is the worst unemployment rate since 2008. Unemployment is at 42.3%. The unemployment rate for young people is at 74.7%. This is the worst recorded youth unemployment rate in the world. Around 27% of children have stunted growth due to a lack of food. We are in this crisis because of the mixture of capitalism and corruption for which the ANC is notorious. The ANC will not bring us freedom. In fact, the ANC does not even have any sense of the national interest in a time of crisis. They have been stealing from the funds allocated for the poor for years.

In Jacob Zuma's second term of office around R1.5 trillion was stolen from public funds. During the lockdown more than a third of people went hungry. Yet in that national crisis R14 billion was stolen from funds allocated to the Covid-19 emergency. At the same time the poor and the working class were severely abused by the police and the army, and sometimes killed. Our movement suffered relentless violent and illegal attacks state attacks. We got plenty of rubber bullets and some live ammunition fired at us by the state but, like freedom, the tiny R350 Covid grant didn't reach the shacks.

We were told that education would take us out of poverty. Yet even young people who have graduated with distinctions are sitting at home with their qualifications. In this month of June the hypocrites in the ANC will be reminding us of what the youth of '76 have done. The question is what is the ANC doing for the youth today? The question is why are they repressing young people trying to organise for justice?

The dream of freedom was shattered by the opportunists, thieves and mafias who have rendered our country into a state of hopelessness. The ANC broke all

its promises to the people but succeeded to make themselves rich. The reality is that freedom will not be brought to us by this counter-revolutionary government, this government of looters, this government that has murdered so many poor people for the crime of standing up for their human dignity.

In response to this betrayal we have been building our power, our democratic power from below, for 15 years. We have been democratising settlements and occupations and turning them into communes. We are working to make the communes sites of production as well as occupation. We face severe challenges including violence from the state and the ANC, and local ANC structures linking with people, sometimes criminals, who want to sell land and rent shacks.

We now have more than 100 000 members in 86 branches across five provinces and strong links with numerous progress organisations in South Africa, in other African countries and elsewhere in the world.

We are working to build socialism from below. We are working to establish, develop and defend and link communes on occupied land. It is only when the communes are strong enough to build socialism from below that the people will be able to take power from the thugs and real freedom will be realised.

In this crisis we are working to produce our own food, build our own infrastructure – from roads, to halls, classrooms, access to water, electricity and sanitation – and eventually our own permanent houses. But to be fully free we need to ensure that there is genuine and radical democracy, that the people as a whole take control of all the means of production, that everyone has a decent income and that poverty is abolished, never to return.

This is the future that Abahlali envisages.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
OJ Majola

8 JUNE 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The dignity of the poor is not recognised by the ANC

The ANC led municipality in Durban continues to undermine people who live in shack settlements. In a normal society government would engage people around questions of development in their communities. Democracy should not just be about elections, it should be a living day to day practice. Development should be participatory.

This is not the case in the eThekweni Municipality where the ANC thinks and makes decisions in the name of the people without consulting the people. We as the people who live in shacks are taken as people who cannot think for ourselves. It is assumed that someone who lives in the suburbs, someone who does not know and understand the situation of the people who live in shacks, must think for us.

It is not just the government that treats us people who cannot think. Many NGOs do the same. And when the ANC comes with development projects that they say are for us, the real aim is usually to make the politicians and their families rich. The Community Liaison Officers appointed to the projects are always local ANC people. Communities are divided so that the projects can be forced through by giving some people small bits of work on the project. In a country with a crisis of mass unemployment even work for a few days is very important for people. There have been many cases where local party structures and the people that they are paying to do some work on the project violently intimidate people who are critical of the project. This is a national problem. We have recently seen it in Vusumuzi in Tembisa, Gauteng.

The community in Briardene in Durban North is currently facing a top down development project, a project that further undermines the dignity of the residents. The city is imposing Ventilated Pit Latrine Toilets.

Toilets are an important political issue. They are a matter of dignity, health and safety. When our movement was formed in 2005 the issues of toilets was

a key issue in the Kennedy Road settlement. Children were dying of diarrhoea due to unhealthy conditions. Toilets were also an urgent women's issue because it was very dangerous for women to find a private place to relieve themselves, especially at night.

Everyone should have a right to safe, hygienic and dignified sanitation. Pit Latrines are not the answer. It is well known that children have drowned in these toilets after falling into them. They are dangerous and highly undignified. Despite promises to eradicate them they are being used more and more, including in schools.

Briardene is a settlement in the suburb of Durban North. The ANC chairperson in the ward is carrying out this project without the councillor's approval. Although the ward councillor has rejected the project the ANC is imposing it anyway. No one is surprised that the local ANC chairperson, who has been the chairperson of the ANC in the ward since 2004, has been appointed as the Community Liaison Officer.

Of course, the residents have not been consulted and the project is being imposed on the community anyway. We continue to be undermined by those who expect us to vote for them and put them in power to continue enriching themselves and their families at our expense.

It is said that the ANC chairperson was heard saying that he will 'deal with' those who call a meeting that will be questioning the project. In Durban these are dangerous words. We as a movement understand that when an ANC councillor or chairperson says that they will 'deal with' people who are convening a meeting that means assassination. We have lost many of our leaders and members who have questioned projects that were meant to enrich people in ANC Branch Executive Committees.

Don Shange, a member of our movement in Briardene, who has been vocal against the building of these dangerous and undignified toilets has been receiving threats. It has become clear that those who are responsible for this project will do anything to deal with those who dare question the project.

Every time when the elections are coming the ANC comes up with ridiculous projects that undermine the poor. The point of these projects is not to provide development in the interests of the poor, it is to motivate the local ANC structures before the election by giving them control over projects through which they can make money. And when they divide the poor by convincing

those who are temporarily employed in the project that those who question the project are taking away their jobs they are undermining the prospects for building or sustaining effective community organisations.

We want to make it very clear that those who are questioning this project are continuously under threat from the local Branch Executive Committee of the ANC led by the chairperson, who is also the Community Liaison Officer for the project.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Thabile Makhoba
Nomsa Sizani

15 JUNE 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Youth League to Hold a Political Education Discussion Tomorrow

The Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League will hold a Political Education and Discussion at the Surat Hindoo and Association Hall in Prince Edward Street on June 16th, youth day.

June 16th is known as the day where young people in this country laid down their lives in the struggle for this country to be free. However, the freedom that they fought for is not realised by most young people.

Our country's unemployment rate continues to increase, and a large percentage comes from the youth of this country. The unemployment rate for young people is 74.7%.

Many of those who live in shack settlements have no hope and have given up seeking work. Some have turned to alcohol abuse or heroin (known as whoonga or nyaope) as a way to comfort themselves. When you walk in a shack settlement you will see that there is a large number of unemployed youth walking around aimlessly. This is not because our young people are lazy, it is because their government has failed them.

We are in a state of hopelessness. It is only when we as young people in this country stand up and do things ourselves that we will see change. The ANC led government has not only failed young people today, it has failed those who took to the streets in 1976 to ensure that the country is free. The ANC promised freedom but today youth unemployment is at the worst level in history, and many people say that is the worst in the world.

Our country is in turmoil because it is led by directionless leaders who are not even able to put their own house in order. Today the ruling party is bankrupt and is unable to pay its own workers. How do we expect as young people that such leaders can lead us out of the doldrums of the economy? It is clear that leaders who steal from the poor during a pandemic cannot be trusted and are a serious threat to society.

The discussions tomorrow will include how we as the poor young people from shack settlements can organise to build the democratic power of the impoverished from below. This is the most urgent task that confronts our generation.

It is important that everyone understands that we are not poor because of personal failure. We were impoverished by the system of racial capitalism, a system that continues to enrich elites, now black and white, at the expense of the poor and the working class.

We can no longer celebrate the fake freedom that the ANC makes us believe it has brought to us. We honour those who fought against the evils of apartheid. However, we note that it was the ordinary people of this country that defeated apartheid in the streets and communities, in the mines and on the factory floors. We continue to say that their blood which is supposed to nourish freedom today, has been scorned by those who claim that they represent their legacy. Tomorrow these hypocrites will be reminding us of the youth of June 16th as if they are carrying forward their struggles. In fact, these hypocrites cynically misuse the struggles of the past to justify their thieving from the people, their repression and their selling out to capitalism.

The ANC are destroying this country. Grassroot organizing is the only way we can revive this country. We believe that we are the solution to the economic and political trouble that this country is facing.

As the great revolutionary philosopher Frantz Fanon said: "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it."

Mfanfikile Sindane
Tercia Majola

30 JUNE 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo in Solidarity with the people of Swaziland

The people of Swaziland have been living under a brutal dictatorship for many years. The monarchy has ruled the country with iron fists. Journalists, trade unionists, students and other kinds of activists have been subject to severe repression including imprisonment, torture and murder. Many have had to flee the country.

Since he came into power in 1986, Mswati has been living a luxurious life with his 15 wives in a country where more than 70% people are living under the poverty line. The Mswati dictatorship has made the elites very, very rich while forcing the majority into deep poverty.

The country is going through serious difficulties as a direct result of the monarch who serves the interest of those who are connected politically and impoverishes and represses the people.

The absolute monarch has banned political parties since 1973. Many pro-democracy activists and organisations have also been silenced with repression. This has led to the monarchy being the only family that chooses the ministers and judges, and controls the parliament. This abuse of power by the monarchy has led to the king enriching himself and his family while making and keeping the people poor.

The youth and other pro-democracy formations and activists have taken to the streets in numbers and are calling for a democratic government to be elected by the people for the people of Swaziland. If they are successful this will not be the first time that an absolute monarchy will be destroyed and replaced by a democratic government. In France the Bastille, a political prison, was stormed on 14 July 1789 and by November the next year the long era of rule by monarchy was over.

As a mass democratic movement of the poor Abahlali baseMjondolo has always called for democracy in all African countries. We have been working with

progressive organisations and activists in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Zambia, Tunisia, Senegal, Niger, Kenya etc. We believe that it is only when the entire African continent is liberated from all kinds of tyranny and power is placed in the hands of the people that we are all going to be liberated.

Today we say that the pain of the people of Swaziland is our pain. For more than 15 years we have faced brutal attacks from the ANC and the state in so called democratic South Africa. We know what it is to experience repression. We affirm our undying solidarity with the people of Swaziland who are currently facing the repression of the absolute monarchy head on.

We are very concerned that the government in our country has not yet condemned the use of force against the protestors. It is outrageous that the army has been deployed against unarmed protesters to protect the power and business interests of the king, his family and their associates. It is outrageous that a country that calls itself a constitutional democracy has had diplomatic ties with a country that is ruled by a corrupt and repressive absolute monarch whose main interests are to enrich himself, his family and his close associates. It is outrageous that a country that does not elect its leaders and represses pro-democracy activists is supported by the hypocrites in the ANC led government.

