

Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statements and Memoranda

Volume Three

2014–2017





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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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1 JANUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The SOHCO Owned River View Flats in Cato Manor Have Just Been Occupied

The River View Flats in Cato Manor have just been occupied. The 350 flats in this block are owned by SOHCO, a social housing company, and were standing empty after the residents were all evicted in November. The security guards shot at the occupiers with rubber bullets. The police have arrived. Ten comrades have been arrested and taken to KwaKito (the Cato Manor police station).

Our movement has organised a number of land occupations over the years. This is the first time that we have occupied a block of flats. We have renamed the River View flat occupation as Amandlethu Village.

Among the comrades who have organised the occupation of these flats tonight are those who were evicted from these flats in November 2013 and those who were first evicted from their shacks in Cato Manor in March 2013 and who then opened and occupied a new section of Cato Manor called Marikana. Since then they have been illegally and violently evicted from the new occupation nine times including, most recently, on 23 December 2013. Three comrades have been murdered during this struggle, two others have been shot and many have been arrested and assaulted.

We have not undertaken this action lightly. We have occupied these flats because they are standing empty while people are homeless. We have occupied these flats because the people violently evicted from these flats by SOHCO in November remain homeless. They have not been given alternative accommodation as required by the law. We have occupied these flats because people living in the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Manor continue to be intimidated and evicted. We have occupied these flats because when people are evicted they are just told to 'go back to where you came from' or to 'go back to Lusikisiki'. We have occupied these flats because our attempts to negotiate with SOHCO, the organisation that built and owns the River View flats, have been frustrated at every turn. SOHCO prefers to show us to the world as criminals and sends in

armed men to throw us out of our homes. We have occupied these flats because the ANC and the police are killing activists in Cato Manor instead of negotiating with us. Like SOHCO they show us as criminals instead of citizens. We have also occupied these flats as a clear declaration of our intent to make 2014 a year of change. We will continue to escalate our struggle until the Municipality agrees to work with all democratic poor people's organisations to build a city for all. This will require an end to repression, serious and effective action to be taken against corruption and for the social value of land and government housing to be put before its commercial value.

If the City or a private landowner refuses to negotiate with us we will first organise a legal march and hand over a memorandum. If that memorandum is ignored we will then organise road blockades to force an answer to our memorandum and to force our oppressors to the negotiating table. We will also consider the occupation of relevant offices. If we are repressed we will organise simultaneous road blockades across the city during peak hour traffic. If people are left homeless we will occupy unused land or unused buildings owned by government or so-called public-private partnerships like Sohco. For years we have warned that if politicians and officials refuse to negotiate with us we will go to the streets and the courts, and that if these tactics fail we will take direct action to access land and housing and to force our oppressors to negotiate with us. We have called this Plan B. If the City refuses to negotiate with us, if they do not act against corruption and if they continue with repression we will continue to blockade roads and to occupy unused government land and housing. This is our New Year's Resolution.

Social housing, a partnership between government and private investors, has been a complete failure in Durban. Social housing has not been run democratically and in the interests of the poor and the working class. It has been run in a highly authoritarian way and for the profit of the rich. One of the biggest investors in so-called social housing in Durban is the notoriously corrupt Jay Singh. He and his wife Shireen Annamaly have, like S'bu and Shauwn Mpisane, become hugely rich from public housing in Durban. Public housing in this city is not run for the poor and the working class. It is run like a mafia operation between politicians and tenderpreneurs in order to make them rich and to reward those who are loyal to the ANC.

Jay Singh has so-called social housing projects in Phoenix, Chatsworth, Newlands and KwaMashu. Regulations were not adhered to in these developments, the homes have all kinds of structural defects, people were first told that they were buying and later that they were renting and rents were unaffordable. Some were then illegally sold. The Phoenix Tenants and Residents' Association has been struggling against Singh and his mafia. On 3 December 2013 one of Singh's developments was occupied in Newlands West by residents of the transit camps in Castlehill Road and Newlands Road.

Sohco has three blocks of flats in Durban. There is River View in Cato Manor, Ridge View in Hillary and Port View in Albert Park. The company was getting a government subsidy and rents from residents. In all three of these blocks of flats the residents have had to go on rent strikes. Rent strikes are a well-known way for tenants to try and force landlords to the negotiating table. They are used around the world. A rent strike, like a strike at a work place, is not a criminal action. It is a form of struggle. It is a form of politics that is used when there is no willingness to negotiate. Our movement has used rent strikes before, e.g. against the gangster landlord Ricky Govender in Motala Heights in Pinetown. The residents of these three Sohco buildings went on rent strikes because Sohco would not negotiate with them on their concerns. The concerns included unaffordable increases in rents, a refusal to repair the serious problems in the flats (including cracks and leaks) and the fact that people were first told that this was rent to own and then suddenly that it was changed to rent for life. In River View there were monthly rent increases. Sohco refused to negotiate and just said that those that couldn't afford the increases must leave.

The legal route was tried in Ridge View and River View without success. In River View residents spent all their savings on a private lawyer and were left bankrupted. Rights on paper don't help in reality when trying to access those rights leaves people bankrupt. The River View residents went to their councillor, Bhekisisa Mngadi. He is not a gangster councillor. He acknowledged the problems with Sohco and told the Daily News that "These are our people not dogs." However Mngadi was threatened by SMS by senior people in the City. He showed these threats to the residents. He phoned a senior person in Human Settlements and put her on speaker phone. She did not know that she was on speaker phone and said that "these people will just make fools of themselves if

they march". When the residents approached the Department of Human Settlements directly they refused to help. They just said that the residents must accept the eviction and go peacefully. Two residents were mandated to go and meet with Jacob Zuma. He met with them. Zuma told them that he could not help them because they had made a mistake by associating with Abahlali baseMjondolo. He said that they must only take their problems to the ANC.

Sohco has evicted residents from all three of its buildings in Durban. The Valley View residents were evicted on 1 November 2011. The first attempt to evict the River View residents in Cato Manor on the 2nd September 2013 was repulsed after residents set up a huge barricade of burning tyres. However the residents were successfully evicted on 18 November 2013. Once again a barricade was set up. When it was clear that the police, private security and red ants were going to try and breach the barricade it was set alight. Fire hoses were used to push the barricade back onto the protestors and two people were badly burnt. A lady who was burnt, Sibongile Dlamini, was admitted to hospital and then arrested and charged with public violence even though she had been very badly injured and had not harmed anyone else.

There was a court order authorising this eviction but the eviction was not carried out lawfully. Residents were not even given a copy of the order.

The people evicted in River View were working for the City, for the government and in places like Game and Pick'n'Pay. After the eviction some people had to leave Durban. Others slept in their cars. Children had to leave school. Many people lost their jobs. People lost their things, including certificates and photographs. Everyone was traumatised by the eviction. Everyone was stressing. People couldn't eat. One woman had to go to her boyfriend for a place to stay. She found that he had another woman in his bed but she had to accept to sleep on the floor. She was asked why she accepted this insult to her dignity. Her reply was that she couldn't afford dignity anymore.

The people who were evicted were very angry at the government, at the ANC and at Jacob Zuma. The residents concluded that this country is not a democracy and that the government is an ANC government and not a people's government. They concluded that the ANC has failed them.

Sohco claims that it has had to evict the residents at all three of its Durban flats because they are all criminals trying to 'hijack' buildings. It cannot explain why residents have felt that they had to go on rent strikes in all of their buildings

to try and force Sohco to negotiate or why in every building residents have exactly the same set of complaints against this company. Some newspaper reports have just repeated Sohco's attempts to criminalise residents without making any effort to get the resident's stories or to find out who is making money, and how, from Sohco developments. Others have been better and have spoken to residents as well as to Sohco and the police.

The government is always trying to separate the poor from the working class and the middle class. In Clare Estate we have made an alliance with the middle classes in the Ratepayers' Association to work together to demand a Clare Estate for all. In Cato Manor we have united the poor and the working class in this occupation. The comrades from the Marikana Land Occupation are supporting this occupation because they know what it is like to be evicted, because they have lost faith in this corrupt government, because the law is not working for them and because they need houses. The comrades in the Marikana Land Occupation have survived serious repression because they are united. The residents evicted by Sohco in Hillary (Ridge View) were defeated because they were divided. The residents of River View have learnt a good lesson from the experiences of the Ridge View residents and the residents of the Marikana Land Occupation. They will stand firm with the same unity and courage as the residents of the Marikana Land Occupation. We are committed to running all of our occupations, including land occupations and housing occupations, on a democratic basis with elected leaders, the right to recall leaders and open mass meetings. We are committed to having women in leadership, including young women, in all levels in our movement. Most of the key organisers in this occupation are young women.

We have prepared a detailed report on corruption and the illegal evictions and repression in Cato Manor which we will soon submit to Thuli Madonsela. We will also prepare and submit a report to the Public Protector on the total failure of social housing in Durban and how it has been corrupted.

Some of our members grew up with the story of the women's struggle in Cato Manor in 1959. We have members whose mothers were part of that struggle. Cato Crest and the River View flats are both part of Cato Manor, of Umkhumbane. The River View flats look on to the Umkhumbane River. The ANC tells us that the women who lead the struggle against evictions in Cato Manor in 1959, women like Florence Mkhize and Dorothy Nyembe, are

heroes. But when Abahlali women demand land and housing, safety and dignity then they are criminals. We are sure that the apartheid state called Florence Mkhize and Dorothy Nyembe criminals too. But they lived in the people's hearts as heroes just as the women leading the struggle in Cato Manor today live in our hearts as heroes. We see a clear connection between the heroes of 1959 and the heroes of today. We also see a clear connection between the white boers of apartheid and the black boers of today. The struggle for Umkhumbane continues. The women's struggle in Umkhumbane continues. The struggle to make Durban a city for all continues. The struggle to make sure that land, cities, wealth and power in South Africa are shared fairly continues.

We remain willing to negotiate. But when our requests to negotiate are denied and we are met with evictions and repression we will take direct action to disrupt, to occupy and connect.

We send our new year's greetings to all our comrades around South Africa and around the world. Let us make 2014 the year in which we all recognise our own strength to take forward our struggle to ensure that the dignity of all people is respected, that we all have the same right to govern our societies and that the hold of the politicians and the capitalists over the land, cities and wealth of this world is broken.

Nono
Ndabo
Bandile
S'bu

1 JANUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

New Year's Eve in Cato Manor: An Occupation, Police Violence, Arrests and Fire

Just after three this morning the River View Flats in Cato Manor were occupied. Some of the occupiers had previously been evicted from this block of flats and others were from the Marikana Land Occupation, also in Cato Manor.

The security guards stationed at the block of flats tried to prevent the occupation by firing rubber bullets at the occupiers but they were outnumbered and they were not able to stop the occupation. Around fifty people were able to gain occupation of the block flats which was then renamed Amandlethu Village.

The occupation was an act of non-violent civil disobedience against a municipality that is corrupt, criminal and violent, a municipality that, in partnership with the ruling party, brazenly ignores the law and routinely uses violence to try and force its poorest residents to accept their oppression. In this municipality government housing is being used to control the poor, to expel us from the city centre, to force us to accept the control of ruling party and, most of all, to make politicians and their friends rich.

Soon after the flats were successfully occupied the police arrived under the command of the Cato Manor station commander, Mnganga. Mnganga is the same police officer who witnesses insist murdered Nqobile Nzuza on a protest in Cato Manor on 30 September 2013. He has never been arrested despite the public statements by witnesses accusing him of the murder.

The police attacked the occupation violently. We have struggled to get clear information about the exact number of people that have been arrested and the exact details of the injuries that were suffered when the occupation was broken and people arrested. Our most recent information is that twenty people were arrested, 10 women and 10 men. We have also been told that a number of the people who were arrested were injured and are being detained in hospital. However we have not had any contact with any of the people who have been arrested since their arrests. Their phones were immediately confiscated and we

have not been allowed to visit them in the holding cells. We have not been given any official information. At the moment we do not know if any of the people that have been arrested have been assaulted or tortured while in police custody.

The comrades who were arrested this morning will appear in Court 10, at the Durban Magistrate's Court, at 9:00 am. tomorrow morning.

Not long after the occupation was broken up a fire started in Cato Crest section of Cato Manor. Around 45 shacks were burnt. At this point we cannot say for certain how the fire started.

We have declared 2014 as the year of change. We have given notice that we will not accept transit camps, evictions, fires, corruption and repression or the failure to allocate land, provide services and build housing on the basis that puts the needs of people, starting with the worst off, before the interests of politicians and capitalists.

Our struggle continues.

Queen
Ndabo Mzimela
Bandile Mdlalose

6 JANUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Land Invasion Unit is Approaching Cato Manor

Land Invasion Unit is Approaching Cato Manor

The Land Invasion Unit has gathered at the Westridge Tennis Stadium. This is where they usually meet before attacking Cato Manor. They have now left the stadium and an attack seems imminent.

There is no court order and so these evictions will be illegal. We don't yet know if they are planning to attack the Dunbar occupation (occupied yesterday) or the Marikana occupation (occupied March 2013) or both.

The ANC and the City have failed to destroy the Marikana Occupation. Now the ANC Area Committee is selling sites in the area for between R3 000 to R5 0000 each. They are trying to get back political control and the ability to profit from the land this way.

They say that this is an ANC area and no one can do anything here without the permission of the ANC.

Marikana was occupied by people who were illegally evicted. They were told 'to make their own way'. Now they are under attack. The residents are clear: 'We have no choice but to resist. If we don't resist here we will have nowhere else to stand for our lives, our families, our dignity and our place in this city'.

The residents also strongly believe that when the Mayor is seen in the area evictions follow. And they strongly believe that he is associated with the killings in the area.

If we are evicted today we will rebuild. South Africa belongs to all who live in it and not just to the rich and members of the ruling party.

Ndabo Mzimela Chairperson of the Abahlali baseMjondolo Cato Crest branch

Khayabazi Secretary of the Cato Crest Abahlali baseMjondolo branch

Mnikelo Ndabankulu Abahlali baseMjondolo Spokesperson

18 JANUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We Reject the Poisonous Politic of Division

Unyawo Alunampumulo

A person is a person where ever they find themselves.

Our movement has a proud history of taking a clear and strong stand against xenophobia. Our movement has always been open to everyone who lives in the shacks and agrees with our politic. We ask people many questions before they join our movement. But we have never asked someone what country they were born in before welcoming them into our struggle. A neighbour is a neighbour no matter where they were born. A comrade is a comrade no matter where they were born or what language they speak. During the xenophobic attacks in May 2008 we insisted that a person is a person where ever they may find themselves. We insisted that South African belongs to all who lives in it. We took a decision to shelter and defend anyone under attack. We acted on that decision. There were no xenophobic attacks in any settlement affiliated to our movement.

We were so sad to hear about the xenophobic attack in the Jika Joe shack settlement in Pietermaritzburg on Thursday. It brought back very painful memories of the attack on our movement in Kennedy Road in September 2009 as well as the xenophobic attacks around the country in May 2008. We used to have members in the Jika Joe settlement but it was not possible to form a branch there due to the serious intimidation from the shack lord who runs the settlement. She gives shelter to criminals in exchange for their support for her authority. It was been impossible to organise freely in this settlement. However we are making contact with our old comrades there to see what can be done.

We have discussed this matter at our meeting today and we wish to make it clear that we will mobilise against xenophobia in all of our branches. In every branch we will continue with our commitment to shelter and defend anyone from another country who is under attack.

We are also deeply concerned about the notorious Phumlani Mfeke and his Mazibuye Africa Form. We also discussed Mfeke at our meeting today. This

man, this rich man, justifies his poisonous anti-Indian politics in the name of African shack dwellers. We have never met this man or anyone from his organisation. He does not speak for us. We reject his poisonous politics of division completely.

Many Indian people are as poor as anyone else in this country. We have Indian members in our movement. We have lived together and struggled together. We have faced repression together and won victories together. We have been together in camps, in marches and funerals. Some of our closest comrades who struggled with us when we first built our movement are Indian people. In Clare Estate our movement has recently formed an alliance with the mostly middle class and Indian ratepayer's association to work together to build a Clare Estate for all.

We are against all forms of discrimination. We are against discrimination by Indian people towards African people and we are against discrimination by African people towards Indian people.

We are against all corruption. It makes no difference to us whether Shauwn Mpisane or Jay Singh is doing the corruption.

We are against all repression. It has never made any difference to us whether the name of the person who is repressing us is Nayager or Mnganga.

We are against all concentrations of land, wealth and power. It makes no difference to us whether we are struggling against Ricky Govender or Mzi Ngiba.

We stand for a fair distribution of wealth, land and power. We stand for the right to the city for everyone. It makes no difference to us whether a poor person is Indian, African or any other race. A neighbour is a neighbour. A comrade is a comrade. That is our politic.

The rich will always try to divide the poor to make us weak. The rich will always try to mobilise us for their own agendas. We will stand firm against the politic of division.

A person is a person where ever they find themselves.

South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

S'bu Zikode
Bandile Mdlalose
Thina Khanyile
Mzwakhe Mdlalose

11 FEBRUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Return to the Constitutional Court Tomorrow

The Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest was founded after an illegal eviction by the eThekweni Municipality. It has been destroyed over and over again by the eThekweni Municipality since March last year. Each time the occupation has been rebuilt. We have been to court and won urgent interdicts against the city preventing them from illegally destroying the occupation. We have marched on the City Hall in our thousands. When we did not receive a reply to our memorandum we organized simultaneous road blockades across the city. Now we are taking this struggle to the Constitutional Court.

The MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal and the eThekweni Municipality will have to face the wrath of the judges tasked with upholding the Constitution of Republic of South Africa.

For many years now the eThekweni municipality has disregarded the rule of law and became a law unto themselves. They consider poor people to be beneath the law. They consider themselves to be above the law. They claim that Durban is an ANC land and that the ANC rules the municipality and thus rules the rule of law.

In Cato Crest they have repeatedly evicted residents despite interdicts in the Durban High Court forbidding them from evicting. Those who, like Nkosi-nathi Mngomezulu, have tried to defend their homes have been shot. Witnesses claim that they saw Govender of the Land Invasions Unit deliberately shoot Mngomezulu. Yet Govender has not been suspended or charged. The shooting of Mngomezulu has not been seriously investigated. The witnesses have not been interviewed. Thembinkosi Qumbela and Nkululeko Gwala were both assassinated after speaking out against evictions and corruption. Their assassins remain at large. Their murders have not been seriously investigated. Nqobile Nzuza is gone. She was shot in the back of the head at the age of 17. She was unarmed when she was murdered. Witnesses have said that they say the Station

Commissioner from the Cato Crest police station deliberately shot her. This has been widely reported. Yet he has not been suspended or arrested. The witnesses have not been interviewed.

It is clear that the ruling party and the state are willing to use murder to repress our struggles. It is clear that they are confident that they can murder us with impunity. It is clear that they believe that the ANC is above the law and that poor people are beneath the law.

The MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal obtained an Eviction Order against the Madlala Village in Lamontville in March 2013. The ANC has made it clear to them that the reason why they were evicted is that they had joined another political party. If they had remained ANC they would not have been evicted. This community has suffered severely in the hands of the ANC and its City. In Durban evictions are often political just as killings by the police or assassins and shootings, beatings and torture by the police are often political.

The Municipality are now claiming that the MEC's order to evict the people from Madlala Village in Lamontville allows them to evict anywhere in the city at any time. They are claiming that this eviction order allows them to ignore the Constitution, the PIE Act and our various interdicts against them and to continue to evict in Cato Crest. This makes no legal sense. It is an attempt to find another way to bring back the Slums Act which we defeated in the Constitutional Court in 2009.

Madlala Village are taking the MEC to the Constitutional Court to have his interdict overturned. They are represented by the Legal Resource Center. Abahlali baseMjondolo are joining with Socio Economic Rights Institute of South Africa as an Amicus Curiae in the case. We have made this decision because this interdict has a direct effect on us.

Our lawyers will present arguments on the following issues:

- Whether the March 2013 Order authorises evictions.
- Whether the March 2013 Order is compatible with section 26 (3) of the Constitution, and
- Whether the March 2013 Order is compatible with the rule of law

In October last year one of our members, Nyati Gcinithemba, was severely assaulted and shot in the chest by the police in the uMlazi court. Our press statement on the shooting is here: <http://abahlali.org/node/12625>

After he was shot Nyathi was arrested, detained and charged with various offences. Yesterday all charges were dropped against Nyathi. This is typical. Hundreds of our members have charged with various offences since 2005 but not one of our members has even been convicted on any charge involving violence. In fact the only time that one of our members was ever convicted of any offense of any kind was when he admitted to connecting his community to electricity (safely with insulated cables buried in the ground). In most cases people are arrested, detained, sometimes assaulted and then released. After 6 or 7 court appearances the charges are withdrawn because they were fabricated in the first place and there never was any evidence.

The assassins, ANC thugs and police are free to use violence against us, even to kill us. Yet when we are repressed we are the ones who are arrested on trumped up charges!

Thinabantu Khanyile- Abahlali baseMjondolo
 Mama Eshlin Mbhemu- Madlala Village
 Mama Sherly Mdodana- Madlala Village
 TJ Ngongoma -Abahlali baseMjondolo

13 FEBRUARY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Evictions in Madlala Village the Day after they were in the Constitutional Court

Yesterday we went to the Constitutional Court to support the Madlala Village community in Lamontville. We were there to oppose an unjust and unlawful eviction order which was granted to the MEC for Human Settlements Ravi Pillay and which the eThekweni Municipality was misusing to claim that it could evict anyone, anywhere despite the protections given to shack dwellers by the Constitution and the PIE Act.

It was very sad for us to hear the lawyers for the MEC telling the court that the order is not to evict residents but to stop new land occupations. The reality is that outside the court they are continuing to evict and are misusing this order to claim that their evictions are lawful.

Today the Municipality gathered at Madlala Village to demolish residents' homes using the same court order. They were not prepared to wait for the judgement of the Constitutional Court. It is clear that they wanted to punish the Madlala Village community for taking them to the Constitutional Court. We all remember how the Kennedy Road community was punished in 2009 for taking the previous MEC to the Constitutional Court. This attack on Madlala Village is not just disrespecting the residents but it is also disrespecting the Constitution of South Africa and the court.

We urge the media to rush to Madlala Village as the municipality is demolishing.

Bandile Mdlalose – Abahlali baseMjondolo General Secretary
Mrs Ndodana – Madlala Village
Thinabantu Khanyile – Abahlali baseMjondolo Office

7 MARCH 2014

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Road Blockade now on in iSiphingo

Residents of the iSiphingo transit camps are currently engaged in a road blockade. Transit camps are never acceptable. We are human beings not animals. Recently this camp has been flooded again after the rains. Residents have diseases like TB and asthma due to the living conditions.

In September the MEC promised, in public, that they would be moved to Cornubia. Yet they are still in the transit camp and have heard nothing more about the MEC's promise.

This is a protest at broken promises and it is a protest at living conditions that no human being can accept.

Khanyi
Mnikelo

13 MARCH 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Marikana Land Occupation Wins Important Victory in Cape Town High Court

Today, there was a landmark ruling for our comrades in the Marikana Land Occupation in Cape Town. It will help us and shack dwellers all over South Africa to stop the municipalities' relentless demolitions of poor people's homes. These demolitions are unconstitutional, illegal and often violent.

We are living in the most challenging times, where Municipalities misuse their powers, as they have done when demolishing people's homes in Marikana settlement in Cape Town on the 28th of April and 02nd of May 2013. It becomes worrying because when this happens, us poor people have nowhere else to go.

Our structures which are our only homes and source of comfort, security, happiness and access to the cities, are destroyed by the Municipalities.

After months of demolitions and resistance in Marikana since May last year residents found some peace in their settlement. But then the torture began again on the 7th of January this year. The municipality's Anti-Land Invasion Unit (ALIU) demolished peoples' homes again leaving them homeless and without an alternative accommodation.

However Abahlali baseMarikana were strong in their struggle and they were aware of their rights. Their attempts to rebuild were rebuffed the following day when the ALIU demolished their homes once again. But this time they took the City to court. They approached the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) in Cape Town and with the support of the LRC they managed to challenge the City of Cape Town in the High Court.

Today a landmark judgement has been set by the Court. We were very much happy and excited with judge Gamble's progressive order requiring that the City of Cape Town not only stop destroying people's homes but that they must actually rebuild the homes they destroyed on the 7th and 8th of January.

Judge Gamble remarked that: "The City's operation seems to have been somewhat haphazard in that the evidence suggests both confusion and a degree

of arbitrariness in the selection of targeted structures”. He also made it clear that the city’s actions were “unconstitutional and unlawful” because while the city accepted that “all of the structures demolished over the two days in question where complete” and had therefore been occupied, they still demolished the homes.

According to the ruling, no municipality has the right to decide what counts as a home, only the courts can do that.

The judgment, noting our rights as per the constitution, was a big victory for all of us. We have said for a long time the Municipality in Cape Town is violating the law and the Constitution. Today the court vindicated this position.

This ruling will not only help the residents of Marikana in Cape Town, but will also help the Marikana Land Occupation in Durban and help to protect thousands of shack dwellers throughout the country that have been forced to endure the violence and oppression of Anti-Land Invasion Units which rob us of our right to dignity.

We will continue our struggle in the streets, in the communities and in the courts. We will continue to democratise our cities and our country from below. We will continue to struggle to ensure that the social value of land is put before its commercial value.

We send our warmest greetings and congratulations to the comrades from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cape Town. We also send our greetings and congratulations to the Legal Resources Centre in Cape Town.

For more information and comments from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cape Town please call:

Tumi – Marikana Land Occupation (Cape Town)

Yolanda – Marikana Land Occupation (Cape Town)

Bandile – Abahlali baseMjondolo General Secretary

23 APRIL 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

An Invitation to all Political Parties except the ANC

Abahlali baseMjondolo has boycotted every election, local and national, since 2006 as part of the 'No Land! No House! No Vote!' campaign. We made it clear that we were not interested in being used as ladders for any political parties or any politicians, that we were aware that no political party is prepared to form a genuine partnership with the poor and that no political party had a progressive position on shack settlements. We understood clearly that poverty is a question of power and that we therefore had to build our own power through organising ourselves as the strong poor and to be very careful not to give up our power to any political party or politician (or NGO).

Before every election we discussed our position carefully and in every election from 2006 till 2011 it was clear that our members did not want to vote. This year we have again had a series of discussions about the General Election on the 7th of May 2014. This year our members came to a different conclusion. This year our members came to the conclusion that it is no longer enough to withhold our vote from the ANC.

The ANC attacked us in Kennedy Road in 2009. They murdered the striking miners at Marikana in 2012. They have murdered many unarmed people on protests. Last year they murdered three activists in Cato Crest. Their security guards and Anti-Land Invasion Unit shoot us when they come to disconnect us and evict us.

They openly threaten us with death. It is not enough to withhold votes from a party that is killing us when we stand up for our humanity. Such a party is a serious threat to society and it must be removed from office as soon as possible. For this reason we have invited all political parties other than the

ANC to come and address us so that we can decide which party or parties to support against the ANC.

There was a long debate about whether or not we should invite the DA to address us. We all know that they have been illegally evicting our members and other poor people in Cape Town and that, like the ANC, their politic is highly anti-poor. Also, like the ANC, they can't understand that democracy is about more than voting and think that there must always be some other force behind our struggles. They do not understand that poor people think and organise their own struggles. However in the end, and after a long discussion, we decided that while we will ask the DA a long list of questions about their conduct if they do come to our meeting the meeting will be open to all political parties except the ANC because as much as the DA are oppressing our comrades in Cape Town they are not murdering our comrades.

We understand clearly that there is no political party that supports our programme. We are also very clear that we will not give up our autonomy to any political party. We will continue to insist that all members elected to leadership positions in our movement must refuse membership of political parties. However we cannot allow a government that kills its people when it stands up for their humanity to be recognised to remain in office. We are therefore willing to make a tactical vote against the ANC.

Before we make any decisions about which party to support we would like to put the following ten questions to all political parties:

1. Can you guarantee that you will actively and seriously oppose all forms of state repression and that you will support our right to organise independently of all political parties? This must include a serious commitment to house all those driven from their homes by the ANC in Kennedy Road in 2009 and for a serious criminal investigation to be undertaken with regard to the violence in Kennedy Road in 2009, Marikana in 2011, Cato Crest and KwaMashu in 2013, all the murders on protests over the years as well as all the violence, including murders, by municipal security guards and Anti-Land Invasion Units during evictions and disconnections.

2. Can you guarantee that you will actively and seriously oppose all evictions?

This must include a serious commitment to provide housing for all these evicted in Ridge View and Hillary in 2012 and 2013 and in Cato Crest in 2013.

3. Can you guarantee that you will act to put the social value of urban land before its commercial land? This must include a serious commitment to the

immediate transfer of the ownership of all occupied land to the occupiers of that land.

4.Can you guarantee that no child will be excluded from school, or treated badly at school, because their parents are poor?

5.Can you guarantee that there will be effective and democratic land reform in rural areas that puts land in the hands of the people, including women?

6.Can you guarantee that there will be an end to corruption? This must include taking serious and effectively against all corruption within your own organisation.

7.Can you guarantee that all shack settlements will get services while they wait for their settlements to be upgraded with formal houses?

8.Can you guarantee that the upgrade of settlements will be planned with their residents and that upgrades from shacks to formal housing will be a undertaken as an urgent priority?

9.Can you guarantee that you will take serious and effective steps to make sure that the wealth of the country will be fairly shared?

10.Can you guarantee that there will be an end to all discrimination against people based on race, their language, which province they come from, which country they were born in or their gender and sexuality? This must include taking serious and effective action against any racism, ethnic prejudice, xenophobia, sexism or homophobia in your own organisation.

Twenty years of shack life is a disgrace for our democracy. We are highly aware that no political party is currently taking the issues of shack dwellers seriously. However we will consider the possibility of a tactical vote for a political party that is willing to make the best commitments among the parties on the land and housing crisis in our cities. Of course we will continue to organise outside of the party system before, during and after the election.

Corruption is destroying everything and turning people against each other. We cannot consider a vote for any political party that cannot show that it is serious in opposing corruption including corruption committed by its own members.

A state that kills people who stand up for their humanity is the end of democracy. We cannot consider a vote for any political party that is not willing to commit itself to actively and seriously opposing all repression.

We invite all political parties to join us at the Abahlali baseMjondolo contact point. This will be a platform given to political parties not only to engage with our movement but to seriously commit them to changing the lives of the shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa. The ANC must be removed from office and we invite all political parties except the ANC to meet with us so that we can decide which party to support in this election. However we want to make it very clear that we will not take membership of any political party, that our vote will be tactical and that if we do agree to collectively vote for one party, or to leave this decision to the conscience of each member as an individual, we will continue to operate autonomously.

We want to bring new ideas to South Africans that people must vote for change based on what political parties commit themselves to while not giving up their political power to political parties. We also want South Africans to put the interest of the country first which means voting for the party or parties that make the right commitments and not supporting the policies of a party just because it is the party that you always supported.

We remain highly aware that most of what we need will not be achieved by voting and we will continue to build our own power and to organised in our communities and to confront all our oppressors in the streets, in the courts and in the media.

Just as we currently organise against the ANC in Durban and the DA in Cape Town we will continue to organise against any political party that oppresses the poor after this election.

The meeting will take place at Diakonia, Durban on Saturday 25 April at 1:00 p.m.

Abahlali Head Office
Thembani Ngongoma
Nono Majola
Zandile Nsibande.
S'bu Zikode

24 APRIL 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Shooting by the eThekweni Land Invasion Unit at eNsimbini Ward 30

Abahlali baseMjondolo members are being violently attacked at eNsimbini by eThekweni Land Invasion Unit. Two comrades – Baba Cele at his 40 years of age and Baba David Ngubane at age 36 have just been shot and rushed to hospital. About 30 shacks have been demolished. We all know that the Land Invasion Unit are a new municipal hit squad that targets the poor, innocent and the homeless.

We all know that the eThekweni Municipality are law unto themselves. Today's eviction, just like any eviction in Durban is illegal, they have no court order and no legal right to evict residents without an eviction order. This illegal and violent attack on the people of eNsimbini happens at the same time Abahlali are still waiting for the Constitutional judgement on the matter of eviction in Durban by KZN MEC for Human Settlements.

The media are urged to rush to the scene in Boroubh Road in Mayville.

Phumlane
Lungile Sosibo

26 APRIL 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

UnFreedom Day 2014: We Mourn Twenty Years of UnFreedom

We Mourn Twenty Years of UnFreedom

Twenty years of shack life has not been easy for us.

Twenty years of ANC rule with its evictions, its disconnections, its lies and all its greediness and violence has come to mean an abusive relationship with us. Twenty years after apartheid we live like pigs in the mud, our children die of diarrhoea, we are forced into transit camps at gun point, the police beat and shoot us in the streets and the assassins kill us with impunity. If we stand up and demand that our humanity is recognised we are removed from the housing list and placed on the death list.

We were promised housing but we got evictions, forced removals to rural dumping grounds and transit camps while Jacob Zuma got Nkandla. We were promised jobs but even a job picking rubbish needs an ANC card. We were promised democracy but when we want to be part of discussions and decision making we are taken as a dangerous threat to society. We were promised the rule of law under a Constitution that would respect everyone but from Durban to Cape Town the Municipalities treat the poor as if we are beneath the law. We have seen miners murdered in cold blood in Marikana. We have seen Thembinkosi Qumbela, Nkululeko Gwala and Nqobile Nzuza murdered in cold blood in Durban. No one is held to account. The truth of our society is that we are people that can be freely killed. No one can deny this.

This is not democracy. It is oppression.

As usual when Freedom Day comes we are lectured about our freedom by people who do not know what it is to make a child sleep with only water in their stomach and who have never been beaten by the police for expressing their views. As usual we are told to accompany politicians and businessmen to the stadiums to cheer our oppressors.

As usual we refuse.

As usual we will be mourning the loss of our freedom to the alliance between the politicians and the rich. As usual we will gather together to insist that shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa deserve real freedom and real democracy. Freedom means that all human creatures must be respected and allowed to live freely. Freedom means that everyone has the right to organize freely and participate in all decision making that affects their lives and their wellbeing. Freedom means that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that therefore we have a right to this land, a right that is free from eviction by the land invasion units.

Freedom day is celebrated on the 27th of April. Abahlali will hold its Unfreedom Day Rally on Monday, 28 April 2014, at 10am at Siyanda Settlement in KwaMashu. We will use this opportunity to remember our fallen heroes with a special gesture.

We remain committed to a struggle for a world in which everyone counts. We remain committed to a world in which land, cities, wealth and power are shared fairly. We remain committed to our right to organise ourselves and to speak for ourselves.

Next year we will celebrate ten years in struggle. Our struggle will continue until we are really free. Even if the struggle of our parents will have to become the struggle of our children we will not give up.

TJ Ngongoma
 Nono Majola
 Zandile Nsibande
 Mnikelo Ndabankulu

6 MAY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The ANC Must be removed from Office

For nine years our movement has boycotted elections. We have been clear that no political party represents the interests of the poor and that it was necessary for us to build our own power in order to present our own needs and demands to society. In these nine years we have won many victories but most of us remain in shacks. Twenty years of shack life is a disgrace in a democracy.

Corruption is also a disgrace. In Durban you get nothing without a membership card for the ANC. All development goes through the councillors and their ward committees and ANC branch executive committees. Development is there to make ANC leaders rich and to control the rest of us by only making it available to ANC members. Development is not for the people. This kind of corruption is a disgrace in a democracy.

But an even bigger disgrace is the repression that we have faced from the ANC, its members, its leaders and its assassins. They have banned our marches; attacked our marches; arrested us on trumped up charges; assaulted us in detention; used armed men to drive us from our homes with police support; used death threats, attacks in our homes and torture in police stations to intimidate people to manufacture evidence against us; detained us for months and months while we wait for a trial that gets thrown out of court because there is no evidence against us; used their anti-land invasion unit to evict us for political reasons and beaten and shot us in our communities. Senior members of the ANC and the Municipality have made public death threats against us. Two activists were assassinated in Cato Crest last year and another, an unarmed teenage girl, was executed by the police.

We cannot go on with this level of repression. As everyone knows we are not the only people who face this kind of repression. We all know about Andries Tatane and all the others murdered by the police on protests. We all know about the Marikana Massacre.

In Durban court orders are just ignored by the Municipality and so the courts cannot protect us. Mostly the media and civil society tend to agree that because

we are poor and black we are automatically violent and criminal and too stupid to think our own politics and so we do not get that much protection from the media and civil society either. We have some valued comrades on the left among the middle classes but mostly this left just wants to bus us into its meetings so that it can look credible without having any interest at all in our struggles, our ideas or our safety. NUMSA asked us to support their march in Durban but they have not shown any concern to support us when we face repression. The EFF also asked us to support their march in Durban but, like NUMSA, they have not supported us when we face repression. So far our experience of both these organisations is that they are operating like the left NGOs – we are treated as if our only role is to provide the large numbers of people that they need to be bussed in to justify their politics.

Because we cannot carry on like this we took a decision to vote against the ANC. We did not want to split our vote. We decided to collectivise our vote in order to make it stronger. Our main priority was that the ANC must be removed from office. We knew that this will not happen in this election but we were still clear that if we can weaken the ANC then we must do that. Also we knew that if we collectivise our vote all the political parties will know that there is a large bloc of votes that will be available at the next election for the party that does the best job in opposing repression and takes the best position on shack settlements.

We decided that all political parties except the ANC would be invited to make a presentation to the movement. Some of our members did not want to invite the DA to make a presentation as they are known to represent the rich and, in Cape Town, they are no different to the ANC when it comes to illegal and violent evictions. However we debated this at length and decided to invite them to make a presentation on the grounds that the removal of the ANC was our first priority and the weakening of the ANC was our second priority.