We will continue to support all progressive forces that are calling for a democratically elected government in Swaziland. We are clear that the people of Swaziland deserve the right to live in freedom and to find their own way into the future. The comrades on the streets in Swaziland have our full solidarity and we are ready to support them in whatever way is deemed necessary.

It is time to end the dictatorship of Mswati III.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono 74
Nomsa Sizani

8 JULY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We condemn the torture of Magnificent Mndebele and Cebelihle Mbuyisa in Swaziland

There can be no freedom without a free and democratic media. However, across Africa, and in many other parts of the world, journalists continue to face difficult and dangerous working conditions. Some have been jailed, tortured and assassinated. In many countries the media has been captured by repressive states. Africa has become a capital of oppression and the torture of activists and journalists.

However not all non-state media is progressive. In South Africa some of the media supports the Zuma faction of the ruling party, some support capitalism and a most of it just ignores impoverished people and our struggles or shows us as criminals and as people who can't think and speak for ourselves.

When Mqapheli Bonono, the Deputy President of our movement, which has an audited membership of more than 100 000 people, was arrested and imprisoned on ridiculous trumped up charges and on 4 May this year almost all the media in South Africa ignored this. It is clear that we don't count to most of the media.

In a free society there should be major support for a wide diversity of democratic community-controlled media.

But the media are not all just elites talking to other elites. In South Africa there are some very good journalists and we respect and value their work highly. There are also two progressive publications, GroundUp and New Frame, that regularly carry stories about impoverished people and our organisations and struggles. These publications are important.

We condemn the recent torture and abuse that the two New Frame journalists, Magnificent Mndebele and Cebelihle Mbuyisa, suffered in Swaziland in the strongest manner. It is a vandalization of their humanity and a direct attack on media freedom, and the freedom of us all.

The government of Swaziland and leaders of SADC have reported that there are only a few people who have lost their lives in the pro-democracy protests in the country. We were in contact with comrades in Swaziland from the start of the uprising and know the truth. New Frame was the only publication that was there to take the stories of the people of Swaziland to the outside world. They reported the real stories of people who have had enough of the dictatorship of the monarchy in that country which is a kingdom of oppression.

As a radical movement of impoverished people, it is important that we speak against this brutal attack on progressive journalism.

As the war against the poor continues in Swaziland our movement continues to be in solidarity with those who are living under and resisting the dictatorship of the monarchy in that country. We have no confidence in SADC or our own government to resolve the issues faced by the people of Swaziland. We believe that it is solidarity with the resistance in Swaziland from grassroots movements, trade unions and other progressive organisations around the world that can bring down the dictatorship and bring peace and justice to the Swati people.

We condemn the conduct of SADC which downplayed the number of people who have lost their lives in Swaziland during the rebellion. We condemn the silence of our government. We condemn MTN for switching off the internet to allow the repression to be carried out without activists being able to easily communicate with each other and get information out.

We are ready to work with other progressive organisation to develop a solid bloc in solidarity with our comrades in Swaziland and against the dictatorship.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

17 JULY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Agent Provocateurs at Work in this Time of Crisis

During this week of crisis in which lives have been lost, homes burnt to the ground, places of work wrecked and infrastructure destroyed in a systematic way there has been constant circulation of fake news on social media. In many cases that fake news has been aimed at dividing communities and turning people against each other.

In this time of fear, confusion and anger it is very important that people do not accept the truth of everything that they see on social media without first making sure that it is correct. It is very important that we do not share unverified information, especially when it may have been designed to divide people. All progressive organisations need to keep making this very clear to their members.

On Tuesday our movement issued a long statement clearly explaining our understanding of what was happening at the time, and explaining our position. That statement drew on careful listening to our leaders in the branches – we have 73 871 members in good standing in 53 active branches in Durban. We called for solidarity in action to build a just peace. The statement, which is available on our website, was widely circulated and read by tens of thousands of people. A number of our leaders discussed it further in the media. It can be seen on our website.

However, it has been drawn to our attention by Muslim comrades in Durban and Johannesburg that someone took our statement and added in a whole new section in the middle which was anti-Muslim. This faked version of our statement was then widely circulated in various Muslim Whatsapp groups causing fear and anger. A number of our members then received abusive and sometimes racist Whatsapp messages from people who had seen the faked version.

Our statement was taken, changed and then circulated by a person or people who had the intention to cause dirty racial tensions in a time of crisis. We condemn this disgusting and reckless act in the strongest terms.

In a situation of serious crisis, it is especially important that all leaders conduct themselves calmly, thoughtfully and honestly, and with the best interests of the whole community in mind. We are disappointed but not surprised that in a Whatsapp group Fawzia Peer, the former deputy mayor and former acting mayor in Durban, treated this faked statement as if it was genuine without making any effort to contact us. A number of our comrades have also drawn our attention to a dangerously inflammatory message that she sent to a WhatsApp group stating that “the informal settlement have gathered tonite planning to attack”. These messages have been confirmed as originating from her number. When Peer held high office the municipality continually repressed us and sent armed men – the Land Invasion Unit and Calvin Security – to illegally and violently destroy our homes. She never made any statement opposing these attacks on us. This irresponsible behaviour by a senior politician is very dangerous. The rot in the ANC should remain in City Hall. We should not allow it to infect our beloved communities.

If there are any comrades with the technical skills who can help us trace who changed our statement and began to circulate the faked version we would appreciate their support. If anyone has any credible information about who is responsible for this disgusting and dangerous act we would appreciate it if they would contact us and share that information.

Our movement has always had Muslim members and worked closely with Muslim comrades. We consider all forces that try to divide us on lines of nationality, ethnicity, race or religion to be our enemies. Our unity is our strength as we work to humanise the world and ensure that we no longer have poor people in a rich country.

As everybody knows when the fires began to cool many Muslim people and organisations moved quickly to provide food to the hungry. There are Muslim people who lost their businesses and yet in their own time of crisis quickly organised to be in solidarity with others. This solidarity is deeply, deeply appreciated and respected by our members.

May Allah bless all those who have opened their hearts in this time of fear and suffering.

S'bu Zikode
Verushka Memdutt
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Desmond D'Sa
Thapelo Mohapi

24 JULY 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

An urgent call to build solidarity in action

The situation in Durban is very serious. The politicians and the people around them are actively trying to divide people and to turn people against each other so that they can continue with their looting. As usual they are trying to divide the poor.

Social media is being used to call for violence, to call for war. False information is being circulated with the aim of generating fear and anger.

The politicians and their cronies are attempting to brew and encourage a very, very dangerous politics that is building fear and anger with the aim of dividing people along lines of nationality of origin, ethnicity and race. Poor people are also being isolated and criminalised. The politicians are trying to make us look at our own neighbours as enemies. They are doing this so that they can keep looting the money that should be for land, housing, healthcare, education and so on. They are doing this so that they can keep looting from the us, the people, and keep destroying our lives and our children's future.

Ethnic incitement

People in and close to the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal have a long history of open prejudice to amaMpondo. They have often tried to blame amaMpondo and other isiXhosa speaking people for poverty in the province. They have often said that people in Durban do not have houses because people from the Eastern Cape have moved here. Now in this crisis all this ethnic prejudice and hostility is being brought to the fore. People are saying that they are '100% Zulu', calling amaMpondo and amaXhosa terrible names and saying that amaMpondo and other isiXhosa speaking people do not belong in the province. We are worried that this could escalate into the kind of ethnic attacks that we saw in 2009, or even an ethnic war.

Like national borders the borders of the old 'bantustans' were imposed by colonialism. We all know that before colonialism people moved freely across the land that is now divided by these colonial borders. Now the ANC is acting

in a way that returns to the oppressive politics of the apartheid system by saying that if you speak isiXhosa you should be living in the Eastern Cape.

Many of our older members survived the war between Inkatha and the UDF. We know what war means, and what damage it does. We have always had members and leaders from different ethnic groups in our movement. Right now, we have senior leaders who come to us as gifts from amaMpondo and abeSotho. This has always been our politic and it will always remain our politic.

Xenophobic incitement

The ANC also has a long of history from xenophobia running from its local branches right up to its cabinet ministers. The state is highly xenophobic. Not long-ago people saying that they were MK veterans were attacking migrants on the streets in Durban. Now in this crisis xenophobia is also being actively encouraged. We will give one example. On 14 July the Briardene settlement in Durban North burnt to the ground after a nearby electricity sub-station was sabotaged. Help for the residents, who lost everything, has come from other branches of our movement, Humanitarian Development Alliance SA (HUDA SA), Muslims for Humanity, Doctors without Borders and the Amadiba Crisis Committee.

We have seen the usual opportunism by the ANC and the DA in Briardene. Both parties have told people that they provided the tent that was actually provided by Doctors without Borders. Now that the ANC is coming to provide building materials (something that they now do after fires as a direct gain from our struggle) they are saying that they will not provide building materials to 'foreign nationals'. Briardene has long established residents from countries like Mozambique and Malawi, and our movement there, as everywhere, welcomes members without regard for the country in which they were born. A person born in Mozambique has served as the chairperson there. When the ANC says that people who it does not consider to be South African are not entitled to support after a disaster it is not only being inhuman, it is also actively and deliberately creating divisions between residents.

There is even xenophobia within the ANC. When Zandile Gumede was removed as the mayor of Durban due to massive corruption her supporters, who are also Zuma's supporters, said that the current mayor of Durban Mxolisi Kaunda is not a South African because his name is Kaunda. He continues to be undermined on this basis.

We are trying to deal with the issue of xenophobia in Briardene by working together to raise money from collecting scrap metal so make sure that everyone, without regard for where they were born, has access to building materials. But the ANC is insisting that they will not allow residents who they call 'foreign nationals' to rebuild. However, we are worried that in this crisis there could be more xenophobic violence, most likely encouraged by the local ANC branches.

Racial incitement

Indian people are also being called terrible names, threatened and told that they must go back to India. This is ridiculous and outrageous. How can a person who has never been to India be told that they must go back to India? This must be rejected as strongly as we reject the dangerous politics of those who say that people must go back to the provinces and countries where they were born.

We all know that when people started taking food on Sunday evening on 11 July people of all ethnicities, nationalities and races participated. We also know that when the riots changed into all out destruction, dangerous criminals used them for their own purposes and there were all kinds of sabotage everyone was frightened and communities across the city organised themselves to defend themselves. Sometimes communities of different nationalities, ethnicities and races worked together. But we also know that in many cases Africans were targeted. This happened to Mqapheli Bonono, our Deputy President, in Clare Estate when Indian and coloured people were allowed through a checkpoint while African people were stopped and questioned and made to show receipts for any goods in their cars. Borders were being made in the city, and now the ANC and their cronies are trying to keep those borders by keeping people divided.

Long before the current crisis we worked with the Phoenix Residents Association to fight against brutal evictions that were being carried out by securities belonging to Jay Singh who was involved in a lot of shady deals. There are African and Indian comrades in the Phoenix Residents Association.