The DA, EFF, NFP and WASP all accepted the invitation to make a presentation to our members at the Diakonia Centre on 25 April and they all came and made their presentations.

The delegates to that meeting then returned to their branches to discuss the presentations there. We met again on 1st of May and held a general meeting. At this meeting the general leadership did not vote as their role was to facilitate the meeting. The rest of the delegates voted and the results were as follows:

2 – undecided

2 – WASP

16 – EFF

26 – NFP

146 – DA

The DA and the EFF returned to witness the voting. WASP did not return. The NFP arrived three hours late with lots of car, bodyguards and their senior people. But by that time we were already dispersing.

The whole meeting was recorded on video and this video can be made available. Even those who were very disappointed with the results agree that it was a highly democratic process. The collective discipline of a democratic organisation requires that we all accept this outcome. Of course this decision is only for this election and it does not bind our members in Cape Town. When the next election comes we will again decide whether or not to vote and, if so, which party to vote for.

The main reason why the majority of the delegates supported the DA was because they wanted to have the strongest possible opposition to the ANC to put the maximum pressure on the ANC and to prevent it from doing what it pleases – which includes murdering us. We negotiated a legal agreement with DA which commits them to support some of our more basic demands. We hope that they will stand up for these issues and that they, and all other parties, will realise that if they want the support of the shack dwellers they will have to support us rather than see us as a problem to be eradicated or forcibly removed from the cities and taken to the human dumping grounds.

We will vote, as one bloc, for the DA tomorrow. We will not take membership of the party, we do not endorse its policies and we will continue to insist that no one can hold a position as an elected leader in our movement if they join a political party. We do not love or trust the DA. Already they are telling lies about our choice and we are not surprised. We have made a purely tactical choice. We will certainly continue to organise against all and any attacks on the poor in Cape Town by the DA government there.

One of the lies that is being told is that the DA are saying that we have endorsed them for this election in the Western Cape. This is not true. Our Western Cape branch has endorsed our decision to make a tactical vote for the DA in KwaZulu-Natal. Our Western Cape branch has not decided to make any collective vote for any party in this election.

Over the last nine years we have protected our autonomy from NGOs very carefully even though we do work with some NGOs. Now that we feel that it is necessary for our safety and our ability to continue to organise to use our numbers to make deals with political parties we will protect our autonomy from political parties in the same way.

Our politics puts people first. We cannot do nothing but wait for socialism to come one day in the far distant future. Our children are dying from diarrhoea right now, our old people and disabled people are dying in shack fires right now, we are being evicted and disconnected right now and we are being beaten and shot during evictions and disconnections right now. We been repressed, and even murdered, right now. We have to act to do what we can to make our members' lives better right now. We have to act to protect our ability to organise and to sustain our living politics right now. This does not mean that we have given up on our vision of a world where land, cities, wealth and power are shared fairly. We call this a living communism and we remain committed to it. But we also remain committed to the human beings that we are now and to our families, neighbours and comrades. We will make what deals we have to make to protect our politics and improve our members' lives right now but we will not give up on our political vision. We represent thousands of people who live in shack settlements. Those people who sit in university offices and NGO offices only represent themselves. Their children are safe. Their lives are not at risk. They are free to put ideology before people because they are not accountable to oppressed people and because they are not themselves oppressed people. But the fact that we do not enjoy that freedom does not mean that we have given up our politics. It means that we are searching for a practical way forward in a difficult and dangerous struggle.

The new Abahlali electoral position has offered us a lot to learn about. There is a lot to learn about party politics and its dirty campaigning tactics. There is a lot to learn about the deeper politics of our time. And, yes, there is a lot to learn about who cares and doesn't care about the struggles of the poor and the working class.

Ideology and principle are vital but if they both fail to house the homeless and rescue the repressed and recognise the humanity of the inhumanized then the oppressed are not doing any harm to anyone in trying to emancipate ourselves

by taking practical action now to keep people safe and to make their lives better while always keeping a bigger vision of freedom and justice in mind.

We share a sadness that we have had to make this decision. Very few people outside the movement have been witness to what we've been going through in the hands of the ANC. We do not have words to explain the pain many of us have gone through. We do not have words to explain our pain of twenty years of shack life and all the state repression that has come to us when we stood up for our humanity. Last year we came to the ceiling of hopelessness. It was clear that we are people that can be freely killed. The stress that this created led to some intense internal conflicts. We knew that we could not carry on with our old politics. Our new position has enabled us to rethink our struggle. It may not be the perfect way but it brought a robust discussion about us that was seriously trying to find ways of creating a new hope from no hope.

We are not surprised at the way some people on the so called left have reacted on our position. We are not surprised at the usual lies from the usual people on the internet. Many people and organisations on the left do not accept that we have the right to think our own struggle and to make our own decisions. They think that because they are on the left they have the right to tell us what to do. We do not accept this. These people see our decision as stupid and as a sell-out while they are nowhere to be seen in our times of great difficulty. It makes us to think that such people enjoy our suffering or even benefit from it. Why will people who claim to be in our support judge us instead of contacting us to first understand our decision? It may be a wrong decision but the reality is that we cannot deceive ourselves purposefully on our pain. Why should we be made to struggle in a way that is only designed to try and impress other people simple because they say that they are on the left? We will never do this. Our members must live in shacks and they must try and survive repression. Their organisation is theirs and it will be directed by their decisions. We have never compromised on this and for this we have always been attacked by the regressive left that only want us to take their money so that in exchange we can arrange for people to be bussed into their meetings. This is not emancipation. It is another kind of oppression.

Is the left doing enough to care about our struggle? Or do they see our struggles as projects from which they can prove and debate their findings and analysis

rather than as a struggle to genuinely confront the forces of darkness? Our decision aims at trying to keep the space open for us to liberate ourselves by making a tactical move. We do not love the DA or agree with its policies. Why do people who failed to condemn the ANC attacks on us get so angry with us when we try to punish the ANC by making a tactical vote for its enemy? Maybe for these people it is better for us to be oppressed by the ANC than the DA. For us it is better not to be oppressed. Some of the left is just like some of the development NGOs and some of the state. They want to experiment on us, to use us for their own projects. We say no. On this there is no compromise. We continue to say 'talk to us, not for us' and 'think with us not for us'.

Our position remains honouring those who have supported and who continue to support us. Since we all don't know the answers in this struggle to humanise the world we will keep hunting and trying. Sometimes we will make wrong decisions but at least we offer debate and learning for ourselves and all our friends and comrades.

The ANC are a serious threat to society and to right of the poor to organise freely in this society. They must be removed from office and until we can remove them we must do all that we can to weaken them.

Mnikelo Ndabankulu
Zodwa Nsibande
Thembani Ngongoma
Nono Majola

18 MAY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo launches a New Branch in Ekuphumeleleni

Abahlali branches have to renew their membership annually and thus relaunch in order to ensure that their membership remains active. By launching a branch the community renews its mandate to its local Abahlali leadership and it renews its mandate to Abahlali as a whole. Before the launch takes place the movement leadership would have come to do our political education in which we explain the history and politic of the movement so that communities are clear about our mission and vision. This is also a political education for the movement leadership as we learn about the history and struggles of each community. Today we are launching a new branch in Ekuphumeleleni.

In order to sustain our active presence with each community and with each branch in the movement we hold community meetings and general meetings. Yesterday we had our general meeting. It was attended by two hundred men and women, old and young. We discussed our home made politic. We also had an opportunity to reflect together on the tactical position that we took on the election. We will keep reflecting on this position as we move forward. But most importantly we have reflected on our deeper living politic and the criticism from those who face no fear of eviction, fire or death, those who know nothing about our lives but are very sure of their right to think and decide for us. It is strange that some people will say that we must listen to them because they care about our lives but we never see them when the land invasions unit or the police or the izinkabi come. It is strange that some people will say that they are really the ones that care about our lives but, just like the ANC, they cannot allow us to think and speak for ourselves. It is clear that for the regressive left we will always be children or criminals but never, never citizens or comrades or even just grown up people trying our best to find a safe place for ourselves and our families in this world.

We also reflected on how our decision, and the recent tensions in the movement that began when some of us were fearing for our lives, has been sized as an opportunity to try and crush our movement and dismiss our struggle so that the time of the strong poor can be over and things can go back to normal and those rich people that want to speak about us and for us without us can do so freely.

“Our lives are a battlefield on which is fought a continuous war between the forces that are pledged to confirm our humanity and those determined to dismantle it; those who strive to build a protective wall around it, and those who wish to pull it down; those who seek to mould it and those committed to breaking it up; those who aim to open our eyes, to make us see the light and look to tomorrow [...] and those who wish to lull us into closing our eyes.”

— Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o

Today we will also be doing our political education in Silver City, Umlazi Township. Silver City is one of the communities which Abahlali successfully defended from the notorious land invasion unit and Metro Rail who threatened to evict the community in 2013. We are determining to keep these families in their homes and to defend this community.

Last Sunday we were invited by the Dermot community by Savannah Park to present Abahlali philosophy and the mission of our struggle. This is our practice that no community should join the organisation without a clear understanding of its philosophy and political mission. This is very important for us so that we do not chase numbers but make sure people are clear before they can take a collective decision to join our movement.

Yesterday AbM FC won their game 2-1 in Reservoir Hills. They play again today at 3:00 p.m.

Abahlali’s living politic continues to carry us in determining our own future and the future of our children and the next generation. Living politic is not found on social media. It is found where people live and work. Those who are serious about solidarity should come here. Those who really want to know the difference between truth and lies should come here.

TJ Ngongoma Spokesperson
Zandile Nsibande Abahlali Women’s League
Ndabo Mzimela Secretary General

21 MAY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Trial Date Set for the Ridge View Twelve

Today members from the Ridge View Abahlali baseMjondolo branch had to return to the Durban Magistrate's court following the arrest of 12 comrades after the occupation of the Ridge View flats on the 31 December 2014.

It would be remembered that many of them were displaced in 2013 during a mass eviction, at gun point, of more than three hundred families. The twelve who were arrested during the occupation were charged with trespasses, malicious damage to property and contravening a court order. They have since been going in and out courts. Today the matter was adjourned for trial on the 30 and 31 July 2014.

Nono Majola
Ndabo Mzimela

23 MAY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

City-wide Summit on Land, Housing and Dignity

The politic of land, housing and dignity remain a huge crisis in our country.

We are seeing a lot of lands every day of our lives but each time we ask for a land we are told there is no land.

Our city mayor calls himself a communist but we ask what kind of a communist does not believe in an equal distribution of land in the city? We ask what kind of a communist sends the notorious Land Invasion Unit to destroy the shacks that we call home and drive us off the land we have occupied? The very same politicians that tell us that the problem is that land remains in the hands of the few mostly white farmers send the blue and the red ants to illegally destroy our homes and drive us off the land we have occupied. These same politicians are making us landless. If it wasn't for our movement, thousands of us would have been made homeless, landless and destitute in our own city, in our own country.

Our communist mayor supports these evictions. He supports the repression of our struggles. He says nothing when we are killed, shot, beaten and jailed defending a land occupation. It is clear that this government will not resolve the land question from above. It is clear that it will have to be resolved by struggle from below.

This weekend Abahlali will be deliberating on the question of land, housing and dignity.

Our struggle is a land struggle before it is a housing struggle. We are clear that there will be no landlord or messiah that will deliver land or have all answers pertaining to land but ourselves. We are clear that it is sinister to be landless and homeless in a country that has produced multi-millionaires in this sector. We are clear that it is unreasonable to buy land that already belongs to you. We are clear that state land is our own land. We have been very clear that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. We are clear that

land occupations are a form of land reform carried out from below. We are clear that without land and without decent housing our dignity is compromised. We are clear that without dignity our citizenry and humanity is at risk. We are clear that if we continuing to pretend as if politicians will one day come up with one size fit all solution we will be self-deceiving. And yes, we are clear that one day our children and our next generation will put a blame on us if this question of land is not resolved now. It is upon this reason that we thought we should take the bull by its horns.

Twenty seven Abahlali branches are participating in the summit and will each send five delegates. We will have speakers from our own movement. We will also have speakers and participants from the Landless People's Movement-KZN.

We will have also have speakers from churches and an input from progressive intellectuals. We will have serious discussions in commission with the hope that the light of better understanding will give us strength to struggle more.

Venue: Surat Hindu Building Association (Denis Hurly Hall) Prince Edward Street, Durban.

Time: 10:00a.m. – 17:00 p.m. Saturday, 24 May and 9:00 a.m. – 12:00, Sunday, 25 May 2014

MaMkhize Nxumalo
T.J. Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

30 MAY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Foreman Road Settlement Renews its Commitment to Abahlalism

Poor people are at most risk of crime in South Africa. We also get the least support from the police. Often it is assumed that all poor people are criminal. Sometimes the police are the biggest threat to us. However when a community is democratically organized it can sometimes be possible to negotiate with some people in the police so that people can get proper protection against violence. It can also be possible for a community to organize itself in such a way that the risk of violence is reduced. When this doesn't happen people often take matters into their own hands. In most shack settlements people that commit serious violence against other residents, acts like rape and murder, are made to leave to the settlement. This can happen on a fair basis but, especially when there is no democratic process, it can also be very dangerous.

Earlier this month on the 4th May three young men attacked community members in the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate resulting to a few injuries and damage to property. When Sydenham police were called they asked the community to lay charges and one of the three suspects was arrested. Two days later he was released on bail and the bail condition stated that he does not come anywhere closer to the community. The community got angry when they realised that the other two suspects were not arrested and chased them out of their homes. This action was not organized by our movement. Two community members were later arrested.

Last week Sunday, an Abahlali activist George Bonono was shot three times in his house in Foreman Road. It is suspected the very same suspect whose bail condition was that he never set his feet in the settlement was the one that shot George. George survived the shooting and handed over a gun cartridge to the Sydenham police.

Today the community came out in their numbers at court to support the two community members who acted in defence of the community from criminals when all appeals to the SAPS for support had failed. The matter has been adjourned for the 10th June 2014 for further investigation.

Although we have had members in Foreman Road since 2005 the Abahlali branch in Foreman Road has not been active for three years now. Last year comrade George managed to recruit about eighty Abahlali members so that an election could be held and the branch relaunched (a minimum of fifty paid up members is required to launch or relaunch an Abahlali branch).

Last night a very successful and well attended Abahlali meeting was held in the Foreman Road settlement. The comrades there have vowed to continue the process of working towards the relaunch of the Abahlali branch in Foreman Road. The new branch will work hard to ensure that everyone in Foreman Road is safe, that the police offer the same protection to poor people as they do to middle class people in the area, and that the struggle for land and housing can continue in the settlement on a mass basis and on a democratic basis.

George Bonono (Abahlali organiser in Foreman Road)
 T-Man Mqidi (Foreman Road activist)
 Ndabo Mzimela (Abahlali secretary)

5 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Kennedy Road shack settlement burns again leaving over 2000 people homeless

At about 19:15pm last night Kennedy Road shacks were on a huge flame of fire which left at least more than 2000 people without shelter etc. The fire is believed to have been caused by an unattended paraffin stove. It is fortunately that there were no injuries or death reported. Women and children are the most affected by this fire. Many of them lost all their belongings in this fire including foods, furniture, clothing (including school uniforms), IDs and building material.

We are sad that after years of our struggle this community remains in such difficult and in fact life threatening conditions. In December 2005 former eThekweni Mayor Obed Mlaba made a public promise to house Kennedy Road residents in Cornubia. Cornubia is a biggest new greenfield housing development in the province. Today the same Cornubia has been given to other people and the list was made at night in other settlements. We were later told that you have to be the volunteer of the ruling party in order to benefit.

In December 2009 after the leadership of Abahlali were violently and forcefully removed from Kennedy Nigel Gumede Chairperson of eThekweni Human Settlement also made a public promise that in January 2010 he will build houses for the Kennedy Road community but all that has been lies. It is clear that we are serving our life sentence here and are being punished for calling for decent housing for all in the city.

The only solution to this on-going problem off shack fires is decent housing for all. Fires of this nature would have been avoided should eThekweni municipality provides housing. Basic services such as water and sanitation, electricity and removed refusal would have also have helped to prevent fire.

We have long called for resignation of Nigel Gumede who only shows energy when it comes to repressing us. He is still in his office and we are still burning.

This time of the year calls upon all of us shack dwellers to keep a watchful eye on our families. But these incidents are not caused by our ignorance but political leadership who only care about our votes but never about our humanity.

Nhlanhlo Maphumulo
Nu Mtshali
Abahlali office

8 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali launches a branch in the Foreman Road Settlement

We are determined to focus and spend all our energy building a strong movement in shack settlements and in poor communities.

Today Abahlali will be launching a branch in Foreman Road. Foreman Road settlement is one of the biggest settlements in Abahlali situated in Clare Estate, Durban.

We have had members in this settlement since 2005 but for the last three years there has not been a properly constituted branch in this settlement. The community has recently had several mass meetings to discuss the new to re-launch the local branch and to recruit Abahlali membership.

Today we are pleased that this community will reclaim its membership and join the big family of Abahlali. It is known that the Foreman Road is one of the shack settlements that is excluded from all kinds of services for political reasons. We are aware that the community is not getting development because it is taken as the voting pool for the ruling party to keep this ward in the hands of the ruling party. We also know that local business including transport sees this community as a market in which business can improve its turnover.

George Bonono Foreman Road Organizer
Ndabo Mzimela
Zandile Nsibande
MaMkhize Nxumalo

15 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

Celebrating the Beauty of Our Youth

HECTOR PETERSON was murdered by the apartheid police on 16 June 1976. He was 13. NQOBILE NZUZA was murdered by the ANC's police on 30 September 2013. She was 17.

We've spent many years in pain and frustration about what happened to HECTOR. We will have to spend many years in pain and frustration about what happened to NQOBILE. We all know that more of us will die in this struggle.

Our youth are serving their life sentences in the shacks or the transit camps. Most of us cannot find work, we cannot study and when we are older we will not be able to get married. We are treated like the rubbish of this society when we should be treated as its promise for the future.

Tomorrow the Abahlali baseMjondolo youth league will be hosting a youth death event that will be focused on bringing out the fun and humorous side in all people. We will celebrate the beauty of the youth. But although it might be a day to celebrate and have fun but we believe in using every opportunity we have together to educate each other.

We are also in solidarity with the families of the 200 Nigerian girls who were abducted #BRINGBACK OUR GIRLS, everyone will go into silence prayer to plead the almighty Lord to hear our cries "there's more chances of being heard because there's a larger number of people crying out".

The AbM Youth League Youth Day event will be held in the Hindu Surat Hall in Prince Edward Street from 11:00.

For more information and comment on the youth day event organised by the AbM Youth League
 Lisa Nene Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League President
 Boni Duma Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League Deputy Secretary
 Induction Workshop

Today we had an induction workshop for two new branches (eKuphumeleleni in Shallcross and Briardene – Foreman Road will join in the next induction

workshop). The induction workshop is part of the procedure after new committees are elected.

The induction workshops include a step by step guide to joining the movement, and all the requirements for branches to be in good standing and the roles of and responsibilities of office bearers and committees.

There is a strong focus on why it is important to join the movement as a collective and not individuals, on why families and neighbourhoods are so important. We talk about how our humanity is expressed and recognised in relation to others and how our political strength is built in relation to others.

Abahlali is not a church. There is also a discussion of ubuhlalism as a philosophy. Today there was a lot of discussion about the ideologies of capitalism, socialism and communism. This really uplifts new leaders to understand why Abahlali is part of a long and world-wide struggle against capitalism. There was a big debate about how James Nxumalo can say that he is communist and what this means for communist as an ideology.

We also spoke in depth about the politic of poverty and exclusion. In this discussion it became clear to everyone that our poverty is a result of the choices that have been made at a political level. People were really excited to understand how life is made to be so unfair as some are made rich and others are made poor.

We concluded that we are struggling for a world in which land, cities, wealth and power must be shared fairly.

Abahlali baseMjondolo

20 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Illegal Evictions in Madlala Village, Lamontville

Despite the latest Constitutional Court ruling on the 6th of June which is in favour of the poor people of the shack settlement known as Madlala Village in Lamontville, Durban, the illegal demolishing of shacks still continues. This morning at about 09:00 the eThekweni Municipality with its implementing agents was busy demolishing shacks in Madlala village, as a result 70 (seventy) shacks were demolished leaving hundreds of people homeless in the harsh conditions of the winter season.

When the demolishing team arrived in Madlala village the shack dwellers there asked if there was a court order granting the right to the eThekweni Municipality to destroy their homes. One respondent from the demolishing team responded by saying there is none and furthermore he said that they are aware of the recent Constitutional Court ruling but that they were working according to the ward councillor's instructions to demolish these homes.

Abahlali baseMjondolo have always maintained that shack demolishing occurs countrywide and we have always been opposed to all evictions everywhere. But we were amazed at the stance the National Minister of Human Settlement Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu took by condemning the evictions at Lwandle in the Western Cape and even announcing that a commission will be investigating the Lwandle evictions. We wonder whether the Lwandle shack dwellers are different from any other shack dwellers countrywide who are evicted and have their homes demolished without a word of support from the authorities. Will Ms. Sisulu condemn the evictions in Madlala Village today? Will she condemn the evictions in Cato Crest? Will she announce a commission of inquiry into evictions in Durban that are carried out against court orders and accompanied by the murder of activists by assassins and the police?

Residents in Madlala Village have begun the process of forming an Abahlali baseMjondolo branch but are not yet members of the movement.

The contact person in Madlala Village is Pinky Zulu

For comment from Abahlali baseMjondolo

T.J. Ngongoma

Please note that in our first statement we mistakenly said that 300 families had been affected when in fact we meant to say that 70 families and 300 people were affected.

22 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Launch New Branch in Dermet, Shallcross

The Dermet community in Shallcross, Ward 72, was founded in 2009. It is a semi-rural area under Inkosi N. Maphumulo. The eThekweni municipality has claimed to own the land and have been illegally evicting residents. Today the Dermet community is facing mass eviction.

The Dermet community decided to join Abahlali baseMjondolo with the hope that the movement will walk side by side with it to resist these threats. They have completed the process required to join the movement and are now ready to launch the branch. The launch will be held today.

Abahlali Interim organizers in Dermet
Sandile Mdlalose
Zama Zikhali

22 JUNE 2014

Emergency press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest is Under Attack despite the Constitutional Court Ruling

The eThekweni Municipality is currently evicting people at the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. Eighteen shacks have already been destroyed. They are evicting without a court order and despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court on 6 June 2014

Thina Khanyile has just been arrested. The comrades in Cato Crest are organising a protest.

Media are encouraged to rush to the scene.

Mzamo Majazi
Ndabo Mzimela

22 JUNE 2014

Emergency press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Now Madlala Village is under Attack!

Now Madlala Village in Lamontville is under attack by the same crew that attacked Cato Crest this morning. This is a war on the organised poor who are standing up for their rights.

Kennedy Road residents were attacked in 2009 after their victory in the Constitutional Court. Now residents of Cato Crest and Madlala Village are under attack after their victory.

This attack does not come as a surprise. We celebrate victories in court with caution as we know what comes next.

The contact people on the scene in Madlala Village are

Mr. Mkhize
MaMkhize Nxumalo

29 JUNE 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali launches a branch in Silver City (Umlazi)

Today Abahlali will be launching a branch in Silver City. This settlement is settlement is situated in Umlazi, South Durban.

Today we are pleased that this community will reclaim its membership and join the big family of Abahlali. It is known that the Silver City is one of the shack settlements that are excluded from all kinds of services for political reasons. We are aware that the community is not getting development because it is taken as the voting pool for the ruling party to keep this ward in the hands of the ruling Party.

Silver City is one of communities that has demonstrated positive strength for the land struggle and has a very strong leadership. The programme will start from 10:00 and that the Current leadership will have a special announcement for their Community then the AbM Branch launching programme will begin at 12:00pm.

A number of comrades have received threats by telephone warning them not to go ahead with the launch. These threats have been reported to the police.

Khayelihle Magcaba Silver City Organizer
Ndabo Mzimela AbM General Secretary
Thembani Ngongoma AbM PRO
Ma-Mkhize Nxumalo AbM National Chairperson

7 JULY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Local ANC Disrupted an Abahlali meeting in Madlala Village Yesterday

Madlala Village is situated in the South of Durban near Lamontville Township. The settlement was founded by Siza Madlala in 2012. This community was a home to about 389 residents before they were evicted more than twenty five times. The settlement is now home to about 25 families.

Abahlali in Madlala Village, mostly women, had scheduled a meeting with the leadership of Abahlali in order to present ubuhlalism to the community. This is part of the process for a community to join the movement. This was intended to be the second meeting Abahlali meeting in the community since February this year when we joined the community as friends of the court in the Constitutional Court for the case known as Zulu and 389 other vs MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works and another. The first meeting went very well but at the end of the meeting there came a young man who claimed to own the settlement and warned us that in future we will have to get a permit from local ANC structures and the local councillor or the Abahlali cars will be burnt. It was clear that the local community was very angry and did not approve his threats. They told us not to worry. We are used to these kinds of threats, as well as anonymous threats by telephone, and we did not worry.

Yesterday when we had just arrived at the settlement and were about to start our meeting we saw a group of about 12 young men. Some of them were drunk while some of them looked very tired and seemed not to have slept. They said to us that this was an ANC area and that we were not welcome without the ward councillor's permission. They threatened that if we do not leave then they will burn the Abahlali car. It was clear that if the meeting went ahead there would be violence. The police were called in but took time to arrive.

The women who had invited us to Madlala Village have been the victims of municipal land invasion unit. Their homes have been constantly demolished. They won their victory in the Constitutional Court but it meant nothing to

the Municipality. Now they are also victims of the local ANC. The community told us that the young man who led this group was Mr Siza Madlala. Madlala Village was named after this man. For a long time the community has wanted to change the name of their settlement to Sisonke Village as they have thought that Madlala was acting like he was owning the community and can do whatever pleases him. They wanted a name that was more collective.

The community told us that some of these guys were whoonga boys who are not even known in the area. Siza himself has been threatening women in the area. He did the same thing in Clairwood where he was chased away.

Due to the clear threat of violence the meeting had to be cancelled. We have faced bullying and intimidation and sometimes serious violence by local branches of the ANC since 2005. This culture of intimidation is not new. However it is getting a lot worse. In most settlements there is someone who is making money from development and who is willing to use violence to protect their position. These people are being enriched by the ANC in order to control people on the ground and to force them to accept oppression. Now that there are whoonga boys in most settlements it is getting easier to find young men who will support the local party thugs.

It concerns us that after twenty years of democracy there are no-go areas in a supposedly democratic country perpetrated by individuals who are either members of the ANC or hide behind the ANC flag. We hope the ANC can distance itself from the likes of Madlala. We have always warned of twenty years of shack life as crime against humanity.

For comment on the situation in Madlala Village, including the intimidation by Siza Madlala yesterday

Mam Bhemu

Mam Zulu

Mam Dodana

15 JULY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Our Struggle to be counted as Part of the Public Continues

On the 5 of September 2013 Sibongile Msiya, Nokulunga Magobongo and Bhekani Mzihle were arrested in Cato Crest. Their homes in the Marikana Land Occupation had just been illegally destroyed by the eThekweni Municipality. The residents responded by organising a road blockade. When the first police officers arrived on the scene the three comrades showed them a court order interdicting the Municipality from carrying out evictions. When the Superintendent, Mganga, arrived the three comrades were arrested on the spot. They were all charged with ‘public violence’. Their real ‘crime’ in the eyes of Mganga was that they were standing up for their rights and showing the police that the Municipality’s actions were illegal and criminal acts against the public.

The two women, Sibongile Msiya and Nokulunga Magobongo, were seriously assaulted in the Cato Manor police station. The movement was able to secure police bail for all three comrades at R500 each. When Sibongile and Nokulunga were released their clothes were torn and they had visible injuries. This was police violence against the public.

After numerous appearances in court the case of the Cato Crest Three went to trial on Monday and Tuesday last week. The three comrades were represented by a legal aid lawyer. The two police officers that testified claimed that the three had stoned a police car. This was not true. The two police officers gave such contradictory and obviously unconvincing evidence that the case against Nokulunga was dismissed on the first day of the trial. The case against the Sibongile and Bhekani was dismissed on Tuesday.

The road blockade organised by the residents of the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest on 5 September 2013 did not result in any harm to any person or any damage to any property. But as usual burning tyres are taken as violence. The fact is that on this day the eThekweni Municipality was guilty of illegally destroying people’s homes, in violation of the law, the Constitution and

a court order. It is also a fact that two women were severely beaten by the police for trying to show that the actions of the Municipality were illegal. Yet no one from the Municipality or the police has been arrested for these crimes. We all know that no one from the Municipality or the police will ever be arrested for these crimes. We all know that there will be no arrest for the murder of Nqobile Nzuza by the police in Cato Crest on 30 September 2013. A police officers can shoot a 17 year old girl in the back of the head in front of a large number of witnesses and he will never be arrested.

It is clear that it is taken as a criminal act for us to stand up for our rights. It is clear that we are not taken as being part of the public. We are the people that can be evicted, beaten and killed with impunity.

Since our movement was formed in 2005 we have constantly been arrested on charges of public violence. Not one person arrested on this charge has ever been convicted. For years the charges would always be dropped just before the cases went to trial. Now that the state is taking the cases to trial they are not getting convictions. The power of arrest is being systematically misused as a form of political intimidation.

We were scheduled to return to court for the trial of the eKuphumeleleni Three (Shallcross) tomorrow but the case has just been adjourned, at the last minute, 'for further investigation'. Of course this means that there is no evidence against the accused. The trial of the Ridgeview Twelve is set for 30 and 31 July 2014. The trial of the Umlazi Seven is set for 6 August 2013.

Last weekend our attempt to hold a meeting in Madlala Village had to be abandoned due to intimidation. We are pleased to be able to report that on Sunday we were able to hold a successful meeting in the community which has now been renamed Sisonke Village. Some of the men who were involved in the intimidation last week came to the meeting to apologise for their action. They explained that they had been misinformed about our movement by the local ANC.

For further information and comment on the dismissal of all charges against the Cato Crest Three

Sibongile Msiya

Ndabo Mzimela

For further information and comment on case of the eKuphumeleleni Three

Albert Ngubane

Makhosi Khumalo

For further information and comment on the situation in Sisonke Village

Mam Bhemu

Mam Zulu

Mam Dodana

24 JULY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Tomorrow We March in Solidarity with the Oppressed People of Palestine

People in Palestine are being murdered with impunity. Their homes are being destroyed with impunity. As they are being murdered and as their homes are being destroyed they are being shown to the world as if they are responsible for their own oppression. It is clear that the Palestinians are people who do not count to this world.

In the past we have organised and protested in solidarity with people in Haiti and Turkey. Tomorrow we will join the march in Durban in solidarity with people currently under attack in Palestine. Our solidarity will be to insist that everyone must count equally in this world.

In 2011 one of our members spent some months in Palestine and she has briefed us on the situation there. We are looking for ways to enrich our connections with the struggle in Palestine and hope to be able to host a Palestinian comrade in Durban.

An injury to one is an injury to all.

The struggle for land, freedom and dignity is a world-wide struggle.

S'bu Zikode
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela

28 JULY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Bahlali Bayanda! Three Branches Launched on Sunday.

On Friday we joined thousands of others in Durban and marched in support of Gaza. We will continue to look for ways to support the struggle in Palestine.

On Sunday we launched three branches. The first two branches to be launched were in eNsimbini in Chesterville and KwaNdengezi in Pinetown. The comrades in eNsimbini have been struggling against evictions. They are being left homeless as their traditional homes are being demolished to make way for RDP houses. In April Baba Cele and Baba David Ngubane were both shot and wounded when they asked to see a court order during an illegal eviction perpetrated by the eThekweni Municipality. This was the twelfth eviction in the area. There have been no demolitions here for the last two months, probably due to strong resistance. The comrades at eNsimbini have named their new branch 'Chris Hani'. They have requested copies of the Constitution for all members. They are well aware that when residents know this law this knowing does not force the Municipality to obey the law but they feel that it is important that everybody understands clearly that the Municipality is a criminal organisation and that resistance to it is just.

There has also been a long struggle in KwaNdengezi. Here the struggle has focussed on the Councillor, Mduduzi Ngcobo (known as Nqola), and his very serious corruption and intimidation. The attempt to launch the branch here last week couldn't go ahead as Nqola locked the community hall and would not allow our movement to use it. Once again all proper channels were followed to book the hall for yesterday and once again it was locked. But preparation had been made to hold the launch outside if necessary and it went ahead successfully outside. The way in which Nqola denies the community hall to the community is a disgrace.

After these two launches a big launch, attended by hundreds, was held at the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. The Cato Crest Abahlali baseMjondolo branch was launched as well as the new Cato Crest branch of the Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League. There were choirs, poets and dancers, all proudly red. We remembered the three comrades who have died in the struggle for this land – Thembinkosi Qumbela, Nkululeko Gwala and Nqobile Nzuza. But we also celebrated the strength of the people who have occupied this land and their success in holding the land despite so much repression. The Mfene Dance Group from Kennedy Road performed, Melissa Deyi, a six year old poet performed and Khaya Nodwengu, a poet from eNsimbini performed too. It was a wonderful occasion. The new branch of the Women's League made it clear that they have suffered enough and committed themselves to building women's power in struggle.

Mr. TJ Ngongoma / National Spokesperson
 Mr. Ndabo Mzimela / National Secretary
 Mr. Sbu Zikode / President

30 JULY 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Illegal Evictions in Isipingo, All Criminal Charges Dismissed Against the Ridgeview Twelve

1. Evictions in the Uganda Settlement

Yesterday the notorious eThekweni Municipal Land Invasion Unit evicted seven families in the Uganda settlement near Isipingo in the South of Durban. As always the Municipality had no court order and therefore this was an illegal attack on the residents.

The families whose homes were illegally demolished yesterday have lived in the Uganda settlement for three years.

The Uganda settlement is one of the settlements where RDP houses were built a few years ago. At least twenty two families are known by the community to have received those houses through corruption. Abahlali members there have tried their level best to report and expose this with no success.

The shacks were built next to transit camps and in the middle there is a tap and water often runs down into the shacks because there is no sewer system. A year ago this problem was reported to Ward Councillor Lihle Khuzwayo and he suggested that those families should find themselves an alternative plot and rebuild their shack where they will not be affected by water. It is the same shacks that are now being demolished and now Khuzwayo says he knows nothing about them. Khuzwayo like other councillors in eThekweni does not understand the power vested into him. He is remoted by a few officials who turn themselves into politicians at the same time. The Land Invasion Unit promised to return to Uganda and evict more families whose shacks have been marked with X. These evictions will also be illegal.

As always people will rebuild and will hold the land with their own strength and persistence. This force is the foundation of our struggle and our hopes.

Zama Buthelezi
Muthwa

2. The Trial of the Ridgeview Twelve

On the 31st of December last year the Ridge View flats near Cato Manor were occupied. The flats had been left empty after the residents were evicted. They were occupied by people who had been evicted from the flats and by people from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest who had been subject to repeated illegal evictions and violence from the eThekweni Municipality. The police were waiting for the occupiers and twelve people were arrested. They were charged with various criminal offenses as well as trespass.

Today their case came to trial. It was set down for two days. All charges were dismissed against three people. All the criminal charges were dismissed against the other nine and they agreed to pay a fine of R500 for the minor civil offense of trespass.

Once again we note that while gangster councillors can pay their assassins to kill with impunity, the police can also kill with impunity and the eThekweni Municipality can demolish and evict with impunity, even though this is a criminal offense, grassroots activists are constantly arrested on criminal charges, and constantly shown to the world as criminals, even though there is no evidence against them. Hundreds of Abahlali baseMjondolo members have been arrested on criminal charges since 2005 and not one has ever been convicted of a criminal offense.

The police and courts are being systemically misused to oppress struggle from below.

The struggle of justice and democracy is not over until people get their homes and dignified respect as it was promised.

Nono Majola
Ngubane

5 AUGUST 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Solidarity with Abahlali basePizzeria Anarchia in Vienna, Austria

Injustice in Vienna, Austria is an injustice in Durban, South Africa and is an injustice everywhere in the world.

Abahlali friends and comrades in living in Pizzeria Anarchia in Vienna, Austria have been subjected to a violent police attack by at least 1700 riot police, a helicopter, a tank, and a water cannon. The Vienna municipality has evicted at least 11 Abahlali there and 4 are still remained in building. So far 9 of the Abahlali there have been arrested. According to reports in Vienna the City has paid up to 500,000 Euros to evict people from the building which is industrial to advance their gentrification plan. This eviction has become a joke to people of Vienna that one person is evicted by at least 100 cops. This is shocking brutality that we condemn.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is part of a global community of resistance. We cannot remain in silence while our comrades are made homeless in Vienna. The very same brutality used by Vienna municipality is similar to what James Nxumalo uses in Durban's Cato Crest and which is used everywhere to protect capitalist accumulation even by the so called 'Communist Mayor' of Durban.

We call upon the Vienna municipality and its police to stop evicting these residents of their city and to respect their right to the city and their right to housing. We call upon the Austrian state to drop all charges against the Pizzeria Anarchia 9. We call upon the state to put the social value of the building before its commercial value. We call upon the Austrian state to investigate why so much of brutality by the heavily armed riot police is used to evict only 15 people.

Our comrades in Pizzeria Anarchia supported us when we were facing repression. They have also supported the Marikana struggle. Now that they are facing repression we offer them our own solidarity.

The principle that 'An injury to one is an injury to all' is central to building a movement in one city. It is also central to building a global movement to ensure that land, cities, wealth and power are shared fairly and managed democratically.