We do not know exactly what happened Phoenix during the riots. It does not seem that anyone knows the whole story for sure. There are all kinds of rumours and it is very important not to accept or circulate unconfirmed rumours. But it is clear that there were murders. We are being told that some people were killed by securities. We are also told that gangsters in the area, gangsters involved in the selling of drugs and known to be very violent, committed some of these murders. These gangsters have a close relationship with the police. All the residents

of Phoenix, African and Indian, fear these gangsters and want them to be dealt with. The African and Indian people that we work with in Phoenix all want the murders to be urgently investigated and prosecuted. A whole community cannot be held accountable for the actions of these gangsters.

We agree that it is urgent that all the murders that happened in Phoenix should be quickly investigated and prosecutions carried out according to the evidence. Wherever there is racism this must be acknowledged and directly dealt with. The state must be pushed to do this work as effectively and as soon as is possible. But because the police in Phoenix are closely connected to the gangsters operating in the township police must be brought in from elsewhere to investigate these murders, preferably from outside the province.

But this idea that all Indians are racist is not true and the attempt to build anger and divide people with the aim of starting a war between Indians and Africans is very, very dangerous. Our spokesperson, Thapelo Mohapi, lived in the Bhambayi settlement in Inanda when he was a child. His family were made refugees during the war between Inkatha and the UDF. They were taken in and given shelter in the homes of ordinary working-class Indian people in Phoenix.

When our movement started in 2005 Raj Patel and Fazel Khan, both academics, played a very important role in supporting the day to day organisation required to build a movement. They humbled themselves and worked within the democratic structures of our movement to support the oppressed to build their own power. They are both deeply respected in our movement. Bishop Rubin Phillip has journeyed with us since 2005. He is our Bishop, a man who is loved and respected in our movement. In the early years of our movement Shamitha Naidoo was a powerful leader in our movement. We remain close to her. We always work to build unity between the struggles of the oppressed and work closely with people like Verushka Memdutt from the Market Users Committee. Internationally we have comrades like Firoze Manji from Kenya and Vijay Prashad from India. All these people are of Indian descent and we stand with them proudly as comrades in the struggle to humanize the world.

There has always been unity in struggle in our movement, and this was the same in the struggles against apartheid. Everybody knows the history of the black consciousness movement, the trade union movement, the UDF and other organisations. Indian people were tortured, jailed and killed in the struggle. Their blood is part of the river of blood that watered the tree of the freedom,

a tree that the gangsters in the ANC are now trying to cut down so that they can burn the wood.

Criminalising the poor

There is another important point that we need to make at this time. The police are under pressure to make arrests and as usual they are targeting the poor. This is not something new. We are always treated as criminals. For more than twenty-five years the police have raided shack settlements, stolen money and taken any electronic goods that they can find if a receipt cannot be produced. They then show this to the world as recovered 'stolen property'. But now the harassment and criminalisation are much worse than usual. In fact, the abuse that we are now suffering is extreme. No middle-class person has the police or soldiers kick their door down, insult them, assault them and take anything that they don't have a receipt for. On Tuesday our Deputy President and National Spokesperson were stopped by the police near the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate while taking milk to people in need. They were threatened, insulted and the milk was dropped on the ground. Treating all poor people as criminals is another way of making one part of society an enemy to others, another way of dividing people.

It is not radical to turn the people against each other. It is an inhuman, dangerous and completely reactionary politics that all people with any humanity in their hearts must reject. We have had enough of the politic of blood. If the political gangsters are successful in turning the poor against each other we will be oppressed for ever.

We condemn all and every attempt to create and escalate division between the people whether this is on the lines of ethnicity, xenophobia, race or class. We cannot allow the politicians and the people that receive tenders in exchange for kickbacks to turn neighbours against neighbours and communities against communities. Everyone who lives in South Africa is now part of us. Everyone who lives in Durban is now part of us. Every person is a person and must be welcomed and treated as a person no matter where they were born, where their ancestors were from and what language they speak. Poor people must not be criminalised.

Our movement will always remain open to all. We will always insist that a comrade is a comrade and a neighbour is a neighbour. We are very clear that

our members must, at all costs, work to prevent people from fighting among themselves.

It is a principle of abahlalism that we must always oppose all forms of racism everywhere because every person everywhere in the world is a person and must be respected as a person. It is also a principle of abahlalism that we do not recognise a person by the race that the system of oppression placed them into. When we are dealing with attempts to incite xenophobia and create ethnic divisions we say that a neighbour is a neighbour and a comrade is a comrade. We say the same when the politicians and their friends are trying to divide us along the lines of the races into which oppression placed us. We treat every human being with dignity and respect. It is the forces of oppression that continue to divide us, keep us poor and vandalise our human dignity.

We are committed to work with all progressive forces and all people of good faith to build solidarity in this crisis via unity in action. Solidarity means opposing all forms of racism and building unity among the people. We are committed to work with all progressive forces and to struggle together against all the looters who are destroying our society, whether they are politicians or capitalists. We are committed to work with all progressive forces to build popular democratic power from below so that we can build a just peace, a socialist peace in which there are no more poor people in a rich country.

We also need to note that our movement has now been a victim of the circulation of fake news for the second time. The first time an agent provocateur changed one of our statements to make it anti-Muslim and then circulated it. We issued a statement to correct this fabrication. Now there is another statement, also circulating widely, that says that a meeting will be held at the Right2Know offices on Monday to launch a new movement that will “ensure justice was done in Phoenix and that ZUMA (former President Jacob ZUMA) was released immediately”. The name of our movement is mentioned, but we know nothing about this meeting and would not attend any meeting of this kind. We are not and have never been supporters of Zuma and have made repeatedly made our positions on both factions of the ANC clear.

Thapelo Mohapi (Abahlali baseMjondolo)
 Mervin Govender (Phoenix Residents Association)
 Mqapheli Bonono (Abahlali baseMjondolo)
 Nomusa Sizani (Abahlali baseMjondolo)

6 AUGUST 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Women's Day Political Education Workshop

On 9 August 1956 around 20 000 women marched on the Union Buildings in opposition to the attempt by the state to impose pass laws on African women. The march was preceded by careful consultation with grassroots organisations, led by Bertha Mashaba and Helen Joseph.

The march itself was led by Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophia Theresa Williams-de Bruyn and Rahima Moosa. Standing in front of the Union Buildings they sang: 'Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo, uza kufa!

Every year we remember and honour all these women. We also remind our members that some of the powerful women in that march and the struggles of the time were organising in shack settlements, like Florence Mkhize and Dorothy Nyembe who were committed organisers and strong leaders in Umkhumbane in Durban.

This year we will mark the day by holding a workshop on Women in Leadership at the Abahlali office. The purpose of the workshop is to grow women leaders politically, so that we can continue to build women's power in struggle. Numbers have to be limited due to Covid protocols hence it will be held at the office.

Our movement was born in 2005. As Abahlali women we decided to form a Women's League on 9 August 2008, and elected our first Women's League structure which was mandated to organise women to join the Women's League and make sure that there is a powerful women's platform in the movement.

Since then we have worked to build this platform where women can discuss their own issues, and how women experience the structures of oppression. This includes the general problem of patriarchy, the need to build progressive forms of women's power and leadership, domestic violence, gendered barriers to control of land, oppressive cultural practices, and women's experiences of social crisis like poverty, hunger, HIV/Aids, evictions, the fact that there are no jobs for our children, and other issues.

The Covid lockdown caused a lot of trauma to the members of our movement. There were very violent illegal evictions and many women were abused, beaten and left to sleep out in the open. Many people lost jobs, and many families went hungry. In this crisis some women became the victims of Gender Based Violence. Many women were not able to go to clinics because they were scared of the soldiers and so they defaulted on their medication.

The organised attempts to sabotage the economy in KwaZulu-Natal have also hit women hard as many jobs have been lost or interrupted.

This is a hard time for everyone, including the women in the movement, so this workshop will give everyone a chance to cough out their trauma and give each other support. We will begin with a collective reflection on recent events and then move on to other questions.

We will not just remember the women of 1956. We will also remember our own heroes. We will remember Nqobile Nzuza from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest who was murdered by the police in Cato Crest On 30 September 2013, at the age of 17 years. We will remember Thuli Ndlovu from KwaNdengezi who was murdered by two ANC councillors on 29 September 2014. And we will remember Zamekile Shangase from Asiyindawo who was murdered by the police on 29 July, Thursday last week, when they came to break open people's shacks and seize their food.

Nomusa Sizani
Zandile Nsibande
Zanele Mtshali

6 AUGUST 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We are Dying for Food

On Thursday last week (29 July), Zamekile Shangase, a 33-year-old woman from Asiyindawo in Lamontville, was shot and killed outside her home by the police. Zamekile was the mother of two children aged 6 and 11. She was elected to a position on the local Abahlali council in 2018 and served on the council for a year.

Zamekile was shot while the police were raiding the settlement as part of Operation Show Your Receipt.

Another life has been lost. Another family is in mourning. Two young children must now live without a mother. If you are poor and black your humanity is not recognised. You are shown to the world as a person who can't think, and as a criminal. You do not count to society. People will speak about you without seeing any reason to speak to you. You can be brutalised and your dignity can be vandalised without any consequences. You can be killed by the state and if there is no movement (imbutho yabampofu) to insist that your life must be counted as a human life your death will count for nothing. In this system we are left to die like dogs.

This is the second time that the police had come to raid the settlements in this area, and take people's food. On Thursday they were going door to door, breaking locks, threatening and abusing people, and taking food from people. People got angry and started shouting. Some people started throwing stones at the police and banging on the police van. The police then got angry and started shooting.

A police officer was standing on the road and shooting up the hill into Asiyindawo at random. After Zamekile was shot the police carried on with their operation of seizing people's food at gunpoint while her body was still lying on the ground.

Colonel Khumalo was at the scene after the murder but refused to engage the leaders in discussion.

We were very concerned to read an article in a major news publication in which it was reported that the police were fired on from all directions by criminals armed with bullets stolen in the riots, that they were forced to return fire and that “a 33-year-old woman was killed”. Another article by the same journalist reported that Zamekile was “caught in the crossfire”. This article saw no need to even mention Zamekile’s name.

The police lied to try and cover up the fact that they killed an unarmed person for no reason. There is no doubt that no one fired on the police. If the journalist had not just taken what the police said as the truth and had spoken to the residents of Asiyindawo, residents elsewhere in the nearby Sisonke settlement (formerly Madlala), and residents in the township (Lamontville) who live near the Asiyindawo he would have found that they all agree that only the police were shooting.

As usual we are spoken about and not spoken too. As usual we are criminalised. As usual our lives count for nothing.

There is a long history of the police lying to cover up their actions, and the media taking their lies as if they were facts without bothering to talk to eyewitnesses.

In the early years of our movement (around 2005 to 2007), when Mike Sutcliffe was the city manager and Obed Mlaba was the mayor, the City always tried to prevent us from marching. When we would march, peacefully and unarmed, in defiance of their illegal bans we would be attacked with rubber bullets, stun grenades, dogs and sometimes water cannons and live ammunition. The police would always tell the media that they had attacked us because they had come under fire. Every time that was a complete lie but the media would report it as if it was the truth and not see any need to ask any of the people who had been on the march what they had seen. It was like they thought that we are just born liars and the police always tell the truth.

Even when someone has been killed the police have often been allowed to lie with impunity. In 30 September 2013 Nqobile Nzuza, a 17-year-old, was killed by the police during a protest in Cato Crest. The police said that they had come under attack from an armed mob and that they would have been killed if they had not fired live ammunition. This was a complete lie but most of the media reported the police statement as if it was true. They saw no need to speak to eye witnesses. When the autopsy was done it showed that Nqobile had been shot

in the back of the head. In 2018 a police officer was convicted for the murder of Nqobile and sent to prison. In the trial it became clear that the whole story told by the police, and often repeated as fact by the media, was untrue.

As Operation Show Your Receipt continues, and people continue to be abused, insulted, threatened and have their food stolen by the police, more people will get hurt.

Why is there so much hatred for the poor? When will the time come for our dignity to be recognised?

We have been asking these questions for more than fifteen years. We have not received any answers to these questions, instead we are receiving bullets from the state.

Our humanity is denied. Our dignity is vandalised. Our lives are criminalised. Our existence is criminalised.

When the leadership of Abahlali arrived in Asiyindawo shortly after the shooting, while Zamekile's body was still lying on the ground, one of the residents asked a very important question to the heavily armed police: "Why must we be killed for food, why must we die for food?"

They did not answer. Others said "Yes, why must we die for a tin of fish?"

In this press statement we are taking this question and putting it to the whole of society.

Why must we be killed for food?

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani
Zanele Mtshali
Alice Caleni

23 SEPTEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Struggle Continues – always moving, always organising, always building

In the past three weeks we have been continuing our work in the branches across the five provinces organising to ensure food security. The crisis of hunger rapidly worsened during the lockdowns, and some members were also hard hit by the winter riots. We organise to build food sovereignty by setting up collective gardens on occupied land and we organise to provide immediate solidarity via the direct provision of food to the most vulnerable people in each branch, as determined by the branches. More than 1 000 families have benefited from our food solidarity project. Building living solidarity is an essential part of struggle.

Tomorrow, Friday 24 September, beginning at 9:00, we will hold the annual Thuli Ndlovu lecture at the Hindu Surat Hall in Prince Edward Street in Durban. Thuli Ndlovu was a leader in our movement when she was assassinated on the instruction of two ANC councillors on 29 September 2014. Each year on the day of the lecture we remember all our fallen heroes and heroines in the struggle for land, housing and dignity. We give them the dignity that they were not given by the government, instead they were killed like dogs for opposing the corruption and oppression of the ANC. They were treated like animals by a government that calls itself democratic. The lecture is also an opportunity to present and share ideas. This year the lecture will be given by our Deputy President Mqapheli Bonono. Engaging in the battle of ideas is an essential part of struggle.

On Saturday, 25 September the Abahlali baseMjondolo Choral Society will perform at The Forge in Braamfontein in Johannesburg during an event, beginning at 13:00, to discuss and celebrate radical culture. The choir, which is mostly made up of women, sings about the years of pain in the struggle for land, housing and dignity. It gives honour to those who are denied dignity by oppression. Creating and sustaining progressive culture is an essential part of struggle.

On Sunday 26 September, starting at 9:00, we will host our Heritage Day celebration in Perdekop in Mpumalanga Province. On Heritage Day we always build unity between the oppressed, celebrating all cultures. Attendance at the event has been limited to 500 due to Covid protocols. Uniting the oppressed is an essential part of struggle.

To be in struggle means constant movement, constant organising and constant building. It means organising solidarity, taking on the battle of ideas, creating progressive culture and uniting the oppressed. It means insisting that our dignity is not negotiable, that capitalism and the gangster politicians must be overcome and that land, wealth, cities and power shared fairly. It means mourning together, celebrating together, thinking together and building together.

We continue to work to support other progressive formations to organise and build their power. We continue to develop unity in struggle so that the oppressed can pave the way to real freedom, not the fake freedom that was brought to us by the ANC. It is only the democratic power of the oppressed that can successfully confront oppression.

Move, organise, think, mourn, celebrate, create, resist, build.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Drop All Charges Against the eKhenana Six! Free Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila!

Tomorrow, Wednesday 29 September, Lindokuhle Mnguni, Landu Tshazi and Ayanda Ngila will appear in the Durban Magistrate's Court. Mqapheli (George) Bonono, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya will appear in the same court on Friday 1 October.

Mnguni, Tshazi, Ngila, Bonono and Gasela all played a leading role in the eKhenana Occupation in Cato Manor, which was developed into a working commune. The achievements of the commune have been widely noted – even in the mainstream media – and include its impressive democratic practices, building a community hall, a co-operatively run farm with vegetables and poultry, a political school that is used by the movement as a whole, self-organised access to services such as water and electricity, a place for young people to relax and socialise, a self-built road, and more.

The commune came under sustained violent attack from the eThekweni Municipality, the police and the local ANC – all working with ANC linked people aiming to seize control land of communally managed land for the purposes of making private profit. Mzi Ngiba, the local ward councillor, was usually present when the occupation was attacked, homes destroyed and burnt and the residents beaten, tear gassed and shot at with rubber bullets and, at times, with live ammunition. He also works with local thugs to oppose the occupation. The Cato Manor police consistently supported the illegal and violent evictions carried out by the municipality.

In mid-March a man by the name of Vusi Shezi was murdered in Cato Manor, a place where murder is a regular occurrence. Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila were arrested and charged with the murder. After the arrests our Deputy President, Mqapheli (George) Bonono, called an open meeting at the Diakonia

Council of Churches to discuss the matter and find out what was happening. After that meeting he and Gasela and Miya were arrested and charged with planning a conspiracy to murder at the meeting. It was alleged that they planned a conspiracy to murder a person who was, at the time, claiming to be a witness to the murder of Shezi.

Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila have been kept in the notorious Westville Prison for six months, and repeatedly denied bail, despite no credible evidence having been brought against them. Bonono and Gasela spent more than two weeks in Westville Prison before they were able to win bail. Gasela was separated from her seriously unwell sixteen-month-old baby while she was in prison. Miya was denied bail as he has a pending case dating back to before the occupation was formed and he remains in prison.

It was immediately clear that the case against Bonono, Gasela and Miya was farcical, and a very crude frame-up. There were numerous people at the public meeting called by Bonono who can testify that its purpose, as stated, was to find out what had happened with regard to the murder of Shezi and the arrests of Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila.

It is now just as clear that there is no case against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila and that they are also victims of a crude frame-up. Even the autopsy report showed that the murder of Shezi happened in a different way to that stated in the original witness statements.

It is outrageous that the criminal justice system has been captured by the ANC and misused to repress grassroots activists. It is outrageous that people have been kept in prison, and living with charges on their heads, long after it became crystal clear that there is no case against any of the six.

This morning we held a picket outside the Durban High Court to protest against the capture of the criminal justice by the ANC in order to repress activists.

The misuse of the criminal justice system against the eKhenana Six is not a unique outrage. As we noted in a previous statement in the early years of our movement Shamitha Naidoo and Louisa Motha led a brave struggle against the notorious thug Ricky Govender in Motala Heights in Pinetown. Govender has strong connections with the local police and claimed to be close to Jacob Zuma. Naidoo remains active in Motala Heights where she is hated by the landlords for opposing evictions and organising occupations.

In 2009 a young man in Motala Heights was tragically killed as a result of a fight between a group of young men. The police made no accusations against Shamitha as a result of this tragic murder. But earlier this year she was charged with ‘conspiracy to murder’ – the same charge brought against Bonono, Gasela and Miya. On 17 September the case against Naidoo went to trial. The magistrate threw the case out. After this the state prosecutor advised Naidoo to open cases against those who had borne false witness.

The abuse of the criminal justice system to repress activists has been going on since at least 2000 when the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign began to face repression.

There is an urgent need for systemic reform of the criminal justice system to stop it from being misused to repress activists. Today we held a picket outside the Durban High Court in protest against the routine abuse of the criminal justice system to repress activists.

If evidence and justice are taken seriously we expect to Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila to walk free tomorrow, and all charges against Bonono, Gasela and Miya to be dropped on Friday.

Thapelo Mohapi
S’bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

29 SEPTEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Our comrades are free! We feel like flying!

Moments ago, all charges were dropped against Lindokuhle Mnguni, Landu Tshazi and Ayanda Ngila who are now free after being detained in the notorious Westville Prison for six months.

The three comrades were arrested as part of the long-standing and often violent attempt to crush the eKhenana Occupation in Cato Manor by the eThekweni Municipality, the police and the local ANC – all working with people aiming to seize control of communally managed land for the purposes of making private profit.

Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila were arrested and charged with the murder of Vuzi Shezi in Cato Manor on 16 March this year. Mqapheli (George) Bonono called an open meeting at the Diakonia Council of Churches on 21 March to establish the facts of what had happened. After this meeting he, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya were arrested and charged with conspiracy to murder a witness in the case against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila. Miya was not even at this meeting, and the participants in the meeting can attest to its actual content, including the contributions of Bonono and Gasela.

We have been told that the two witnesses in the case that was opened against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila planned and wrote their statements in the office of Detective Subramoney at the Cato Crest station. We have noted in a number of previous statements how the officers at the station have repressed the occupation in various ways.

The two witnesses were Mabongi Luthuli and Ntokozo Ngubane. Ngubane is part of an ANC family in the area. She has three brothers. One is a notorious hitman (inkabi). The other two carry guns and have often threatened people in the occupation and fired their guns as part of their threats. As we have explained before the local ANC has been trying by all means to get control of the land to use to break the commune and to turn the land into private property and use it to generate private profit. The Ngubane family has played a central role in this.

A few weeks ago, Luthuli and Ngubane both made sworn statements to the Investigating Officer, Officer Zulu, stating that they had lied in their original statements. Ngubane admitted that she was in fact in central Durban at the time at which Shezi was murdered in Cato Manor. Luthuli has admitted that she was also not at the scene when Shezi was murdered but was phoned by Mazwi Ndwandwe to go to the scene and to then make a false witness statement. Furthermore, the autopsy report showed that the murder of Shezi happened in a different way to that stated in the original witness statements.

We have been told that when Ndwandwe heard that the IO was going to dismiss the case as there was no evidence he begged him to keep the case, and even offered a bribe.

Ndwandwe has been a key player in the attempt to take over the occupation and in the arrest of the six. He pointed out the people that the police arrested and was often seen in the company of the police at the Durban Central Police Station. He is the person that, as we noted in a previous statement, arrived in the left spaces in Durban claiming to be on the run from political threats. He is from Umlazi, which is in Durban, but was previously unknown to all the left organisations in Durban.