There will be a picket at the Austrian embassy in Durban, Ridge Road, tomorrow at 11.

Ndabo Mzimela Abahlali Secretary
Zandile Nsibande Abahlali Women League
TJ Ngongoma Abahlali Spokesperson
S'bu Zikode Abahlali President

21 AUGUST 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Solidarity with Comrades from the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Abahlali baseMjondolo General meeting last weekend was attended by eight comrades from the DRC lead by Pastor Raphael. The General Meeting discussed various ways of working in solidarity with the Congolese comrades.

The comrades from the DRC who are here in South Africa made a shocking presentation on the history of the Congo from the year 1887 which led to the genocide that they are now facing. Devastating photos were shown and spoke volumes to the narrated story.

Questions and answers were held followed by a tense conversation about what needs to be done thereafter. All of us were deeply touched and felt helpless. Comrades asked about the role of South African government and its troops in DRC. We asked the role of the African Union and the South African Human Rights Commission and of course the role of civil society and the UN and the US. Some of the answers were that genocides continue in the presence of more than 4 000 South African deployed troops in the DRC. There were also claims that Khulubuse Zuma, who we all know is related to our President Jacob Zuma, has shares in some companies in the DRC. Noted was also the role of neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Ruanda. Also noted is that DRC remains colonized. It is clear that foreign companies and their government are working with governments of neighbouring countries to oppress the Congolese people in the most horrific way to steal the mineral resources of Congo. We must ask serious questions about the role of the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, South Africa and the US in the DRC.

This meeting with the Congolese comrades and our commitment to take on solidarity work with them on an ongoing basis comes after some long conversation held by few Abahlali delegates who have travelled in Europe, and even

did some solidarity work with comrades abroad, but with the exception of Zimbabwe, failed to make links to struggles in the region. At times we felt embarrassed by failing to make alliances and links with other African grassroots struggles. We have received a lot of international solidarity and wish to extend the same to struggles our region too.

We note that many ordinary South Africans have no idea about what is happening in the region. We are quite well informed about what is happening in Palestine which is good but we are not well informed at all about what is happening in the DRC. We have therefore committed to working to ensure that we can inform ourselves about this situation. A solidarity march with Congolese to the DRC Embassy in South Africa has also been proposed.

If South Africans had a proper understanding of the situation in countries like the DRC we are sure that there would be no discrimination against our fellow Africans brothers and sisters who need our love, support and solidarity. Abahlali is determined to open this conversation and to continue it to a point that our common enemy is identified.

The war in the DRC must end. The right of the Congolese people to full economic and political sovereignty must be respected. All the capitalist forces and governments that are profiting from the war in the DRC and the exploitation of the resources of the country must be opposed. The crisis in the DRC needs to be put on the agenda of all progressive forces in South Africa and internationally in the same way that the oppression of the Palestinian people has successfully been put on the agenda in South Africa and internationally.

Pastor Raphael DRC Solidarity Coordinator
 Ndabo Mzimela Abahlali General Secretary
 Zandile Nsibande Abahlali Women's League
 S'bu Zikode Abahlali President

12 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Evictions at the Chris Hani & Marikana Land Occupations

Evictions at the Chris Hani (eNsimbini) and Marikana (Cato Crest) Land Occupations

At ten o'clock this morning five shacks were demolished by the Land Invasions Unit in the Chris Hani Land Occupation in eNsimbini. This land was occupied in February last year. The shacks that were demolished are new shacks that were built about two weeks ago by people that were renting nearby and decided to join the occupation to avoid having to pay rent. As usual there was no court order authorising these evictions and they were, therefore, an illegal and criminal act on the part of the eThekweni Municipality. The residents of these new shacks were at work when the eviction happened and so there was no confrontation.

On Wednesday eleven shacks were demolished in the Nqobile section of the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. These shacks were built in May. This eviction happened as a result of a complaint by a private businessman located near to the occupation.

The Land Invasions Unit came with heavy security. Ndabo Mzimela tried to ask them to show a court order authorising the eviction. He was pointed with a fireman and told that he would be shot if he came any nearer because he was 'being rude'. There was no court order and these evictions were also illegal and criminal acts on the part of the eThekweni Municipality. As everybody knows three people have been murdered (two by the izinkabi and one by the police) since this land was occupied in May last year.

Corruption continues to run free in the housing project in Cato Crest. On Sunday government flats were being allocated. The CLO was supposed to do this job but instead it was done by the head of the area committee which is also an ANC committee. She allocated three flats to her family members, who are also ANC members. At this point angry residents (who are not members of our

movement) stopped the process. This corruption has been going on for years and is at the root of many of the tensions in the area.

At our City Wide Land Summit held in May this year we agreed that no court, political party or government policy will guarantee us land, build our power or give us control over our own lives and communities. It is sometimes important to engage the courts, elections or policy formulation on a tactical basis but the only force that we can rely on is the people's force which is also known as inkani. The shacks that have been demolished in the Chris Hani and Marikana Land Occupations will be rebuilt with this force. The land will be held with this force.

For as long as the government does not put the social value of land before its commercial value we will continue to occupy land. Land occupations are land reform from below.

Phumlani – eNsimbini

Khayakazi – Cato Crest

Ndabo Mzimela – Abahlali baseMjondolo Secretary General

16 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Meeting with the eThekweni Municipality Today

Abahlali leadership is set to meet with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlement and Public Works led by MEC Ravi Pillay and the eThekweni municipality political principals at 4:00 p.m. today. Our movement engages in many kinds of political action. These range from organising a land occupation or building a crèche to road blockades, mass marches, court action and negotiations with the government.

We first entered negotiations with the eThekweni Municipality in 2007. Those negotiations were long but eventually bore fruit in terms of a Memorandum of Understanding. However after that MOU was signed we were attacked in Kennedy Road and it has not been implemented. The plans to upgrade the Kennedy Road settlement via a participatory process rather than to destroy it are still in place though. Also some of basic services that were agreed to be provided to settlements are now being provided in some areas.

In 2011 negotiations with the municipality were reopened. However Nigel Gumede, head of Human Settlements in the Municipality, openly threatened S'bu Zikode and so we returned to the streets.

Last year, after a city wide programme of road blockades in protest at the repression of the Marikana Land Occupation, and international pressure, Ravi Pillay indicated a willingness to open negotiations between the province and our movement.

The movement has since had several meetings with the Department. The MEC has always opened his doors for engaging with Abahlali. This engagement has led to the formation of the task team comprised of Abahlali representatives and provincial officials. However the Task Team is missing representatives from the eThekweni Municipality as what the politicians and officials call 'an implementing agency'. We are noting that the Team is positive and working

well but that it lacks a political will from the Municipal political principals. Although these several meetings have not born any fruits but we still believe that the MEC is serious about moving away from a politic of repression and toward a politic of negotiation.

In our recent meeting with the MEC held on the 25 August 2014, amongst other issues discussed, were various issues pertaining to human settlements such as housing lists, allocation policy and the MEC budget speech. We also discussed the Abahlali/Provincial Department of Human Settlement and eThekweni Municipality Task Team. We have discussed the Abahlali voting position in the General Election which has really worried the ANC at all levels. We have discussed what the politicians and officials call 'land invasion' and what we proudly call 'Land Occupations' and the proposed National Human Settlement Indaba.

In this meeting we requested the MEC to facilitate a meeting with us and the eThekweni political principals. We thank the MEC for organizing this meeting.

We are going to this meeting with positive minds knowing very well that in our last meeting with eThekweni S'bu Zikode was openly intimidated in a full Council Meeting at the City Hall. We hope that this time around, Nigel Gumede will not intimidate any of us. We are determined to build this relationship and to reclaim our city.

We are looking forward to this meeting since we cannot avoid that while we can occupy land on our own and connect to water and electricity on our own under the current political system a lot of the demands for the development of shack communities can only come through the municipalities.

Over the years our several meetings with officials have shown that they are whole heartedly willing to work with communities but that there is no political will and support for this from the politicians. Over time we have been able to shift some officials to a participatory form of development and to get them to understand that we want land and housing in the cities, and not in the human dumping grounds far outside of the cities. It is thus clear to us that the only hindrance towards moving to a partnership between the organized poor and the officials is the lack of political will from the politicians which is a result of the attitude of certain individuals like Nigel Gumede.

Despite the humiliation we had in 2012, we have decided to come down without compromising our dignity for the purpose of fulfilling our vision which

is improving the lives of the shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa in general. By so doing we would like to see the materialization of meaningful engagement between eThekweni Municipal officials and democratically elected and accountable community structures.

In every process of negotiation we are careful to keep our power outside of the negotiations so that we can return to the streets whenever it is necessary. Every time we enter negotiations the first demand that is made from the government side is usually that we must agree to stop land occupations. We cannot stop land occupations for as long as land is allocated on the basis of money and not social need. It is also usual for the government side to try and deal with us as individual communities. We have always resisted this. There is some pressure to make this meeting only about the Cato Crest crisis and the Marikana Land Occupation. We have insisted that we will address the Municipality collectively about all the issues confronting our members. All of the 23 Abahlali baseMjondolo branches in and around Durban that are in good standing have been invited, by us, to elect delegates to attend today's meeting.

We are willing to work with any level of government that is willing to form a partnership with the organised poor that can lead to an improvement of the lives of the poor.

MaMkhize Nxumalo – Chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo
 Zandile Nsibande – Abahlali Women League
 Abahlali Spokesperson – Thembanani Ngongoma

17 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The eThekweni Municipality Chooses Intimidation Over Negotiation

Yesterday Abahlali attended the meeting scheduled with the eThekweni Municipality's 'political principles' as per the invitation of the MEC for Human Settlements in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Ravi Pillay. However there was no possibility for negotiation. Intimidation was the order of the meeting.

Ravi Pillay chaired the meeting. He welcomed all present and made an apology on behalf of the Mayor and his deputy Cllr Nomvuz Shabalala. He also apologised for Nigel Gumede who chairs the Department of Human Settlements and Infrastructure Committee in the Municipality and who also did not make it to the meeting.

The meeting was attended by top officials from the MEC's department including the Head of Ministry and General Managers in the Province and all structures of the ruling ANC from branch level as well as the South African Civic Organization and the South African Communist Party. It was also attended by local businessmen and police officers from the crime intelligence unit. We find it very revealing that when we face the ruling party in a formal meeting they are together with business and the intelligence unit of the police. It is clear that the ANC prefers a partnership with business to a partnership with the poor, and that the police are there to protect the ANC and not the people.

Crime intelligence will never investigate an illegal eviction or the beating, shooting, torture or murder of one of our members. But if we organise a legal march they will be watching us every step. They are there to enforce the domination of the ANC and not to enforce the law.

In his opening remarks the MEC made it very clear that the meeting was to discuss the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest in Ward 101. Those representing business were the first to be given a platform to speak. They said that for the last past three weeks they have witnessed ongoing land invasion in the area and that they were concerned about their businesses profit. They said

they want to know who is sponsoring this land grab and who is behind this land grab.

Nothing was said about the fact that in Cato Crest the misallocation of RDP houses is still going on in a broad day light. In the past three weeks there are three new built RDP houses that have allocated to one family of an Area Committee member. That Committee is under the ANC. The general members of the community declined that to happen and the Ward Councillor has failed to solve the issue. Those of us who are demanding land and housing for all are taken as criminals while those who are corrupting the few houses are built are taken as good comrades of the ruling party.

Abahlali responded by making a very clear point that we found ourselves in a wrong meeting given what had been decided at the last meeting with the MEC and the task given to the MEC to organise a meeting with the political leadership of the eThekweni Municipality. We further made it clear that if we knew this meeting was only going to discuss Cato Crest we would have brought the Cato Crest branch to answer to all issues raised on their settlement and we explained that we cannot speak on behalf of the Cato Crest in their absence.

We further reminded the meeting that the Cato Crest matter was still in court.

Then almost every ANC representatives stormed Abahlali with attacks. They said that we are being “funded to instigate riots and instability in the country” and to “cause chaos”. They personally attacked Ndabo Mzimela and falsely alleged that he was selling land and said that he was a self-imposed induna in Cato Crest.

The MEC did not protect us against these attacks just like how Mayor James Nxumalo did not protect S’bu Zikode when Nigel Gumede was threatening him at a Full Council Meeting in 2011. They further claimed that Ndabo has an RDP house in his rural Hammarsdale home, and that him and all those who invade land must return to their homes in Inanda, KwaMashu and the Eastern Cape. This is the language that they have learnt from senior leadership of the ANC in the city and province who suggest that KwaZulu-Natal should only be for the Zulu speaking people. Our politic on this question is very clear and it is in line with the laws of the country: KwaZulu-Natal must be for everyone that lives in the province without regard for where they were born and grew up or what language they speak – South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

On all these attacks we said nothing. But they were very worried by our silence and non-responding on these attacks. They went on to say that only the thirty one people cited on the court order in the Cato Crest case are known to them (before this meeting they even denied that these people were known to them) and they demanded that Ravi Pillay send the metro police and land invasion unit to tear at least three hundred shacks. The MEC had to lecture his comrades on the law and the Constitutional Court ruling. He even made reference to the Grootboom case. But his comrades were not impressed with the law and court processes. They just wanted the MEC to immediately go and tear down all the shacks. They also stressed that they are in the taxi business and that road blockades are bad for their business. They kept speaking about the ‘mushrooming of informal settlements’ as if this is caused by a conspiracy rather than being a response by the people to the fact that they remain without land and housing twenty years after democracy. The ANC is still unable to understand that while the government is failing to democratise access to land the organisation of land occupations from below is a form of land reform from below.

These attacks were called by the MEC as developing a good “Social Compact”. He did nothing to stop his comrades attacking us and intimidating us with such hostility in a meeting called by him. There is a long way to go to educate the ANC on the politic of free debate and democracy rather than intimidation, and the politic of non-violence instead of the politic of blood and hitmen that the ANC has chosen in Durban.

We still believe that the MEC will organize a relevant meeting for relevant people without allowing intimidation at meetings of this nature. We still believe that the MEC has good intentions.

This is not the first time that we have gone to a meeting with senior politicians only to find ourselves subject to intimidation rather than invited to discussion. The first time that we were invited to meet with senior politicians was in September 2006. We were invited to a meeting by the MEC for housing. That meeting was conducted by Mxolisi Nkosi, the HOD in the Department. It was nothing but intimidation. It was said that one of our comrades was an agent of a foreign country assigned to provoke unrest and undermine democracy. It was said that S’bu Zikode was a shack farmer. We were warned to cease speaking to the media and threatened that some of us, who were named, would soon be arrested.

In October 2011 we had a meeting with the Mayor and Nigel Gumede, the Head of Human Settlements in the eThekweni Municipality. At that meeting Nigel Gumede openly threatened S'bu Zikode with violence.

In June last year there was a meeting between the ANC, the SACP and others about the Cato Crest crisis at which the same kind of allegations were made against Nkululeko Gwala as those made against Ndabo yesterday. Gwala was assassinated shortly after that meeting. On the same day as the assassination the chairperson of the ANC in eThekweni gave public permission for the murder.

There is a crisis of land and housing in every town and city in South Africa. For almost ten years we have organised ourselves so that we can empower ourselves to partner the government to resolve this crisis. There have been times when we have had good negotiations with officials. We recently had excellent negotiations in Howick.

However it is clear that today, as it was in 2006 and as it was in 2011, the ANC in Durban prefers a politic of intimidation and violence to a politic of negotiation. We have survived many, many arrests. Many comrades have been beaten while in detention. Many comrades have lost jobs. Many comrades have been driven from their homes. A number of comrades have been tortured. The intelligence services are always close to us. Many lies have been told about us. There have been all kinds of dirty tricks. Two of our members have been murdered. Repression has sometimes damaged our movement but it has never destroyed it. We have not been defeated. We have continued with our struggle.

We have twenty three vibrant branches in and around Durban. We have the strength to continue this struggle in the streets, in the courts and in the media.

Whenever one comrade is singled out for intimidation and lies we stand firm with that comrade. In 2011 we said that we are all S'bu Zikode. Today we say that we are all Ndabo Mzimela. An injury to one is an injury to all. If another one of our members is murdered we will shut this city down with daily road blockades at rush hour. We will also continue to vote against the ANC.

However if the ANC is willing to turn away from the politic of intimidation and blood and to negotiate a real partnership to solve the crisis of land and housing in this city we remain ready to return to the negotiating table.

MaMkhize Nxumalo – Chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo

Zandile Nsibandé – Abahlali Women League

Thembanani Ngongoma – Abahlali Spokesperson

19 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Consultative Meeting with the Ingonyama Trust

In KwaNdengezi and in eTafuleni people living in traditional homes with land for livestock and gardens are being forced out of their homes and are losing their land as RDP houses are built on their lands. For these people development means being forced out of a big house that they have built themselves into a tiny government house and it means that they are losing their land and the money and the food that they get from their land. New people are being brought into the RDP houses by the councillors and their ward committees. As usual the houses are given to their family members and to members of the ruling party. As usual there is no consultation with the community. The municipality only consults with the councillors and their ward committees. This land has always fallen under the amaKhosi but the Municipality is now claiming that it falls under them.

As a movement we support land to be allocated for housing and we support the building of new housing. But we stand for decent housing designed with communities and including community halls, clinics, libraries, gardens and parks and not rows and rows of broken down dog kennels. We cannot support the kind of development that dispossesses and further impoverishes one group of already impoverished people to give other impoverished people houses. There is a lot of unused land that can be expropriated to build houses.

In KwaNdengezi the councillor has, like a number of other councillors in other areas, responded to our attempts to engage on this issue with serious armed intimidation. Those who say that the councillor system is a system of democracy are failing to understand that many people in Durban experience the councillors, ward committees and BECs as a system of oppression.

The Ingonyama Trust was established in 1994 by an Act of Parliament-Act No 3 of 1994 with His Majesty the King as the sole Trustee. The Trust is the largest landowner in the province of KwaZulu-Natal with a total extent of 2,

815,235 hectares. Our movement is engaging on a serious program of securing and reclaiming our land. It is clear that our struggle for land will require an engagement with the Trust as well as the State.

Yesterday delegates from our movement met with officials from the Ingonyama Trust to discuss this matter and other matters pertaining to land. We are pleased that at this meeting we were treated with respect. We thank the Trust for their willingness to engage us respectfully. The officials from the Trust were shocked to hear about what is happening in places like KwaNdengezi and eTafuleni.

The meeting has given us a better understanding of the work of the Trust and a better understanding of various tenure rights particularly those applicable in Traditional Lands. We discussed the various kinds of tenure, including Indigenous Rights-Primary, Permission to Occupy-Secondary and Leases-Secondary in detail. The meeting gave us a better understanding of how “title deeds” are supposed to be issued. This will help us fight against the corruption of fake title deeds that is taking place in our communities.

As a movement that is committed to putting the social value of land before its commercial value, that strives to build democratic structures for community self-organization, that is committed to participatory development and that rejects discrimination based on gender, place of origin and language we often have serious differences with different kinds of powerful forces.