When he suddenly arrived in the left spaces in Durban Ndwandwe claimed to be under threat as a result of his participation in a strike in Mandeni. However, we now know that he was not in Mandeni at the time of the strike. Before arriving in Durban, he had been in Cape Town where he had been funded to be in hiding by an organisation called Frontline Defenders, on the recommendation of an NGO called Tshisamani. He received money for a safe house on the basis of lies.

As we explained people in our movement and other left organisations began asking questions about Ndwandwe soon after his suddenly arrival in the left spaces in Durban. One reason for this was that he claimed at different times and in different meetings to be representing a number of different organisations (at least seven) that he had no mandate to represent. This included The Coalition of the Poor, the Azanian People's Movement, Numsa, the United Front, Mayibuye and Ubunye bamaHostela. He also misrepresented himself to at least one NGO in Cape Town as someone that lives in the eKhenana Occupation and as a leader in the occupation and tried to raise money in the name of the occupation.

It is also important to note that Ndwandwe was very close to some of the people in R2K, which was at one point a progressive NGO. It is a matter of record that this NGO has been penetrated by state intelligence in the past. The people that Ndwandwe was close to in R2K are the same people that tried to misuse the names of all the membership based left organisations in the city – including our own – to organise a march in support of Zuma. Of course, the march failed.

At least three organisations in Durban considered Ndwandwe's activities to be corrupt and at least two decided that, in their view, he must be working for state intelligence. Our view was that he was plainly an opportunist, but that it was also possible that he was working for state intelligence or the regressive NGOs that will not accept the right of the oppressed to organise themselves and have gone to great lengths to try by all means to capture popular organisations and to destroy those that cannot be captured.

At one time Ndwandwe asked to be given a space to build in eKhenana but his request was denied because he was contemptuous of democratic processes and tried to make personal deals with NGOs without any sort of democratic participation, mandate or oversight. However, he did enter into a personal relationship with Ngubane and often visited her at the occupation. He stopped coming to the occupation after Bonono and Gasela were released on bail and moved back to Umlazi.

Ndwandwe thought that the projects in the occupation such as the food and poultry farming, were externally funded and that he could access this money. In fact, they were self-organised and self-funded. He also thought, again incorrectly, that Mnguni and Gasela – both leaders of the occupation – were being paid.

When an attempt by three members of the Ngubane family to be elected into the leadership of the occupation failed they began to openly work with the local ANC and played a central role in the attempts by the ANC to take over the occupation. The ANC used the arrests to bring their own people on to the land and to frighten, isolate and divide the residents. They brought the residents *izinhloko* (cooked cow heads) and the Ngubane family started working towards opening an ANC branch. The Ngubane family are now supporting Siya Mkhize to become the new ANC councillor in the ward.

The arrests also damaged the commune in another way which is that all the money that had been made and that was made via the co-operative was used to support the comrades in prison. As a result, the co-operative eventually become bankrupt. Because of this, and the divisions caused by the ANC, some people stopped doing militant work and the garden declined. However, the poultry project and the political school are still working well.

The comrades on the occupation say that they were not overpowered but strategically retreated in the face of the repression coming from both the police and the local ANC. They say that they will push back now, and restore the full functioning of the commune.

Serious questions must be asked of the police and the prosecutor for arresting innocent people and keeping them in prison for more than six months. A serious injustice was committed as part of the repression aimed at breaking the building of a democratically organised community, a community that had subject to terrible violence from the state and local thugs connected to the ANC over a period of years.

But now we celebrate! Today people are over the moon! The residents will buy a sheep to welcome Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila back to eKhenana.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

1 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Justice delayed is justice denied but celebration for the eKhenana three

The case for Bonono, Gasela and Miya was scheduled for today for a senior public prosecutor's decision. The last time we were in court the state made it clear that it had completed its investigation. However, it was now left to the senior prosecutor to make a decision.

However, when we got to court this morning the prosecutor asked for an opportunity to interview all the state witnesses. This was very strange because the investigating officer had done all of that and was satisfied. For that reason the magistrate adjourned the matter for Monday, 4 October. When our lawyer asked for bail for Miya he was refused. He then asked for bail conditions to be relaxed for Bonono and Gasela he was also refused.

The prosecution had all the time at their disposal over six months to interview the state witnesses but failed to do so. It is unfair to delay proceedings with Miya remaining in custody.

Our lives continue to be vandalized. The eKhenana three case has been withdrawn on Wednesday. The obvious expectation was that Bonono, Gasela and Miya's case was going to be withdrawn today too.

We are disappointed about this delay as it means that justice has been delayed once more, and therefore denied once more. We will have to go back to court on Monday with the hope that a competent court would have done its job.

We were, however, pleased to have a wonderful celebration to welcome the eKhenana three home to the occupation after their release on Wednesday.

We wish to thank our comrades, friends and partners from around the world who continue to stand in solidarity with us.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

4 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

All Charges Dropped Against Mqapheli Bonono, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya!

Moments ago, on the 16th anniversary of the founding of our movement, the farcical charges of conspiracy to murder brought against Mqapheli Bonono, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya were, as expected, dropped in the Durban Magistrates Court.

In March this year Lindokuhle Mnguni, Landu Tshazi and Ayanda Ngila, all leaders in the eKhenana occupation and its development into an impressive working commune, were arrested on what have now been shown to have been trumped up charges of murder. Shortly after their arrest Bonono, acting as a responsible leader, called an open meeting, held at the Diakonia Council of Churches, to establish the facts of what had happened. After this meeting he, Gasela and Miya were arrested and charged with planning a conspiracy at this meeting, a conspiracy to murder a witness against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila. It was immediately clear that these charges were farcical. Miya was not even at the meeting, and the participants in the meeting were willing to give an account of what had happened to anyone that was interested in asking them. When the Bonono, Gasela and Miya first appeared in court the prosecution didn't even have the date of the meeting right let alone anything remotely approaching actual credible evidence.

Bonono and Gasela spent more than two weeks in the notorious Westville Prison before they were able to win bail. Gasela was separated from her seriously unwell sixteen-month-old baby while she was in prison. Miya was denied bail as he has a pending case dating back to before the occupation was formed. He was finally released today after the charges against the three were dropped.

On Wednesday 29 September – which was the 7th anniversary of the assassination of our leader Thuli Ndlovu by two ANC councillors – all charges against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila were dropped and they were able to walk out of the court and into freedom.

On Friday 1 October a wonderful celebration was held to welcome the three back to eKhenana with hundreds of comrades from other branches participating. We were expecting to also be able to celebrate the dropping of call charges against Bonono, Gasela and Miya who appeared in court that morning in the expectation that the charges against them would be dropped.

To everyone's surprise this did not happen, and Miya was sent back to prison. The prosecution was already aware, and had been for quite some time, that there was no case against the three. It is outrageous that Miya was forced to spend the weekend in prison when everyone knew that he was innocent of the charges that had been brought against him. There needs to be a serious investigation into the conduct of the magistrate and the prosecutor.

It is important to note that after being released on Wednesday 29 September Mnguni was supposed to be back in the dock the following day as he is one of 24 people who were arrested on a charge of 'public violence' in November 2018. These charges remain open despite the state's failure to be able to prosecute.

Since our movement was formed in 2005 the police have used this tactic of arresting activists on the charge of 'public violence', detaining them – and often assaulting them and sometimes torturing them in the holding cells – then releasing them on bail and forcing them to come to court six or seven times before the charges are finally dropped. There has never once been a conviction in sixteen years because these charges are just a form of harassment against activists. It is often local councillors and their committees who point out the people to be arrested. The court appearance on the public violence charge scheduled for Wednesday last week was postponed but the fact that an activist can come out of prison after being detained for six months on one bogus charge and then be scheduled to get straight back in the dock on another bogus charge the next day shows just how threatening the self-organisation and political autonomy of the poor is to the gangsters in the ANC.

It is now clear to the whole world that the arrests of the eKhenana six was a gross misuse of the criminal justice system to try and crush the eKhenana Commune. However, urgent questions remain.

Why were six people arrested on bogus charges? Why were Bonono, Gasela and Miya taken to prison and then, after Bonono and Gasela were bailed out, left with charges hanging over their heads for six months when it was immediately clear that there was no case against them?

Why was Miya left in prison for six months when it was made clear immediately after the arrests that he was not at the meeting that the state claimed, farcically, had been used to conspire to murder? The police could have confirmed this within an hour if they had any interest in establishing the facts.

Why were Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila repeatedly denied bail and kept in horrific conditions in Westville Prison when it was clear that the state had no case against them?

Soon after the arrest of Bonono, Gasela and Miya our lawyer Jimmy Howse, a highly respected advocate known to be a measured man who carefully follows the evidence, said in open court that the case ‘stinks to high heaven’, that it was ‘a travesty’ and showed very clearly that there were ‘serious anomalies’ in the argument made by the prosecution. Why was this ignored when it was clear that Howse’s statements were entirely justified and that the state had no credible evidence? All that the prosecutor could say in response to the plain fact that there was no evidence was that the police required more time to find evidence. Surely there should be credible evidence before arrests are made, rather than arresting people and then keeping them in prison while looking for credible evidence.

On the 21st May Mabongi Luthuli, a witness for the state, confessed in the Family Court to having borne false witness by lying in her witness statement. Her confession is on the court record. Why were the charges not immediately dropped after this?

A few weeks ago, Luthuli and Ntokozo Ngubane, the second witness for the state, both made sworn statements admitting that they had lied in their original statements. Ngubane, whose father is a powerful person in the local ANC, admitted that she was in fact in central Durban at the time at which the murder for which Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila were arrested and imprisoned was committed in Cato Manor. Luthuli has admitted that she was also not at the scene when the murder happened but was phoned by ‘a man’ and told to go to the scene and to then make a false witness statement. We strongly suspect that this man may have been Mazwi Ndwandwe. His role in the misuse of the criminal justice system to repress the occupation has been explained in a previous statement. Again, why were the charges not immediately dropped after this?

We have had serious concerns about KwaKito – the Cato Manor police station – for many years. Our members have been insulted, threatened, assaulted

and tortured by officers from that police station. If they try to report criminality by the municipality – such as illegal and violent evictions – or local ANC leaders they are threatened and thrown out of the police station. In 2013 Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by an officer from that station. The Cato Manor police station does not even pretend to follow the law. They openly take instruction from the local ANC politicians – the ward councillors and people on their branch committees. There needs to be a serious inquiry into this police station and serious action taken to address the rot.

We also need to note that our comrades have received open threats from the police. When the first three arrests were made in eKhenana on 17 March the officers were not in uniform and, as a result, one of the three, Tshazi, fled when confronted by threatening men with guns. The police shot at him while he was running away (unarmed and with his back to the police) and one of the police officers accidentally shot off his own finger. Tshazi suffered a broken leg during the arrest and on 18 March, when he was in hospital, Detective Subramoney threatened to force an unlicensed gun on to his hand and then arrest him for shooting the police officer who had shot off his own finger. Also in the hospital, Constable Shandu told Tshazi “If you come out you are committing suicide”. This was clearly a death threat. There needs to be a specific investigation into the threats made by Subramoney and Shandu.

There also needs to be serious action against the pervasive corruption in the criminal justice system. At every point in the process following the arrests of the six the police requested bribes from the accused and their families and comrades. Bribes were demanded for bail to be recommended and for charges to be dropped. Bribes were demanded for people in the cells to receive visitors or food. Bribes were demanded for people to enter the court room and witness the proceedings. Everything in the prison is corrupt. Prisoners have to pay to be safe, to have a place to sleep, to have proper food, etc, etc.

Serious concern also needs to be expressed about the article on the arrests published in *Ilanga* in March. It repeated lies, was full of inaccuracies and did not give the people slandered in the piece a right to reply. It is unacceptable for the media to uncritically repeat propaganda for the ANC, as News24 recently did for the police when they murdered one of our former leaders, Zamekile Shangase, a 33-year-old woman from Asiyindawo in Lamontville, on 29 July during a ‘show your receipt’ raid.

The arrests of the eKhenana Six were a politically motivated farce, nothing more or less than a brazen, crude and cynical misuse of the criminal justice system to repress activists. If anyone can make an evidently dishonest and malicious allegation against activists that results in arrest and imprisonment it will be open season on our movement, and other organisations and struggles. This needs to stop, and it needs to stop now.

The police and the National Prosecuting Authority must be compelled to answer for their outrageous actions. We cannot tolerate a situation where local ANC thugs can misuse the criminal justice system to have activists arrested and jailed. We will be instructing our lawyers to sue.

We are also calling for serious and effective reform of the criminal justice system which has routinely functioned as a mechanism to repress activists since the emergence of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign in 2000. There needs to be a full enquiry into the sustained abuse of the criminal justice system to repress activists over more than twenty years.

If Shamila Batohi, as the head of the prosecuting authority, and Khehla Sit-hole, as the head of the police, are people of integrity we expect that they will, at a minimum, come to eKhenana, meet with us, offer their apologies and discuss ways to put an end to the abuse of the criminal justice system to repress activists.

We would like to thank all our comrades in the organisations of the poor in Durban, across South Africa, Africa and around the world who have shown such powerful solidarity with our movement during this time. It is deeply appreciated. Solidarity has always been a key foundation of our movement and just as you were here when we needed you we will be there when you need us.

The struggle continues, but today we celebrate again.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

11 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The repression of Abahlali in eKhenana continues but the Commune remains

The criminal justice system – including the police and the prosecuting authority – continues to be misused by the ANC to repress our movement. Just under two weeks ago three of our comrades from the eKhenana Commune – Lindokuhle Mnguni, Landu Tshazi and Ayanda Ngila – were released from prison after being held for six months on bogus charges and repeatedly denied bail. A week ago, all charges were dropped against Mqapheli Bonono, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya, all of whom are also participants in the Commune. Miya had spent six months in prison while Bonono and Gasela were granted bail after two weeks in prison. Both cases were proven to be trumped up and the arrests and imprisonment to have been based on lies by the state witnesses.

On Friday last week three women – Nokuthula Mabaso, Thozama Mazwi and Sindiswa Ngcobo – were arrested by the notorious Cato Manor police station. All three have made huge contributions to the building of the eKhenana Commune, and played a very important role in keeping the Commune going while other leaders were in prison. Last week there was a harvesting of the cabbage that has grown well this year.

The three were charged with assault with the intention to commit grievous bodily harm in relation to an incident in June last year. At that time a woman associated with the local ANC attacked a migrant worker with boiling water. The three intervened and there was an altercation.

The three were kept in the holding cells of KwaKito (the Cato Manor police station) over the weekend and appeared in the Durban Magistrate's Court today. While members of our movement were quietly sitting outside the courtroom they were told that they were 'intimidating' and must move. Our mere presence as organised poor black people is taken as a threat, as illegitimate, even as criminal. We are often denied access to the court building, or to the courts where matters are being heard. Today we could not enter the court room.

The three were denied bail and sent to Westville Prison, a terrible place that damages all who must suffer it. They were denied bail because the complainant said that she was being

‘threatened’. This is not true, and is exactly the same tactic that was used in the previous cases to keep innocent people in prison. No evidence was given to support this accusation.

An assault case is under schedule 1 and under normal circumstances bail cannot be refused. Only Abahlali members are refused bail on less serious offences. These are women with young children yet they are being sent to prison by the same state that pretends to be waging war against ‘the abuse of women and children’ in South Africa.

Ntokozo Ngubane, who is close to the complainant, played an important role in making the false allegation against Mnguni, Tshazi and Ngila. In that matter she eventually admitted that she had lied in her witness statement. As we have explained in previous statements she is part of a local ANC family which aims to take control of both the occupation and the local ANC structures. One of her brothers is a notorious hitman (inkabi) and the other two carry guns and have often threatened people in the occupation and fired their guns as part of their threats. Her father, NS Ngubane, is a key person in the local ANC, and has tried to secure nomination as a councillor.

Ntokozo and her father have the same surname as the Chief Magistrate and NS Ngubane seems to be exploiting this relationship to influence justice system, as he is seen in and out of the office of the Chief Magistrate. NS Ngubane was also in and out of his office today, as happened during the two previous cases. The fact that he can skip all processes of the court and go straight to the Chief Magistrate means that the judicial process in these matters has no credibility. He was heard in the corridors of the court saying ‘Kufanele kuphele nge Khenana’, meaning that eKhenana must be completely destroyed. His political agenda is not hidden.

It is well known that the eKhenana occupation was regularly attacked by the state for years, that the Cato Manor police have been extremely hostile, and that the local ANC, led by NS Ngubane have tried by all means to take control of the occupation so that Abahlali’s living politics and the spirit of ubuhlali and Abahlalism can be destroyed in the area and they can take control of the land to sell it for shacks, and to rent out shacks.

NS Ngubane is not only holding the Durban magistrate court at ransom, he is also able to instruct the police at KwaKito who to arrest or to release.

After the eKhenana occupation was developed into a working Commune, with the production of food, the development of infrastructure, cultural projects such a poetry and the building and running of the Frantz Fanon school where people have come from all over to participate in radical education programmes it became a more general threat to the ANC.

The brazen misuse of the criminal justice system to repress our movement is outrageous. It is outrageous that Ntokozo and NS Ngubane can work with both KwaKito and the prosecuting authority to have our leaders repeatedly arrested, jailed and denied bail on bogus charges. Along with our deputy president, Mqapheli Bonono, eight participants in the eKhenana Commune have now been arrested and jailed on bogus charges in three separate cases.

Some of the officers at KwaKito now refuse to open cases for the Ngubane family because they know that they have fabricated cases in the past. However, there are two officers who have opened cases that are against Abahlali and refuse to open cases when Abahlali members are abused by the Ngubane family. We call on all police officers and prosecutors to refuse to take instruction from the ANC and to operate according to evidence.

Our movement as a whole, and individual occupations, have come under repeated waves of violent repression from the state and the ANC over the last 16 years. A high price has been paid for continuing to organise and resist. A total of 19 comrades have lost their lives. The criminal justice system has been repeatedly misused during these waves of repression. We lost count, many years ago, of the number of comrades that have appeared in the dock. But what we can say for sure is that in almost all instances charges have been withdrawn before the matters have gone to trial, and in every single instance when a case has gone to trial the state has failed to secure a conviction, and it has been clear that the charges were a complete frame up. Many hundreds of arrests have not resulted in a single conviction.

We cannot count how many times we have taken the state to court to stop evictions, overturn legislation or sue for abuse at the hands of the police. In almost every instance we have won. This gives our members some confidence in the fairness of courts, but the misuse of the criminal justice system to repress the movement destroys that confidence.

The National Prosecuting Authority need to deal decisively with its capture, in part, by the thugs in the ANC who are aiming to destroy our movement.

The ANC has always seen people who live in shacks as people who do not count, as people who can be spoken for rather than to, as people who can be left in squalor, as people who can be beaten, kept in prison or killed without consequence. They do not see us as citizens. They do not even see us human beings. When we start our own production of food to sustain ourselves and our own political education to free ourselves, we are treated as criminals, as people who are disposable, as people who can be crushed. Autonomy is seen as a serious threat.

This kind of authoritarianism, abuse and cruelty is one of many reasons why we, as the largest organisation of impoverished people in the country with over 100 000 paid up members (and many more participants and supporters without formal membership) across five provinces, have called for the ANC to be removed from power. We have made a clear call to our members and supporters to not make the mistake of voting for the thugs and thieves in the ANC. As a poor person in this country voting for the ANC is voting for your own grave to be dug. The ANC have used the police, the army and the izinkabi to kill the poor with impunity. No decent human being can vote for that.

The repression of eKhenana continues but the commune will remain. They cannot arrest us all.

We cannot accept this. There will be no business as usual.

We will write to National Prosecuting Authority Director, Adv. Shamila Batohi to ask her to investigate the captured KwaKito police station and NS Ngubane's relationship with that police station and some court senior officials.

Once again, we thank the comrades from across Durban, around South Africa, from all over Africa and around the world who have stood in solidarity with us and the eKhenana Commune.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani
Lindokuhle Mnguni

22 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The ongoing attack on the eKhenana Commune is being planned at a high level

A total of nine comrades have now been arrested on trumped up charges in the latest wave of repression against the eKhenana Commune. Six have already had all charges withdrawn. Two of the six spent two weeks in prison and the other four spent six months in prison. Yesterday Nokuthula Mabaso, Thozama Mazwi and Sindiswa Ngcobo were released on bail after spending two weeks in Westville prison.

The police are currently in eKhenana. They say that they are there to make more arrests.

The sustained attack on the eKhenana Commune is being orchestrated by the ANC at both the local level in Cato Manor and in the eThekweni Municipality. The arrest of nine leaders who have been in the forefront of building the Commune was not just planned at the local level.

The land on which the Commune was built was first occupied in 2018 and ever since it has faced attacks from both the eThekweni Municipality and the local ANC. There have been repeated armed, violent and illegal attempts to destroy the occupation. During the first Covid lockdown last year the Municipality sent out the notoriously violent Calvin Security company to demolish people's homes in violation of the Constitution, the law, the Covid regulations and a court interdict preventing the Municipality from demolishing people's homes. There has been consistent state violence and criminality from the Municipality.

There has also been sustained repression from the local ANC, which has been desperately trying, for years, to take over the land and destroy the commune. NS Ngubane, a powerful person in the local ANC who has tried to secure nomination as a councillor, has been a central figure in this. The ANC want to crush the commune because it is a political threat and they want to take over the land so that they can sell it to people to build shacks, rent out shacks and then, finally, build and sell government flats through corrupt means.