We always try to protect our autonomy and to retain our own power. But we always prefer to negotiate rather than to be in conflict with the government, NGOs and amaKhosi when this is possible. We appreciate the spirit of yesterday’s meeting. It was very informative and the information will enable us to ask the right questions to be able to hold municipalities accountable on issues of land and housing in those settlements where the councillors are taking the land from the amaKhosi with the result that people are losing land and housing in the name of development.

MaMkhize Nxumalo
Zandile Nsibande
Thulile Ndlovu
Ndabo Mzimela

23 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Press Statement on Heritage Day

Our movement will gather together on this day of 24 September 2014 to celebrate our cultural diversity and histories of struggle. As always we embrace each other's well-being as creatures who are to enjoy life. We continue to insist that Durban must be a home, safe and free, for everyone that lives in this city whether we are rich or impoverished, women or men and without regard for where we were born and what language we speak.

We will also be using this opportunity to give a report back to our general membership on the progress of our struggle for land, housing and dignity. We will be reporting on all the challenges we have faced this year. Will be reporting on all the meetings we have had with various government officials and other institutions and organizations, the status of the struggle in our branches and of the movement as a whole. And yes, this will be an opportunity to hold the University of Abahlali in Action on political work.

The event will be held tomorrow at Siyanda "B" in Kwa Mashu, starting from 10:00am and concluding at 15:00pm.

Ndabo Mzimela, Abahlali Secretary General
Thembani Ngongoma, Abahlali Spokesperson
MaMkhize Nxumalo, Abahlali Chairperson

26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We Are All Ndabo Mzimela

As everybody knows the struggle in Cato Crest against corruption and for land and housing has been seriously repressed. Last year Thembinkosi Qumbela and Nkululeko Gwala were murdered by the izinkabi and Nqobile Nzuza was killed by the police. Others have been shot and beaten. Some have been beaten in the police station. A number of activists, including those who are not members of Abahlali baseMjondolo and are part of other organisations, like the SACP, have had to leave the area. There are regular illegal evictions that are often in violation of court orders and are always in violation of the law. All these actions are carried out with impunity.

Both Qumbela and Gwala were warned to cease their activism before they were killed. They both knew in advance that they would be killed. For this reason we have to take any threat against any comrade very seriously.

In Cato Crest the local structures of the ANC are intertwined with the taxi business and with criminal networks. In Cato Crest corruption runs free and development exists to make the local politicians and their supporters in the Ward Committees and BECs, as well as their families, rich. The struggle of land today it becomes a threat to the politicians when people are homeless and the politicians are busy selling RDP houses to their friends and allocating them to ANC members. The ANC of today is no longer for the people and by the people. They are engrossed by their personal interest. They get in to power to feed themselves and their families. They abandon the poor and make them their audience while eating. Today loyalty to the ANC of Mandela, to the UDF, to the Mpondo Revolt, to the women of Cato Manor, to the ICU and Bambatha requires rebellion against the ANC.

No-one in the ANC has spoken out about the corruption and repression in Cato Crest. The ANC sees Thuli Madonsela as a problem. They see land occupations as a problem. They do not see the assassination of activists as a problem. They do not see corruption as a problem. They do not see a Municipality that tells the landless that they must remain without land, that those in rural areas

must remain in rural areas and that those in the Eastern Cape must remain in the Eastern Cape as a problem. Most of civil society and most church leaders and academics are also silent. The only force that we can rely on for sure is our own inkani.

The ANC was very threatened by the road blockades that we organised in protest at repression last year. They were also threatened by the way in which we showed the world that they were acting against the law. They were also threatened by the Marikana Land Occupation and they remain threatened by the way in which the occupation has grown.

Last year S'bu Zikode wrote an article in *The Guardian* exposing what is happening in Cato Crest. There were also international protests and road blockades across Durban. After this the MEC, Mr. Ravi Pillay, contacted us to begin discussions. The death threats stopped.

Mr. Pillay promised to organise a meeting with the eThekweni Municipality. The last time that we meet with them Nigel Gumede, head of Human Settlements, openly threatened S'bu Zikode with violence. However we agreed to attend the meeting. We organise ourselves to take direct action and to protest but we also organise to negotiate with the state. It is better for the state to have a partnership with the poor rather than big business, the tenderpreneurs and the councillors and their ward committees and BECS.

The meeting was held at the City Hall on 16 September. It was a meeting with the MEC and the ANC of Ward 101 in Cato Crest, SANCO and SACP leadership. As we have explained despite Mr. Pillay's good intentions that meeting was nothing but an attack on us. The meeting stated it very clear that Ndabo Mzimela and his constituency are disturbing the BEC's development and taxi business. It was said that our movement is being funded by foreign agencies to cause riots, destabilize the country and undermine the ANC. Ndabo was told to take all his constituency and leave Cato Crest because they do not belong to Cato Crest. One of the taxi men clearly stated that if Ndabo does not back down there will be blood. Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated shortly after similar things were said about him and so we take it very serious when we here these things being said about Ndabo.

After the meeting with the MEC and the local Cato crest ANC leadership at City Hall the situation has never been the same. Further intimidation has been

made to Ndabo and he was again warned stop the course that he is coursing in Cato Crest.

During this weekend strange men came to Ndabo's home three times looking for him. The municipality came twice to check if any new shacks were being built. On the 22 September Ndabo was called to a meeting at the nearest police station by the Station Commander. The police said they were called by their top boss to call for a follow up after receiving a messenger that was saying that Ndabo had been shot by the izinkabi but was still alive despite the shooting. He was warned that the Movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo have being declared as Amavukela Mbuso (rebels) and told to back off.

Our Mother Land, Our Democratic country and Our City have turned into a hunting zone whereby leaders who stand against corruption, for the right to land, the right to housing, the right to city and the right to equality are being hunted like animals.

We have taken the slogan from the trade union movement that says an "injury to one is an injury to all" into our movement. This is the foundation of solidarity. Without this we are weak and isolated. All members and supporters of Abahlali baseMjondolo are Ndabo Mkhalseni Aaron Mzimela. We have twenty three vibrant branches in KwaZulu-Natal. We stand together.

If this democracy is about killing humble leader like Thembinkosi Qumbela, NKululeko Gwala and a school child like Nqobile Nzuza so let it be. We understand that more of us will die in this struggle. We are struggling for our children.

S'bu Zikode, Abahlali baseMjondolo President
Zandile Nsibande, Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League
Thembani Ngongoma, Abahlali Spokesperson
MaMkhize Nxumalo, Abahlali Chairperson

26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Illegal Evictions About to Happen in Cato Crest

The ANC eThekweni has forced the MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works in the province of KZN to illegally evict Abahlali baseCato Crest.

This criminal mandate was made very clear at our meeting with the MEC at the Durban's City Hall also known as Nigel Gumede Hall. The MEC's attempt to lecture his comrades about the rule of law and the Constitutional ruling few months ago fell in deaf ears.

Since that meeting the MEC/eThekweni Municipality have hired private security guards to guard the Marikana land occupation. Also izinkabi hit men have been seen around the settlement hunting for Ndabo after he was threatened at the City hall during our meeting with the MEC last week. Strange men who introduced themselves as officials from eThekweni municipality have also been monitoring the settlement for further shack expansion in the morning and evening.

Yesterday, Thursday, 25 September 2014 at about 6pm at the Councillor's office the BEC also known as the Mzi Ngiba Committee met to discuss their mandate to the Land Invasion Unit to illegally destroy our homes. They said they will destroy about 270 shacks and only leave the 30 shacks who were cited on the court papers. Any eviction without a court is not only unlawful but it is criminal. Also clear is that these evictions are political.

We would appreciate if the media runs to the scene, the bulldozing unit have already gathered in their numbers as we speak now.

K Maphumulo
Mzamo Majozini
Abahlali office

27 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo of the Western Cape Re-launches in Sweet Home Farm, East Philippi

The situation at the Marikana Land Occupation in Durban remains tense after the attack by the local ANC yesterday. Last night black land rovers without number plates were driving around the area. However there have been no further attacks.

Today delegates from Abahlali in KwaZulu-Natal are with our comrades in Cape Town as part of our exchange visit and to witness democracy in action. This is an opportunity to share our struggles in our respective provinces and to learn from one another. The Sweet Home branch, our only active branch in Cape Town, will relaunch today.

Our movement has very clear conditions for membership. Individual members and branches need to renew their membership every year and each branch must relaunch and re-elect its leadership every year. We used to have a branch in

QQ Section in Khayelitsha but their membership expired in 2012 and has not been renewed since then. There are some residents in QQ Section who are interested in renewing their membership and have asked the movement to visit them. We will all use this opportunity to visit QQ Section and discuss way forward for those residents who wish to renew their membership and form a branch in good standing.

We have been quite concerned that for some years some NGOs in Cape Town have been regularly inviting people who are not members of our movement, and who have no mandate from our movement, to represent our movement in their meetings and workshops. It is very important that a movement has the right to define for itself who is and who is not a member. When NGOs think that they can decide who is a member of a movement, and who can represent a movement, this leads to all kinds of serious problems. In fact it is clear that

some NGOs prefer to work with individuals that are not accountable to democratic membership based structures because these individuals are often willing to take instruction from the NGOs. For this reason we need to make it clear that at the moment we only have one branch in good standing in Cape Town and that is Sweethome Farm.

The launch will start this morning at 11:00 at Sweethome Farm Community Hall.

Syamboleka James, Abahalali Chairperson in Sweethome Farm
Christina Mthandana, Abahlali Committe member in Sweethome Farm
Ndabo Mzimela, Abahlali General Secretary
Thembani Ngongoma, Abahlali National Spokesperson

30 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Thuli Ndlovu was Assassinated last Night

Thuli Ndlovu, the Abahlali baseMjondolo Chairperson in KwaNdengezi, was Assassinated last Night

Between half past six and seven last night an armed man burst into Thuli Ndlovu's home in KwaNdengezi while she was watching TV. He shot her seven times and she died on the scene. There were two other people in the house at the time. One was Sphe Madlala, an 18 year old neighbour. He finished matric last year and did very well in physics and maths. Our movement has been trying to help him to get into university. He had come to the house to help Thuli's 17 year old daughter, Sli, with her matric studies in maths and science. Sphe was also shot twice in the stomach but he survived. He underwent surgery at RK Khan Hospital at one this morning and remains in a critical condition. Thuli's one year old son, Freedom, was also in the house at the time of the shooting. He was not physically harmed. Sli was in a separate outside room with her grandmother at the time of the shooting.

An hour before the incident Mduduzi Ngcobo, the local councillor who is known as Nqola, was moving around near Thuli's home in his black Navara. When she saw Nqola hear her house Thuli told her mother that "today we are going to be shot". She also called one of her comrades in the movement to express her concerns.

Thuli has often been intimidated and threatened by Nqola. The local police always sided with Nqola. But she had a good relationship with an officer in Provincial Crime Intelligence who she thought was more neutral. She would inform him when there were meetings or when she felt unsafe. She was in Cape Town this weekend for the relaunch of the Sweethome Farm branch of our movement. While she was away she received a call from the local Station Commissioner asking her to come to a meeting. This also happened to Ndabo Mzimela from Cato Crest. When Ndabo attended the meeting he was warned to leave the area or face assassination. Thuli only arrived back in KwaNdengezi

late on Sunday afternoon so we don't know if she was able to get in touch with the Commissioner.

KwaNdengezi is like a rural area and people live in their own houses and not in shacks. They have an iNkosi and iziNduna. Land is allocated by the iziNduna and is not paid for. Some people have the land rights papers known as Permission to Occupy papers (PTOs) and other people don't have papers. But the right to occupy the land is not just a right on paper. It is recognised by all the neighbours and is therefore a real and strong right. After 1994 the land was taken over by the Municipality and the legal authority was shifted from the iNkosi to a councillor.

The problems in KwaNdengezi started in 2010 when Nqola called a meeting to announce that a housing project would be taking place in the area. Before accepting the project the community raised concerns about their families' grave yards. They said that a housing project should not frustrate people but improve people's lives. It was agreed that before the project starts another community meeting will be called to discuss how it should be structured. It was also agreed that as this is a community project therefore it should be driven by the community.

However there no further meeting was called and the project was imposed on people from above. Many attempts were made to meet with the Councillor but when meetings were scheduled he did not attend them. After several times of going to his office, the community leaders called the councillor and explained that the agreement had not been kept. He promised to come to the community and listen to the people's grievances and try to find resolutions. But again he did not do as he promised.

When this housing project started RDP houses were just built anywhere and without any discussion or consultation. Some people found that two or three houses were suddenly being built in their yards. Fences were just destroyed and houses were built on their gardens and even next to or over their family graves. There has been no respect for the dead. African people have a high respect for the dead. This is an insult to the people and to their culture. Also the houses are not being built for the people in the area. They are going to people unknown in the area and the councillor is selling them. When people complained about these houses being built in their yards and on their gardens and graves they were told that their houses were shacks and that therefore they have no ownership

or say – no rights at all. However their houses are not shacks. They were built on properly allocated land and are solid structures having as many as five rooms in some cases.

The Inkosi in the area, Mr. B. Shoji, denies having signed any documents authorising the Municipality to take over certain portions of land in the name of development. The people in the area have not given their consent to this development. Yet the Municipality has continued to do what it wants without regard to the people living in KwaNdengezi. Nqola has responded to the people's concerns with serious intimidation including firing live ammunition at people.

People in KwaNdengezi started joining our movement in early June 2012. One of the community members had been following the Shallcross land occupation and approached our movement for solidarity.

From the beginning our members faced serious intimidation in the area. During a protest against corruption on Sunday 27 January 2013 people were threatened at gunpoint by an MK Veteran who is one of those who is believed to have bought a corrupted RDP house. We opened a case of intimidation against this man but it was never investigated and he was never arrested.

Later that afternoon the same MK Veteran and Nqola came with the police and pointed out which protesters they wanted the police to arrest. Four people were arrested. All charges were later dropped due to a lack of any evidence against the four comrades.

On 31 August that year the community had to protest once again against the City's stealing of residents' yards, including their gardens and graves, and the selling of the RDP houses that were being built. Nqola threatened to shoot residents in the broad day light. A case of intimidation by the local councillor was reported to the police in September 2012 (Case 197/09/2012). But it was never investigated until today just like the case of intimidation by Nigel Gumede that was reported to the police in 2011 after he made an open threat against S'bu Zikode was never investigated.

On the 18th of November 2012 120 people, mainly women, participated in the launch of the new Abahlali baseMjondolo branch in KwaNdengezi. Before the launch there were several meetings. Nqola denied us the use of the hall and tried to close down our meetings. He would be armed and accompanied by armed men. There would be serious threats. Eventually we had the launch outside in a tent.

On 2 March 2013 the Abahlali baseMjondolo Woman's League had its General Meeting. The KwaNdengezi branch was present and shared their painful story of living under constant threat from their councillor and that they were not even sleeping in their own homes due to threats. The Women's League took a decision to respond to the situation and on the 6th of March 2013 they entered and occupied the Durban City Hall to demand that the serious accusations of intimidation and corruption against Nqola be investigated. They demanded that the City Council take his threats seriously and act to secure the safety of our comrades in KwaNdengezi. The City Council did nothing. They said nothing. Thuli's blood is on their hands.

On the 29 March 2013, which was Good Friday, Dumisani Mdletshe went to the home of a well-known, well respected and brave leader of our movement in KwaNdengezi. He kicked open the door and entered the home. He had a bush knife. He attacked her grandmother and her uncle and killed them both. They were both members of our movement. He then asked for the comrade who had escaped in the dark.

Mdletshe then went to another home, kwaShozi, which is about 2 kilometres away. Here he attacked Mr. Shozi who is the father of another well known, well respected and brave comrade. Mr Shozi fought back with the help of his sons. They overpowered their attacker and called the police who arrested Mdletshe.

On the 19th of May 2013 there was another peaceful protest against Nqola's corrupt and undemocratic allocation of houses. Eleven comrades were arrested. Mandisi Shozi went to the police station to try and see his mother and to check that she was ok. Nqola and his izinkabi (hit men) assaulted him outside the police station. They have not been arrested for this assault. All charges were dropped against the eleven comrades due to a lack of any evidence against them.

On the 12th of July 2013 an Induna in KwaNdengezi by the name of Mr. Dingisono Ndlovu was arrested by a team of police investigators who identified themselves as coming from the Provincial Task Team. He was detained for two days. When he was released he said that he had been tortured by the police while in custody.

On the 22nd of October 2013 a road blockade was organised in protest at Nqola and his corrupt housing project. Nqola came to the blockade with the police. He was armed and he joined the police assault of the protestors. Thuli

Ndlovu, who was then the interim chairperson of our movement in the area, was singled out for deliberate personal intimidation and assault.

That night Nqola arrived at Thuli's home and started shouting threats and shooting a gun outside her house. She and her family did not sleep that night. The interim committee opened a case of intimidation against Nqola with the local police. They knew that of course that a case against a councillor will never be investigated but they wanted it to be on the record.

In November 2013 Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma made a report to Jacob Zuma to investigate allegations of irregularities in the list processes for councillors leading up to 2011 local-government elections. This report noted that in Ward 12 in KwaDengezi complaints included allegations that the ward councillor was selling government houses and that "cases of corruption and killing of people in their ward were brought to the police, the police never did anything about the reported cases". The task team recommended that Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa "facilitate investigations of killings in that ward". No action was taken in response to their report. Thuli's blood is also on Mthethwa's hands.

On the 16th of September this year our movement met with the Provincial MEC for Housing and members of the ANC, SACP and SANCO structures in Cato Crest. Serious threats were made against us. The focus of this intimidation was on Ndabo Mzimela from Cato Crest. We started to get calls from the media who had been approached by the ANC saying that 'Durban is under siege from Abahlali baseMjondolo'. There were warnings from within the ANC and the police. We know the signs. We knew that another assassination was coming. But all the signs pointed to Ndabo Mzimela being the one at risk.

On the 18th of September we had a good meeting with the Ngonyama Trust. They were shocked to hear about what is happening in KwaNdengezi and promised to respond to the issues. This would have been a threat to Nqola and others who are profiting (legally and illegally) from development in the area. This weekend there was a spontaneous protest in the area against the corrupt allocation of houses. Thuli was not part of this protest.

We had a meeting in KwaNdengezi today. People are really scared and shocked. They don't see much police visibility today.

Our movement is shocked but not surprised. We have accepted that some of us will die in this struggle. We are well aware that our leaders have been removed from the housing list and placed on the death lists. Many of us have

received threats. We knew that another assassination was coming. The only surprise was that many of us were expecting that it would be Ndabo's turn. Senior police officers were also aware that another assassination was coming. They have done nothing to give protection to our members.

Our deep condolences go to Thuli's family, to her mother and her children. We will do all that we can to support them and to make sure that Thuli is buried with all the dignity and honour that she was denied in life. She was a brave and strong woman. She will always be remembered and honoured in our movement.

We are facing a war. The struggle for land and dignity continues.