We have now received papers from the Municipality declaring their intention to get a court order to destroy the eKhenana Commune by demolishing the homes and other structures that have been built and driving the residents off the land. They want to destroy a self-built and democratically managed community that has produced its own food and ensured that many families are sustained. How can the government destroy such a Commune in the midst of an economic crisis that has hit the poorest of the poor so much that there is already starvation and hunger across the country?

The attack on the Commune is now coming from all angles, but the resistance continues. The ANC, along with some others, have tried to destroy our movement for 16 years but they have failed. The state has control over the police and the Anti-Land Invasion unit, they have public relations departments for propaganda and they have huge budgets to buy support. The local ANC structures also have access to these budgets and to the police and izinkabi and, as we have seen with eKhenana, the ability to manipulate the criminal justice system. We have faced a powerful enemy but after 16 years of repression our movement is bigger and more powerful than ever before with over 100 000 paid up members across five provinces, and many more supporters.

We have strong militants in eKhenana that have resisted this far. They have endured the most dangerous prison in the country, Westville. They have resisted even when the ANC used izinkabi to try and destroy the Commune. They have survived numerous armed attempts at eviction by the Municipality. Now the state is taking the battle into the courts. They have done this with the arrest and imprisonment of the nine comrades on crudely faked charges. They are also doing it with the attempt to get a court order to enable them to physically destroy the Commune. We will meet them in the courts with our radical pro bono lawyers and we will continue to build the Commune, to run classes in the Frantz Fanon school and to build solidarity with the Commune.

We have noted before that when our comrades from eKhenana appear in court NS Ngubane openly goes in and out of the office of the Chief Magistrate, whose name is also Ngubane, and that he openly makes threats against our members in the corridors of the court. At the appearance in court yesterday of the three women that were released on bail he was heard threatening our members that he was from Msinga (a notoriously violent area) and that they are

going to 'deal with' members of Abahlali in eKhenana. This is the threat that he has continually made in the occupation. It is a death threat.

NS Ngubane also works closely with KwaKito (the Cato Manor police station) and seems to be able to have people arrested by the police on faked charges at will. The police there also refuse to open charges by members of our movement when they are attacked. They openly follow a political line and not the law.

We are concerned about these threats as the ANC in Durban is seriously gangsterised and political murders are routine. A number of our leaders have been murdered since 2013 and the ANC are killing each other all the time. Cato Manor is one of the most violent areas in the city. Murders are routine. A week ago Siyabonga Mkhize, an ANC candidate in the local government elections, was murdered in Cato Crest, which is adjacent to Cato Manor.

If they can kill each other without shame they will think nothing of killing us.

We send a message of deep thanks to all the comrades around the world who have shown solidarity with the eKhenana Commune and other movement at this time.

The struggle continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

25 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The attack on the eKhenana land occupation continues with the assault of women and more arrests

On Saturday at about 10am ANC thugs molested and assaulted Phumelele Mkhize, Snothando Mkhize, Nomlindelo Madlala and Nomfundo Mhlongo at the eKhenana occupation. The police came and instead of arresting the ANC thugs they arrested two of the women that they had attacked: Phumelele Mkhize and Maphiwe Gasela. Maphiwe has previously been arrested and imprisoned on false charges that were finally dropped on 4 October. The two were charged with assault in the same matter that Nokuthula Mabaso, Sindiswa Ngcobo and Thozama Mazwi were arrested and charged for earlier this month.

The other three women who were assaulted by the ANC thugs were rushed to the hospital, treated and released. They then went to open a case of assault with the police in Cato Manor. One was able to open a case and the other two were denied and told that they were wasting police time.

A police officer known to the three women phoned NS Ngubane, the local ANC chief, to ask if the police could open cases for the three women. Ngubane refused and then the police refused. The police said to the women that they must come to the police station with Mr Ngubane and the ANC thugs that assaulted them to have a meeting.

This means that only the ANC people are allowed to report Abahlali members and when ANC members make allegations the police immediately arrest Abahlali members without any investigation. But, if it is Abahlali members that are being raped (as happened last year) and assaulted there will be no arrests. At best a meeting must be held to discuss that with the perpetrators and NS Ngubane.

A total of ten comrades have been now arrested, beginning with the arrests of Ayanda Ngila, Lindokuhle Mnguni and Lando Tshazi in March this year. This

was followed by the arrests of Mqapheli Bonono, Maphiwe Gasela and Siniko Miya in May.

The charges against Ngila, Mnguni and Tshazi were dropped on 29 September and the comrades, who had spent six months in prison, welcomed back to eKhenana with a huge celebration. The charges against Bonono, Gasela and Miya were dropped on 4 October.

The ANC, with the support of the Cato Manor (KwaKito) police, then attacked the occupation again with the arrests of Nokuthula Mabaso, Thozama Mazwi and Sindiswa Ngcobo on Friday 8 October. They were twice denied bail and sent to Westville prison before finally being granted bail and released from prison on Thursday last week, 21 October. As with the previous arrests their bail conditions prevent them from returning to eKhenana.

There is a clear pattern. People are arrested on faked charges with the Cato Manor police working closely with NS Ngubane, the local ANC chief. The arrests happen over the weekend – often on Fridays – so that the comrades who have been arrested have to spend the weekend in the notorious Cato Manor police station. They are then denied bail on the spurious grounds that they will intimidate state witnesses. While they are in court NS Ngubane, a man who has publicly threatened to ‘deal with’ eKhenana and its leaders, openly walks in and out of the office of the Chief Magistrate, EB Ngubane. Bail is then denied on the grounds that the accused will ‘intimidate state witnesses’ after which they are sent to the terrible Westville Prison. If bail can be won after a number of court appearances the bail conditions prevent the accused from returning to eKhenana.

These arrests exact a huge toll on the people that are arrested and their families, and on the organising at eKhenana. They also place huge pressure on our movement forcing us to spend much of our time in court and with lawyers. These arrests are a clear misuse of the criminal justice system with the clear aim of breaking the spirit of the residents of eKhenana with the ultimate aim of destroying the occupation and weakening our movement.

This weekend the ANC in the area vowed to arrest the entire community as a way to evict everyone out of the occupation.

This weekend it was also made very, very clear that the Cato Manor police openly take instruction from NS Ngubane. They do not even try to hide it. This morning the police were seen at his house having a conversation. As we have

noted above, and in previous statements, NS Ngubane also has free access to the Chief Magistrate EB Ngubane. The criminal justice system has been captured by the ANC.

Today, Monday, 25 October, the two eKhenana women arrested on the weekend – Phumelele Mkhize and Maphiwe Gasela – appeared in court and were released on R500 bail each. As always happens their bail conditions prohibit them from returning to eKhenana on the grounds that they “will interfere with state witnesses”.

The local ANC violently attacks residents of the occupation and vows to have everyone in eKhenana arrested while the eThekweni municipality is bringing eviction proceedings in court. This is an all-out attack on the occupation.

We know that the aim of this ongoing repression is to destroy the occupation and for the ANC to take control of the land. We also know that in order for the ANC to campaign in our communities without being challenged by brave comrades who insist on telling the truth they must distract us from real issues and keep us in jails and in courts.

We ask our comrades to stand in solidarity with eKhenana women who are under attack from the alliance of the local ANC in Cato Manor, the Cato Manor police, the eThekweni Municipality and the courts. We kindly ask comrades in other countries to write to the president of the country, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, the Minister of Police, Mr Bheki Cele and the Minister of Justice Mr Ronald Lamola. We also ask you to stage protests at the South African embassies and high commissions in your respective countries.

S'bu Zikode
Nomsa Sizani

27 OCTOBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Repression continues in eKhenana as the homes of Maphiwe Gasela and Phumelele Mkhize are burnt to ashes

The alliance of the Cato Manor police, the local ANC and the eThekweni Municipality against the eKhenana Commune has taken another ugly turn. Last night the homes of Maphiwe Gasela and Phumelele Mkhize were burnt. Like all the other comrades from eKhenana who have been granted bail after arrest on bogus charges their bail conditions prohibit them from returning to Cato Manor, where eKhenana is located, so their homes were not occupied at the time of the attack.

Last night Ntokozo Ngubane, the daughter of NS Ngubane, the local ANC chief, was seen holding a meeting with ANC people in her house. After the meeting, at about 9pm, she was seen walking through the occupation with five other people. There were four men and one woman – Nkosingiphile Nsele. Nsele is the complainant in the case against Gasela, Mkhize and the three other women arrested on 8 October – Nokuthula Mabaso, Thozama Mazwi and Sindiswa Ngcobo. The six people walking through the occupation were carrying a 2.5-litre container filled with a liquid which witnesses assume was petrol. Shortly after this the homes of Gasela and Mkhize were in flames.

The community woke up but the fire had been fuelled with petrol and the flames were too high for them to be able to put it out.

Ntokozo Ngubane was a key state witness in the bogus murder charges brought against Ayanda Ngila, Lindokuhle Mnguni and Lando Tshazi who spent six months in prison after being arrested in March. All the charges were dropped against the three on 29 September after it became clear that the state had no case at all, and that the whole case was a crude frame-up.

It became clear that Ntokozo Ngubane and the other state witnesses had lied in court. Perjury is a criminal offence but they have not been arrested. We think that this may be because of the relationship between the Chief Magistrate, EB Ngubane, and her father, NS Ngubane and between both her and her father and the Cato Manor police.

After the two homes were burnt members of the community went to report a case of arson to the police in Cato Manor. Because the witnesses implicated Ntokozo Ngubane the police refused to open a case saying that the owners of

the two homes must come to the station. The police were told that both Gasela and Mkhize had just been released from custody and that their bail conditions instruct them to stay away from Cato Manor. The police still refused to open the case. They also refused to come to eKhenana to witness the aftermath of the incident, speak to residents and begin an investigation.

Gasela and Mkhize are poor women with small children who have suffered for too long and whose lives have been vandalized by the local ANC, the police and the courts.

Our members are repeatedly arrested and jailed on bogus charges while there is impunity for brazen criminal actions by the local ANC and the Municipality.

We have repeatedly witnessed the police taking instructions from and consulting with NS Ngubane. We have also repeatedly witnessed NS Ngubane going in and out of the office of the Chief Magistrate, EB Ngubane, while our comrades are in court.

It is clear that the police are not going to protect eKhenana and arrest ANC thugs. The local Cato Manor police station, also known as Kwa Kito, is instructed to arrest only Abahlali members and they have repeatedly made arrests when there is no evidence of any wrong doing. All that it takes for our members to be arrested and removed from the Commune by being taken to jail or given bail conditions that prevent them from returning to eKhenana is an allegation from an ANC member no matter how ridiculous that allegation is. Any crime committed by local ANC thugs be it rape, assault or burning of property is ignored no matter how brazen. The ANC can openly engage in serious criminal actions with impunity.

There is an all-out attempt to crush the Commune. We continue to remain non-violent in all our responses to these attacks.

All our efforts to call for justice for eKhenana have been ignored. We call on all our comrades, progressive organisations in South Africa and elsewhere, along with human rights organisations and Chapter 9 Institutions, to add their voices and power to the defence of the Commune, and an end to violence from ANC thugs and the Municipality, as well as the ongoing misuse of the criminal justice system.

S'bu Zikode
Nomusa Sizani
Thapelo Mohapi

6 NOVEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The majority have rejected the ANC

Only around a quarter of people eligible to vote chose to cast their votes for the ANC in the recent election. The mass stay away from the polls is a mass rejection of the ANC, along with the DA and the EFF which could not attract the support of significant numbers of former ANC voters. When you do not respect the dignity of the people and you undermine their power you always pay the price.

We have always said that the day is coming where South Africans will no longer have the loyalty to the ANC and will vote them out of power. This election shows that that day is coming.

We must never forget that this country was liberated from apartheid by ordinary people, by the long history of popular organisation at a mass scale running from the ICU to the UDF. We must not forget the Durban strikes of 1973, the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and the uprising in cities and towns across the country that began in 1984. We must always remember the price that ordinary people paid for our liberation from apartheid.

However, we do also remember the great men and women who led the ANC, people like OR Tambo, Chris Hani, Dorothy Nyembe and many others who gave their lives to the fight against the evils of apartheid. We must also acknowledge that when the mass struggles on the factory floors and in communities brought apartheid to the brink of collapse the majority of the people accepted the ANC as their leaders.

But now, twenty-seven years after the end of apartheid, we are ruled by political gangsters in some parts of the country. When we organise and march against corruption we are organising against the day to day theft of our own futures. When houses are actually built they are sold by corrupt councillors. We have seen this in Cato Crest, KwaNdengezi, Lindelani, Cornubia, Mount Moriah and in many places around the eThekweni Municipality.

When there is development it is imposed on the people. Grassroots planning is taken as criminal, as a political threat to be crushed. We have seen this

in Tembisa outside Johannesburg where the ANC undermined people's democracy by imposing reblocking. This is a process that needs to take place through democratic engagement with the communities. However the ward councillors ignored the views of the people.

Evictions take place with impunity and at gunpoint through private security companies or the Anti Land Invasion Unit. They are carried out in brazen violation of the law, and sometimes court orders too. The politicians continue to assume that they are above the law and that we are beneath the law.

As a result of austerity and corruption we are left in the mud without water, electricity and sanitation and violently attacked when we organise land reform, urban planning, service provision and food sovereignty from below. We cannot continue to live without land and work, to have our dignity vandalised and to live in the mud like pigs year after year while a few political elites live in luxury at the expense of the poor. Many families continue to go to sleep without any bread on the table. The same system that makes the rich to be rich makes the poor to be poor.

We are beaten, arrested, tortured, jailed and murdered when we stand up for our dignity. 'Land or death' has become a common saying because people know that to struggle for land is to risk death. 'Phansi nge ANC!' has become a common slogan in rallies and big meetings.

The ANC has become the enemy of the people. It is just as Frantz Fanon warned us.

We have always said that the anger of the people may go in many directions. Some of those who took their votes away from the ANC took them to right-wing and xenophobic parties. This is a dangerous development. Nobody is poor because their neighbour was born in another country. We were made poor by colonialism and kept poor by the ANC.

Prior to these elections we have called on our members, of which there are more than 100 000 in good standing, as well as those who support our struggle, to refuse to vote for their grave, to refuse to vote for the ANC. Our members, many of our supporters headed this call and huge numbers of other people also refused to vote for the ANC. For the first time the ANC could not win a majority in Durban and the municipality is now a hung municipality. The ANC will have to depend on other parties in order to run the municipality again.

The outcome in these elections are not about the factions in the ANC, they are a result of years of the abandonment and repression of the poor. They are about years of gangsters continually looting the state while we continue to live in shacks of indignity. But there are consequences for undermining the poor.

Now the poor have shown their power.

The ANC, DA and EFF will all leave the poor to continue to be poor. There is no hope from these parties. The only hope that we have is ourselves. We will continue to mobilise and organise the power of the impoverished from below to build our power from below to ensure that all of us in the shack settlements, the townships and rural areas find solutions to move forward, abolish poverty and build a real democracy.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Nomsa Sizani

27 NOVEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to hold Elective Congress to deepen our internal democracy

It is that time of the year where the mandate given to our current leadership by our members is ending. The Abahlali National Council term of office runs for three years, while the provincial term runs for two years. The Local Council office term runs for a year. Tomorrow Sunday, 28 November, Abahlali from around the country will meet at 135 Musgrave Road in Durban to elect our new leaders. The movement is determined to deepen our internal democracy. This is an opportunity to affirm that our Movement belongs to its members. Delegates come from our branches in good standing and candidates have been nominated by branches in good standing. New branches are also invited to observe the election.

Today the movement held a Policy Conference to deliberate on policy matters. Delegates deliberated on policy questions that will guide, define and shape our movement. The movement's praxis, culture and principles are well discussed and endorsed in these spaces. These questions are brought to the fore by branches. They come from the day to day thinking and praxis of our members in their different branches.

The conference also deliberated and reflected on the achievements, challenges and opportunities held in the last three years and opportunities thereof. Delegates noted a significant change in terms of how the state and general public view our movement. The power that we have been able to build over the years is beginning to bear fruits.

The elective congress will start at 10:00am. There will be reports from the outgoing leadership and shoot straight to the election. The election team is constituted by our comrades from the Coalition of the Poor. They will be overseeing the whole process and ensuring democracy, transparency and fairness.

Nomsa Sizani
Zandile Nsibande
Zanele Mtshali

2 DECEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The justice system continues to fail us in eKhenana

On the 23rd of November the Cato Manor police finally arrested three of the six people who are widely understood to be responsible for burning down of the houses of two women leaders of Abahlali in eKhenana.

Nkosingiphile Nsele, Sibusiso Mdluli and Mthandeni Mfeka were arrested on the 23rd November and appeared at the Durban Magistrate Court on the 25th November. They were granted bail of R2 000 each.

There are very clear double standards at play from the prosecuting authority in Durban. Our members have repeatedly been arrested on bogus charges and repeatedly denied bail. Two comrades spent two weeks in the notorious and very dangerous Westville Prison and three comrades spent six months there. When our members have been granted bail, the bail conditions have always prevented them from returning to their homes in eKhenana. The result is that, as well as imposing a serious personal cost on people, the bail conditions have also, at different times, removed ten key leaders from the occupation and prevented them from continuing with their activism.

Burning down people's homes is a very serious case. Here a real crime was committed and it is widely understood who the perpetrators are. The arrests are a breakthrough because they mean that there is no longer complete impunity for the ANC. However, the blatant double standards and inconsistencies from the Prosecuting Authority in Durban remain a grave concern given that when it comes to the local ANC their members are granted bail on their first appearance, and the bail conditions do not prevent them from returning to eKhenana.

When the three returned to eKhenana on Monday they were frightening people with gun shots and were seen in KwaKito (the Cato Manor police station) to meet with the investigating officer.

Organised waves of repression are not only carried out by violence from the state and the ANC. They are also accompanied by the circulation of slander and fake news. This is also part of the repressive strategy in this case. There have

been many Facebook accounts without a single previous post or a single 'friend' that have been posting pro-ANC propaganda.

The ongoing attack on the commune has had a negative impact on the food sovereignty project, which has managed to feed the poor families in the community. It has led to the many of our leaders being displaced from their homes. The criminalisation of the commune has meant that families that relied on it for survival are now going to sleep without food because what was their only hope is now destroyed by those who want to follow the usual ANC model of allowing local party leaders to turn shack settlements into personal profit-making schemes.

We have always held to the principle that the social value of land must come before its commercial value, and that land must be used for living and for people to grow food. We continue to support our community to work the land.

We will ensure that the commune in eKhenana is not destroyed by the ANC.

The misuse of the criminal justice system to attack autonomous organisation from below is not something new. The same thing happened in Kennedy Road in 2009 when the ANC said that the movement was 'running its own authority' by building our own political organisation and running our own projects such as a drop-in centre that took care of child-headed homes. The leaders of our movement in the settlement, including the organizers of the drop-in centre, were attacked, and their homes ransacked by people in the ANC. Instead of arresting those who committed these crimes, the police arrested members of our movement, criminalising our movement.

The ANC has always seen the self-organisation of the poor as criminal acts. When the poor occupy land for living and survival, the ANC sees this as crime.

We continue to support all communal projects that seek to feed the poor. We continue to fight against any form of eviction and displacement that render the poor homeless. We remain committed to our principle that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. We will continue to support progressive forces that occupy land for living and creating food sustainability.

Occupy. Resist. Grow. Develop.

Contacts.

Thapelo Mohapi
Lindokuhle Mnguni
Nomsa Sizani

8 DECEMBER 2021

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

An Important Victory in the Struggle Against GBV

Truth never damages a cause that is just. Law is not law, if it violates the principles of eternal and universal justice.

The Abahlali Women's League celebrated a tremendous victory on the 6th of December 2021 at the Pietermaritzburg High Court. The serial rapist, Msomi, who is 31 years of age, received a sentence of 123 years and 5 life sentences in prison for the rape of more than 60 women. One of these women is a very senior leader of AbM.

Our leader had been severely assaulted in 2013. After the attack she went to RK Khan Hospital for medical help, only to find that the doctor responsible for the Thuthuzela Care Centre was not available on the day. She couldn't open a case with the police because there was no doctor's report. The victim had been traumatized all these years and did not receive support until 2019.

Every year during the 16 Days of Activism between 25 November and 10 December we organise workshops to build women's solidarity around GBV and to provide practical support to victims. In 2019 she was part of one of these workshops and was referred onto to Lifeline Durban where she received psychological support and was further advised how to receive medical help and achieve justice.

When, after serious pressure against the state, Msomi was finally arrested earlier this year 21 women stood firm at the Durban High Court from and became state witnesses against the perpetrator. The others were frightened for their lives and chose not to be witnesses.

We as the Abahlali Women's League organised to support the women. Beginning in July, when the matter first went to court, we launched a picket at the High Court in support of all the women. The picket was set to pressure the court to serve justice to our leader and the to all the other women.

Most rapes are not reported and most rapes that are reported are never prosecuted. This was an important victory.

We are inviting all women everywhere to organise to build women's power in struggle and to break the silence of GBV which is a global pandemic.

We demand that the government of South Africa take Gender Based Violence cases as a priority. There are many problems with the justice system. One that is delaying cases for years is the backlog in processing DNA evidence. When there is no DNA evidence there is no case. The government must invest enough money into the justice system to resolve this problem, and take measures to stop corruption so that the money is actually used for what it is allocated for.

All progressive organisations in South Africa must work together to build a strong platform to struggle against GBV. Building women's power and defending women's autonomy must be at the heart of all radical politics.

#WeAreAPriority.

#StopGBV

#BreakTheSilence

#Women'sRights

Nomusa Sizani
Zandile Nsibande
OJ Majola