Lala ngoxolo qhawe, sizohlala sikukhumbula

Sma (Family member)

Ndabo Mzimela (Abahlali baseMjondolo Secretary General)

Zandile Nsibande (Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League)

1 OCTOBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Another political eviction in Sisonke Village, near Lamontville

On Sunday 28 September 2014 the ANC Ward 74 councillor Nolubabalo Mthembu called an ANC meeting to discuss ways of replacing the Land Invasion Unit with an ANC demolition team. This meeting took place at the Lamontville Community hall in the afternoon at around 1pm. The Task Team Committee was launched to carry out the illegal eviction of the nearby Sisonke settlement. Sisonke Village, formerly known as Madlala Village, made headlines early this year when they approached the Constitutional Court after they had been subjected to more than 24 illegal evictions.

The Constitutional court found that the Eviction Order obtained by the MEC, Ravi Pillay, was invalid as it was made in breach of the Constitution. The court also found that the eThekweni municipality had lied to the Court and referred the matter back to Durban High Court. We are still waiting for the High Court to make a ruling on the matter. It is clear that replacing the Land Invasions Unit with ANC members is a tactic to avoid legal accountability for evictions. We saw a similar strategy at the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest on Friday 26 September when ANC members began demolishing shacks. They also attacked one of our members with a spade.

In 2009 repression by the police was replaced with repression by armed ANC members acting with police support. Last year Willies Mchunu openly called for ANC members to act directly against people struggling against corruption and for land in Cato Crest. Since last year izinkabi (assassins) have also been used to repress us.

Yesterday, while we were busy with the family of Thuli Ndlovu, our comrade slain in KwaNdengezi, the Land Invasion Unit accompanied by the local ANC evicted about 30 families in Sisonke Village. As always, there was no court order authorising this eviction thus making the eviction criminal and unlawful. The local ANC claim that this piece of land is reserved only for the ANC members.

This encourages communities to fight. This is also the case in Cato Crest where ANC members are told that the land that has been occupied by the Marikana Land Occupation is reserved for the grandchildren of the ANC members living in the area.

It is clear to us that the ANC has issued an order to its members to engage in a politic of creating war within communities. They have not succeeded in destroying our movement or our struggle with the police and they continually loose in the courts. Despite various dirty tricks, and serious repression, our movement remains strong. They are now mobilizing their members to attack us directly. This is what the apartheid regime did to the progressive movement in the 1980s. Today the Municipality is shifting its dirty duty to ANC communities.

The politic of violence must stop. The use of assassins and the mobilization of armed party members against our movement must stop.

The situation in Durban is now very serious. We are evicted, beaten and killed without any consequence. Today there is no democracy for the poor in this city. If this is not challenged tomorrow there will be no democracy for anybody in this city. If the politic of war is not challenged in Durban it will come to other parts of the country too.

Mam Dodana
Mamu Mbhemu

17 OCTOBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

From Assassination with Bullets to Assassination with Words

On the 6th of October 2014, exactly one week after Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated, The Mercury published an article by Bongani Hans and Sihle Manda that was nothing but an attempt to assassinate the reputation of S'bu Zikode, of our movement and of the many people who are striving for land and housing in Durban independently of our movement.

The article, 'Shacks pop up in Durban land grab' by Bongani Hans and Sihle Manda is online here: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/shacks-pop-up-in-durban-land-grab-1.1760398#.VDfdg2eSxps> It has since been republished by The Post and the South African Housing Federation which also circulated it via email.

This article includes statements and insinuations from Provincial Human Settlements spokesman, Mbulelo Baloyi, and Skhumbuzo Vilakazi and Harvey Mzimela from the Land Invasion Control Unit that are completely dishonest and nothing but malicious fabrication. It is defamatory and slanderous. It is clear that these statements have been made to encourage and legitimate violence against our movement and its leaders. This article is in clear violation of the press code which is online here: <http://www.presscouncil.org.za/ContentPage?code=PRESSCODE>

The article begins by stating that a 'tsunami' of people is 'flooding' into Durban from rural areas resulting in 'a proliferation of shacks'. Over the years we have had a number of discussions in our movement on the history of land occupations, shack dwellers' struggles, evictions and forced removals in Durban drawing on knowledge in our communities and academic knowledge. We know that for more than a hundred years the rulers of this city have been claiming that land occupations and movement into the city by people who are poor and black is a 'crisis' that must be stopped by all means. We know that excluding African people from the cities, and tightly and violently controlling African people who

were in the cities, was one of the main aims of apartheid. We know also that the grandparents or parents of many of the middle class people living in Durban today once lived in shacks in places like Cato Manor, Inanda or Tin Town and were described by the elites of the time as criminal, violent, dirty, diseased and politically remoted.

We also know that cities are growing around the world and that land occupations are happening around the world. For as long as there is an economic and political system that means that cities are the only places where most people have some chance of finding opportunities this process will continue. The apartheid government could not stop urbanisation with all its repression, its violence and lies, and the ANC government will not be able to stop it with its own repression, its own violence and its own lies.

People are moving to all the cities in South Africa, and in all the cities people who can't afford formal housing are occupying land and living in shacks. This article makes it seem like this is only happening in Durban and that urbanisation and land occupations in Durban are a result of a criminal conspiracy.

The article does not acknowledge that in some cases, as in the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest, the people that have occupied land in Durban did so after being illegally evicted from their homes in Durban by the Municipality. See – http://www.seri-sa.org/images/Zulu_Intervention_FA_final.pdf The article fails to acknowledge that one of the main reasons for the ongoing crisis in Cato Crest is that the housing development there mainly benefits members of the ruling party and not ordinary residents. Those who are close to Mzimuni Ngiba, who is the ward councillor, are the ones who benefit. This is one project that does not have an elected Steering Committee but only an ANC committee. It is one project that does not have a list of beneficiaries but only benefits those who are loyal to the party. It is one project that does not have a fair allocation policy but only comradeship. It is one project in which the mayor himself and senior party bosses participate in unlawful evictions. It is one project that has led to the assassination of whistle blowers and housing rights activists in which senior politicians in the area are implicated but nobody gets arrested.

This article also fails to acknowledge that in places like Siyanda and Cato Crest there are land occupations that are organised and supported by the local structures of the ANC as part of its attempt to reduce the power of our movement. These land occupations are never treated as criminal and their residents

are not subject to violence. The ANC also supports land occupations in Cape Town when they are linked to the ruling party. It is therefore clear that the ANC is not against all land occupations. It is against those land occupations that it does not control.

In this article the ANC are trying to create the impression that movement into Durban from rural areas is the result of a criminal conspiracy. Although they don't say it in this article on the ground leaders in the ruling party are constantly insisting that people from the Eastern Cape must remain in the Eastern Cape. They are saying that KwaZulu-Natal is for the Zulus only. They are encouraging people who are Zulu to 'protect the land for your forefathers'. The idea that people from the Eastern Cape must remain in the Eastern Cape is much closer to the logic of apartheid than to the Freedom Charter which clearly states that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it' or the Constitution which clearly states that 'Every citizen has the right to enter, to remain in and to reside anywhere in the Republic'.

The position that the ANC is taking in Durban and in KwaZulu-Natal means that there is no right to the city for people who have been impoverished by oppression. It means that this should be the end of the generations that could move to the cities to improve their lives and that those who live in deep poverty in rural areas should starve and die there. Mayor James Nxumalo left Ntshanga and came to Durban. It seems that the right to the city must now be limited to the politicians and the rich.

The article also states that this 'frenzy' of land occupations is being organised by 'shack lords' who charge up to R20 000 for a site to build a shack, who go to rural areas to recruit people to occupy land and who have become so rich from this that they live in uMhlanga and Durban North. This is complete fiction. Durban is not like Nairobi where very rich people, like cabinet ministers, own and rent out hundreds of shacks. In Durban when shacks are rented the price is usually between R80 and R300 a month. It is unusual for one person or one family to have more than a few shacks to rent. We know of two cases in KwaZulu-Natal where one person has claimed to own a whole shack settlement and then demanded that everyone pay rent to them. One is the Jika Joe settlement in Pietermaritzburg. In this settlement the person who is claiming to own the settlement works for the ANC. Neither she nor the ANC try to hide this. It is therefore clear that the ANC have no problem with shacklordism when the

shack lord is loyal to the party. The other case that we know of where one person has claimed to own a whole settlement is in Shallcross in Durban. In this case the person who claims to own the whole settlement is not working for the ANC. Our movement marched against her. That struggle was successful and people in that settlement are no longer paying rent. Some years ago residents in Jika Joe joined our movement and tried to organise in the settlement but they were not successful due to serious intimidation.

Our record of organising against shack lords is clear. Furthermore when a settlement affiliates to our movement it has to elect its leaders and to continue to do so if it is to remain a branch in good standing. If the members in a settlement feel that it is necessary to recall elected leaders this can be done. Even senior leaders have been recalled in our movement. Democracy and shacklordism are obviously incompatible. Therefore it is clear that although shacklordism is not a big problem in Durban our movement is against shacklordism.

We have never heard of someone who has become so rich from selling land or renting shacks that they can live in uMhlanga or Durban North. What we do know is that the ANC has often lied and said that our leaders live in these elite suburbs when in fact they were living in shacks or, if they were living under death threats, in modest safe houses which have been temporary accommodation arranged with Church support. We do not have a single member of our movement living in these elite suburbs.

If the ANC has evidence of anyone who is making enough money from selling land or renting shacks to be able to live in uMhlanga or Durban North let them bring it. Our movement is under constant and close surveillance from intelligence. We are constantly arrested on charges that are later dropped or thrown out of court. It is clear that the ANC is desperate to get convictions against us yet they cannot succeed in doing so despite having us under constant surveillance of various kinds including everything from aerial photographs of land occupations to monitoring our phones. If there was any evidence of any of our members or leaders having committed any crime the ANC would know about it and those people would have been arrested and convicted.

Because the ANC cannot find anything to use against us in court, despite all these years of close surveillance, they rely on two strategies to undermine us. One strategy is assassination, wrongful arrest, assault, torture and eviction. Another strategy is rumours and lies which are circulated to the media, via local

party structures and even via regular anonymous phone calls to our members. When tensions emerge between comrades, often due to the intense personal pressures that come with repression, these are sometimes exploited too.

The article also says that these shack lords that are supposed to be making all this money are being supported by taxi bosses and drug dealers. It is the politicians, not us, who are close to the taxi bosses. Many people in local ANC structures own taxis, like in Cato Crest. They get their assassins from the taxi industry. The person who made a clear threat of violence against Ndabo Mzimela at the recent meeting called by provincial MEC Ravi Pillay is a taxi boss. Baloyi choose to be silent about this even though this threat was made in from of his boss, Ravi Pillay.

In recent years whoonga has done serious damage to some of our young people. We spend a huge amount of time trying to support young people to create positive spaces. Our movement has put a lot of energy into all kinds of youth projects. We have also offered real support to people who are addicted. In fact S'bu Zikode and his family have taken a young comrade struggling with addiction into their home. We know how deep the damage of whoonga goes to people, their families and communities. People who profit from selling whoonga are our enemies. Saying that land occupations are being organised by shack lords who are being supported by taxi bosses and drug dealers is complete fabrication. It is just a way to try and criminalise impoverished people, and our attempts to access urban land and to organise. And anyway we all know that the big drug dealers are protected by the police, the same police that protect the politicians against the people.

We all know that once people have been criminalised it becomes easy to perpetrate violence against them. It becomes easy to treat people who have been criminalised as if they are beneath the law. We are already evicted unlawfully on a regular basis and face serious and regular violence from the police, the Land Invasions Unit, Municipal Security guards and local structures of the ANC. Not once in this article is any concern expressed about the violence that is regularly perpetrated against impoverished people in Durban, and especially those who are organised outside of the ANC, by the state and the ruling party. In fact the statements in this article are clearly aimed at making us even more vulnerable to state criminality and to violence from the state and the ruling party. They are

aimed at creating a climate of impunity for the violence from the state and the ruling party.

The article then goes on to quote Provincial Human Settlements spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi saying that ‘invaders’ are threatening the ‘rightful low-cost house beneficiaries’. We all know that there is no such thing as a neutral and fair housing list in Durban and that housing goes to people who are connected to the local ANC structures. Houses are sometimes allocated on the bonnets of cars and money is sometimes openly exchanged. When houses are being allocated the local ANC leaders often bring their families from rural areas. If you are not connected to the local ANC structures, or if you are not Zulu, or if you are renting rather than owning, you are likely to be left homeless when development comes.

Baloyi makes specific reference to Cato Crest. He does not acknowledge that the land occupation happened there after local residents were illegally evicted from their homes in the same area. Baloyi must know this. He is being deliberately dishonest. The language that calls some impoverished people ‘invaders’ and others, usually those who are linked to the ruling party (and who are often also Zulu and shack owners), as ‘rightful beneficiaries’ is an attempt to weaken the power of the impoverished by dividing us. It is an attempt to try and encourage some impoverished people to blame other impoverished people, rather than the government and the rich, for their continued suffering under this so called democracy. It is an attempt to encourage violence against our movement from local ANC structures.

After land occupations and movement into the city has been shown as if it is a criminal conspiracy the article then says that: “The municipality’s Land Invasion Control Unit, which falls under the metro police, has placed the shack dwellers’ lobby group Abahlali baseMjondolo and its leader, S’bu Zikode, at the top of its list of perpetrators of this “orchestrated land invasion”. No evidence is provided to support this statement which is a clear attempt to criminalise our movement and to show S’bu Zikode as a ‘perpetrator’, as criminal and as a man who is exploiting impoverished people for his own financial interest. This is nothing but slander and defamation.

Since 2005 we have been used to being slandered by politicians calling us the ‘third force’ and ‘criminals’. Since 2006 we have been used to being slandered on emails by the notorious individual who saw no embarrassment in claiming to

be the biggest leftist in Durban while working as a consultant to the police, the same police that were arresting us and assaulting us. After the repression in 2009 he supported the lies that the police were telling about us, lies that were later thrown out of court. Recently he has been joined by a former member of our movement who was expelled after being found guilty by a disciplinary hearing of charging an inflated price for membership and then failing to hand this money taken from new members to the movement.

Our response to the slander from the politicians has been to hold open meetings in which anyone can come and see that there is free discussion in our movement and that our resistance to the government comes from below, from the crisis of people's lives, and not from some international conspiracy from above. We have just ignored this slander from the regressive left because no one with any credibility takes it seriously. Their spaces, their email lists and their NGOs, have no relevance to our struggle. But we are not used to being slandered in *The Mercury* and we will not ignore slander in this space. As Malcom X warned the media "have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent".

Baloyi is then quoted in the article as saying that "communities" need to "protect their areas". Our members are already being freely attacked and evicted by the local ANC structures in Sisonke Village in Lamontville and the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. Since 2009 death threats have been openly made against our leaders, including S'bu Zikode, by ANC members. Two of our well known members have been assassinated and in 2009 many of our members were driven from their homes by armed men who described themselves as ANC. The ANC has never condemned them or acted against them. Baloyi's call, like that of other senior ANC leaders that are calling on communities to 'protect' their areas, will be clearly understood by local party structures as a call for violence against our movement and other occupiers, especially those that are not members of the ruling party and are not Zulu.

The article then quotes Vilakazi stating that "municipal staff were being attacked by well-armed crowds when they tried to stop invasions". We know of no case where members of the Land Invasions Unit have been attacked and injured by armed residents during an eviction. Our members have often tried to resist evictions but they have never done so with arms. If they had they would certainly have been arrested, tried and convicted. When the Land Invasions Unit

come to evict us they come with the police and other security and everything is recorded on video.

However our members have often been injured by violence from the Land Invasions Unit during armed evictions and disconnections. People have been beaten and shot. In October last year two unarmed people were killed and another seven unarmed people were injured during an armed electricity disconnection in a settlement (not affiliated to our movement) in Reservoir Hills. It is the land invasions unit, the municipal security guards and the police that are an armed and serious danger to society, not us. By presenting people that resist the always illegal and usually violent evictions from the Municipality as an armed threat Vilakazi is preparing the way for more violence to be used by the state during evictions.

Vilakazi is quoted saying that the 'hotspots' for these 'land invasions' are 'Marikana in Cato Crest, Mini Town in Hammarsdale, part of Mount Edgecombe, Lamontville and Matikwe in Inanda'. We have vibrant branches in Cato Crest and Lamontville but we do not have branches or even any existence at all in Hammarsdale, Mount Edgecombe or Matikwe. But the way that the article is written creates the impression that S'bu Zikode and our movement are responsible for all these land occupations. In fact even in Cato Crest and Lamontville people made the first decision to occupy on their own and only approached our movement, and then decided to join our movement, after they had occupied.

Vilakazi also claims that 'shack lords' sell land to people when they learn that there will be development in the area and people then move in aiming to 'stall development until they are prioritised for low-cost housing allocations'. It is not true that people only occupy land in areas where development is planned. People occupy land in many places where there is no development coming. Occupying land is a way for people to access accommodation in the city and to be near to opportunities for livelihoods and education. Many people are trying to make their own future and are not waiting for the government. Those of us who are known to be strong in the struggle know that we will never get a government house.

Mzimela even claims that our movement goes to rural areas to 'recruit' people to move to the city. We have never done this. In fact we don't even recruit new members in the city. We want members that are seriously committed to our movement and we therefore work on a system whereby people approach

us, not the other way around, and joining is a long process that requires new members to learn about our movement and to seriously think about what it means to join.

It is also wrong to think that all people living in shacks come from rural areas. It is true that many people are leaving rural areas for towns and cities. Some of these people plan to remain in the cities. Others do not intend to live their whole lives in the cities and are sending money back to their rural homes and will retire back to these rural homes when they have finished working. It is also true that many people who live in shacks grew up in the city but can't afford to rent or buy housing. Some people who live in shacks are there because they are escaping abusive relationships and have nowhere else to go.

Mzimela also states that "Abahlali has a website which connects them with the world and they raise funds with sympathetic international organisations. Access to funds makes it easy for them to challenge any court application for eviction, which prevents us from evicting people." We do have a website. It is often hacked and it doesn't always work and doesn't always work well but we have comrades that try to keep it online and working for us. Our website has always angered those who want to keep us in the dark corners and who want to be the only ones able to access the internet. Glen Nayager, Mike Sutcliffe, Heinrich Bohmke, Ricky Govender and all those who wish to silence us and force us back into the dark corners have always seen our website as a big problem. The Municipality, all government departments, the police, NGOs and all kinds of other organisations have websites. We have the same right as anyone else in this society to communicate our struggles and ideas on the internet. We will continue to occupy our own space on the internet.

When we began our movement we had no donor funding at all. For a few years now we have had some donor funding but not all of our money comes from donors. We also charge an annual membership of R20. Unlike the ANC, which also has donors, we have always been completely open about which organisations have offered financial support to our movement. From the first time that we ever received donor money the details of who has given us money have been published on our website. We get some money from church organisations. We also get some support from two non-church organisations. The first is the South African Development Fund which is based in the United States. This is a progressive organisation that was formed in 1985 by Themba Vilakazi with

a group of South Africans living in exile in the United States who were joined by Americans active in the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements. It was formed with the view to supporting the struggle against apartheid. Today it continues to support the struggle for justice in South Africa. Bishop Tutu is chair of their advisory board. They have a website at: <http://www.sadevelopmentfund.org/> The other non-church organisation that offers financial support to our movement is War on Want. This organisation is based in London. It is a progressive organisation that supports worker and community struggles around the world, as well as the struggle of the Palestinian people. It has a website at: <http://www.waronwant.org/>

We do not accept any money from any organisation that wants to use its money to give it the power to give direction to our movement, or to compromise our organisational or political autonomy in any way. The money that we do accept is in a long progressive tradition of international solidarity. The ANC gladly accepted international solidarity when it was in struggle. We do not only receive solidarity. We also act in solidarity with comrades in other countries like Haiti, Palestine, Austria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Turkey. We have the same right as any other organisation or group of people in this society to work with and to be in solidarity with whomever we choose in South Africa and internationally.

The financial support that we do receive from other organisations is not used to cover legal costs. We use it to run an office, to hire halls for meetings and so on. When we require legal support we work with pro bono legal organisations like the Socio-Economic Rights Institute in Johannesburg (SERI). We have also worked with the Legal Resources Centre and ProBono.Org. We do not pay these organisations for their legal support. We only work with legal organisations that are willing to respect our autonomy and to take instructions from impoverished people. The patron of SERI is former Constitutional Court Judge Zak Yacoob and Bishop Rubin Philip and Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza are on the SERI board. SERI has a website at <http://www.seri-sa.org/>

We have every right to seek to support to go to court when we are confronted by illegal and often violent actions against us by the Municipality. We are constantly forced into the courts by the government by being arrested on bogus criminal charges that are later dropped or thrown out. Yet when we take the government to court we almost always win our cases. It seems that Mzimela

and others who think that it is unacceptable that a poor people's movement can access the courts want to evict us from access to the courts, and the internet, and the right to be in solidarity with others, as well as from the city. They want us to disappear from this so-called democracy. They want us to have no voice and no power. We must remain, silent, invisible and hopeless, in rural areas. Those of us who are already in the cities and cannot be forced out must remain silent, invisible and hopeless in transit camps. They want to deny us any right to meaningful citizenship. They want to evict us from this democracy.

In this article 737 words are given to government officials to lie. But only 128 words are given for a response to these lies. In this space the account given by the journalists of S'bu Zikode's position on land occupations is not accurate. In fact S'bu makes a clear distinction between land invasions and land occupations and S'bu, and our movement, give clear support to land occupations, which are land reform from below, and will continue to do so as long as the commercial value of land is put before its social value. In this article no opportunity is given to us to respond to the wild lies about drug dealers, houses in uMhlanga and Durban North, land being sold for R20 000 etc. These lies are left to stand as if they are true.

Once again we say that we are all S'bu Zikode. We reject this attempt to individualise a struggle that is being fought by thousands of people today in all the cities in South Africa, and which has been fought in Durban for more than a hundred years.

Mbulelo Baloyi, Skhumbuzo Vilakazi and Harvey Mzimela cannot continue in their jobs with any credibility after making these kinds of statements. They must be immediately removed from their posts. They are supposed to be civil servants, not propagandists for the ruling party. They are supposed to be committed to the laws of the country, not propagandists for state criminality and repression.

The editor of The Mercury needs to investigate how an article like this was published. It is propaganda and not journalism. The Mercury also needs to make an apology to us and to its readers for the lies published in this article.

We urge the Department of Human Settlement in the province and eThekweni municipality to support a fair and impartial investigation into all housing corruption in Durban, its links to the assassination of housing activists and whistle blowers and the role of politicians in these assassinations. We insist that

Nigel Gumede cannot continue to be a referee and a player at the same time. We urge the Department to come up with a clear and fair Housing Allocation Policy that includes a fair and transparent Housing list. We urge the Department to set up a very clear, clean and democratic elected Housing Allocation Committee.

We urge the government at all levels, as well as the media, to resist any attempts to present the crisis in our cities, and the crises in our rural areas which is directly linked to the urban crisis, in terms of a criminal conspiracy on the part of one organisation or individual. We all need to face up to the reality that millions of people in South Africa live in a daily state of emergency and that for many of us access to the cities provides the only real hope to improve our lives and the lives of our children.

T.J. Ngongoma (Abahlali baseMjondolo Spokesperson)
Ndabo Mzimela (Abahlali baseMjondolo Secretary General)
Zandile Nsibande (Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League)
S'bu Zikode (Abahlali baseMjondolo President)

18 OCTOBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The ANC and SACP are Building Shacks in the Marikana Land Occupation with the Permission of the Ward Councillor and Municipal Security Guards

About twenty men, members of the ANC and the SACP, are building shacks right now in troubled Cato Crest in Ward 101. They are building their shacks in a piece of land that has been left vacant in the Marikana Land Occupation in order to build a community hall.

The men who are building shacks on this land said that the local ANC councillor Mzimuni Ngibi has given them permission to build the shacks. This has been confirmed by the security guards who are now placed in the settlement to guard against further land occupation by Abahlali. The security guards came and negotiated with the men and the councillor was then called to confirm that his comrades have the right to build.

We would be happy if everyone who is desperate for housing was allowed to build but only the ANC is allowed to build. The Land Invasion Unit and its law enforcement do not apply to ANC but only to people who are non-ANC. The same security guards have demolished several shacks built by Abahlali but today they smile while negotiating with the rulers of this country.

We can safely say land occupation is only permitted to ANC and SACP members in Durban. When we occupy land we are called criminals and the third force. When the ANC and SACP occupy land in order to try and weaken or take over a land occupation that they have not been able to destroy via all kinds of intimidation including illegal eviction, assault, shooting, wrongful arrest, torture and assassination they are given the full support of the state's armed power.

The media can rush to Cato Crest now to witness how the Durban ANC really rules this city.

Ndabo Mzimela
Khayakazi

6 NOVEMBER 2014

Press statement · Joint statement

Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Durban Congolese Refugee Community to March on Saturday

We do not count to this society and this world. We can be driven from our homes, beaten, tortured and murdered with impunity. We are placed outside of citizenship and even humanity. When we insist on our dignity, when we take our place in the cities and in the discussions and when we resist the violence that constantly rains down on us like an endless storm we are shown to the world as criminals. We are expected to suffer and die in silence. We are expected to leave a world for our children in which their only future is suffering. We are not alone in having to live under this cruelty. In Palestine, in Haiti, in the Congo and in the favelas of Brazil and the gecekondu of Turkey it is the same.

It is our responsibility to build a new politic, a politic that respects the dignity of all people, a politic that restores the land and wealth of the world to the people, a politic in which there are no people that can be freely driven from their homes and freely killed, a politic in which everyone counts.

We have been facing serious repression recently. We have been facing bullets, evictions and lies. But in the middle of this storm we have been having a series of meetings with the Congolese refugee community in Durban surrounding the on-going genocide in the DRC. Abahlali have vowed to stand in solidarity with our comrades here and those that remain facing abuse and butchering in their country. Together we need to understand how it is that in this world so many people's humanity is not recognised. We also need to understand what we can do to overturn this system that makes some few people rich while the rest are made poor, driven from their land and their homes and turned into some kind of animal that can be freely killed.

We reiterate our position that “unyawo alunampumulo”, a person is a person wherever they come from. The pain of our Congolese comrades is our pain. We call upon ordinary South Africans to stand in solidarity with Congolese as

they say to us that they see South Africa as the root of Africa and DRC as the heart of Africa. It is time to expose the complicity of both local and international agents who perpetuate genocide in DRC. It is time to say away with the capitalist monopolies that continue to enrich themselves with the mineral wealth of the DRC. It is time for us to do away with African states that provide the armed force for these capitalist monopolies.

In the same way Abahlali have buried enough of our comrades who have been assassinated for exposing these greedy agents who steal from the public purse. We are saying enough is enough. We shall not keep quiet and watch while our comrades are being murdered by the police or izinkabi that are paid by politicians. It is a disgrace that our lives are being used to exchange money by politicians. Four of our comrades have been killed within a space of 18 months: Thembinkosi Qumbela, Nkululeko Gwala, Nqobile Nzuza and Thuli Ndlovu. At around 8 o'clock last night Mobeni Khwela an ANC activist working against Nqola's corruption in KwaNdengezi was gunned down. We extend our deepest condolences to his family. We also have more wounded comrades as a result of these gangsters who are based at the City Hall. Durban's land invasion unit and the police work under the instruction of these gangsters. The Durban City Hall is running with the blood of the people it should be serving with integrity. Those who pay the izinkabi are welcome in this hall. Yet those who stand for justice are considered as criminals in this hall.

We acknowledge and salute our friends, partners and comrades around the world who are standing in solidarity with us at this trying time. We note with a particular interest the tireless solidarity efforts our comrades in London are demonstrating. Just as others stand with us when we face oppression so too it is our responsibility to stand with others facing oppression.

We will be marching together with our Congolese comrades on Saturday. We have asked the Minister of Police Mr Nkosinathi Nhleko to come and receive our Memorandum regarding assassination and other violent crimes against Abahlali. We have also asked for the MEC for Human Settlements in KZN Mr Ravi Pillay to come and receive our Memorandum on the brazen housing corruption that continues to reign in our province. Our Congolese comrades have asked the DRC Ambassador to South Africa to also come and receive our Memorandum. The Department of International Relations has been

also informed of this march and the need to intervene. We hope all these public officials will honour our demands and act accordingly.

Abahlali demand that the death list created in Ward 101 and Ward 12 in Durban and at the high ranking political sphere must be investigated and exposed.

Abahlali demand that gangsters and warlords that hide behind party politic must be exposed and arrested.

Abahlali demand that the politic of blood must be replaced by a genuine politic of negotiation and free organizing outside of state and party control. We demand that the land and wealth of the country must be shared fairly. We demand that as an immediate first step the social value of land must be placed before its commercial value. There must be an end to corruption. The government must be a servant of the people, not a system to steal from the people and to repress the people in the name of the people.

Our DRC comrades demand peace and sovereignty in DRC. They demand an end to genocide and human right abuses. They demand an end to the balkanisation of the DRC. They also demand an end to all sexual violence against women and children. They reject the DRC Constitution change and demand an end to looting of minerals and other wealth of their country.

The march will be held on Saturday, 08 November 2014, starting from King Dinuzulu Park at 9:00am to Durban City Hall at 12:00pm.

Raphael Bahebwa
Kapela
Diaku.
Ndabo Mzimela
Thembani Ngongoma

8 NOVEMBER 2014

Memorandum of demands · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Memorandum of Demands Delivered to the Minister of Human settlement in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, MR Ravi Pillay

We, the citizens, men and women of the Republic of South Africa are members of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA in kwaZulu-Natal, Durban, are democrats committed to the flourishing of this country and the world. We speak for ourselves and direct our own struggle. We have been mobilized by our own suffering and our hope for a better future here and abroad. It is time to take seriously the fact that, land is a serious problem in our country and that land was stolen from our ancestors and that, this has impoverished us. That housing in the city is a mess that has not just terrorized our communities but made us homeless here in South Africa. Housing corruption has become a weapon of mass destruction to those of us who are killed for the right to the city and the right to housing.

Today we recognize that the right to housing has been violated in our presence, we are kept in an inhumane conditions, in shacks and transit camps.

Our demands are as follows:

The Minister has made several budget speeches every year but failed to give Abahlali details of how that budget is allocated and for whom. He avoided us by saying eThekweni municipality will give us details, knowing very well that the boss of the city Nigel Gumede will not give us that information, as he thinks it must be reserved for his close comrades. We demand full details of the budget earmarked for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements.

Settlements where Abahlali are active Nigel Gumede has made sure that no housing projects are built there. We demand full share and the right of Abahlali to also benefit from housing built in the city.

Cornubia Housing allocation has only become Nigel Gumede's private investment for his own benefit and the people close to him. Housing list for beneficiaries in most housing projects are made at night for the members of the

ruling party to benefit. We demand that the Minister rise above the corrupt party allocation system for fair benefit of all the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

Housing corruption in Cato Crest and KwaNdengezi has led to assassination of whistle blowers and housing activists. The Minister has been told several times on these crimes and corruption but does nothing. We demand that these two housing projects be stopped and be investigated.

Nqola, a Ward councilor of KwaNdengezi Ward 12 and Mzi Ngiba a councilor of Ward 101 have terrorized their communities. We demand that they be suspended and investigated on their implication to assassination of housing activists and whistle blowers.

KwaZulu-Natal has No clear, transparent and democratic Housing list. We demand that such inclusive Housing list be formulated with affected and interested communities and parties.

eThekweni Municipality has No clear and a transparent Housing Allocation policy. We demand that such allocation policy be made clear and clean so that Nigel Gumede does not exploit and monopolize the system.

The Human settlement should not be turned into a weapon of destroying the landless, the homeless and the impoverished. We demand that the minister provide fair leadership in his department so that there is peace and stability.

We demand that the social value of land come before its commercial value.

We demand provision of water, sanitation, electricity, road access and refuse collection in all Abahlali settlements.

Court Orders in Tumbleweed, Sisonke and Cato Crest have been violated. We demand that the Minister respect the laws of the Republic of South Africa.

Land is our priority. We demand that the state release serviced land to the poor while waiting for housing.

Evictions and Durban's Land Invasion Unit are a disgrace in our society. We demand that all evictions must be stopped and land invasion unit be disbanded.

Those of us who were forcefully removed from Social Housing flats in Ridge View and made homeless, we demand that they are returned to those flats with immediate effect.

Just as people around the city, the country and world are uniting in support of our struggle we express our support for our comrades in DRC and elsewhere.

Receiving this memorandum without conscious Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will reconsider engaging in non stopping protests.

Handed over by _____ on _____ at _____

Signature _____.

Received by _____ on _____ at _____.

Signature _____

MaMkhize Nxumalo

Thembani Jerome Ngongoma

9 NOVEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Shack Fire in the Foreman Road shack settlement in Clare Estate, Durban has Claimed Two Lives

Yesterday we had a very successful march, together with our Congolese comrades, against the politic of death. Early this morning two residents of the Foreman Road shack settlement lost their lives in a huge fire. We are the people that can be freely murdered without consequence. We are also the people that are left to live like pigs in the mud and to die in shack fires.

For almost ten years we have been struggling to force the state to take shack fires seriously. We have won many victories over the years but we remain the people that are left to burn. Every time there is a fire the politicians and the police rush to blame us for the fire. They never blame the conditions in which we are forced to live. They never meet with us to work out a way to improve these conditions. We will not rest until we have forced this society to recognise and respect our humanity.

This morning at about 12:30am a fire started in the home of a family in the Foreman Road shack settlement. It is believed to have been caused by a paraffin stove which exploded. The Foreman Road settlement is one of the oldest settlements that has been denied their right to housing by eThekweni municipality. We have won the battle against eviction in this settlement but we have not won the right to decent housing in this settlement. There have been a number of fires in this settlement. It is on a steep hill and when it rains everything is mud. This is how we live, in mud and fire. This is how we have to grow our children.

The settlement falls under ward 25. When the fire started the community was asked by Disaster Management Officials to call on Bhekisani Ngcobo the local councillor. The community replied by saying that they cannot waste their time calling a man of no help like Ngcobo and they handed the number to these officials so they could call him themselves. Ngcobo did as usual by not answering his phone and never visited the settlement till now.

About 33 shacks were burnt down and a couples were burnt into ashes. Some parts of their bodies are still lying unattended as the police could not pick up all their remains while it was dark. The two people that died were Zanele Gavu and Mbongiseni Bhetsile.

We express our condolences to their families. We believe that provision of decent housing, electricity and water and sanitation could have saved these lives. We call upon the Department of Human Settlements to provide all settlements with electricity and other fire prevention measures, as well as drainage, paths and toilets, while permanent homes are constructed in partnership with communities.

Once again we serve notice that we will never accept to be the people whose lives count for nothing. We are well aware of the price that will be paid for this commitment. Some of us will die so that others can live like human beings.

George Bonono
Mr Ndwandwe

14 NOVEMBER 2014

Press statement · KwaNdengezi Branch

Two Comrades Arrested in KwaNdengezi

At around 20:00 last night to Abahlali baseMjondolo members were arrested in KwaNdengezi. They were arrested by police officers in plain clothes and driving unmarked cars. They were not told why they were arrested and up until now they are not yet charged let alone to appear before court. The explanation from the Station Commissioner of SAPS KwaNdengezi is that they will not be taken to court since a 48 hour period has not expired yet. It is clear that as usual their arrest was timed so that they could be held for Friday and through the whole weekend. We fear for their safety while they are in police custody.

The Abahlali baseMjondolo chairperson in KwaNdengezi, Thuli Ndlovu, was assassinated on 29 September 2014. On 5 November 2014 Mobeni Khwela an ANC activist, working against Nqola's corruption in KwaNdengezi, was also assassinated. These assassinations were carried out impunity. There have been no arrests. It is clear that the police are working for the ANC and not for justice.

The KwaNdengezi station commissioner was rude and had a bad attitude toward Abahlali members when they tried to get more information about these arrests and the safety of the comrades that were arrested. These arrests must be taken seriously because in this period of time Abahlali are facing assassinations, death threats and physical attack from the ruling party cases are opened but no investigation is taking place and as a result there are no arrests. We have to be loyal to our new oppressors and not say anything to power even if ward councillors like Nqola in KwaNdengezi and Mzi Ngiba in Cato crest are evicting people to build RDP houses and then allocating them to their comrades and friends.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is fighting for equality and against injustice in our society. Our movement has always been struggling for the truth to be told in the form of revealing a true South Africa from the grassroots, a South Africa that the South African citizens and the citizens in the world do not have access to seeing, since it is a South Africa that they do not see when watching television or reading newspapers.

This struggle has been criminalised by the State and ruling party in this so called Democratic country, Abahlali have publicly said that the police are working in the hands of politicians and that the people's rights have been violated in the name of the law. In our living struggle As a result of an act of a controversial Act of Parliament, the Ingonyama Trust Act of 1994 was passed and through it the Municipalities with Ingonyama Trust have an agreement by which the development has to be conducted in urban and rural areas. As a result of this agreement the development in the areas where amakhosi have land is supposed to include the amakhosi and the councillors. But in areas like eTafuleni in Inanda and KwaNdengezi in Pinetown people who have land and houses through the amakhosi are just being evicted so that the councillors can build RDP houses for their people. This has resulted in deaths but government and its officials on the ground are so so quiet about that despite all the necessary attempts made by this movement to draw the attention of the respective departments and politicians to this problem.

The corruption in KwaNdengezi has caused unstable conditions in that area but police have failed to arrest the perpetrators of this corruption and intimidation. But because we are treated as people who do not count the same in this society we are being arrested without warrants.

Thembela Ngwane (Abahlali member in Kwandengezi)

Sphindile (Abahlali member In Kwandengezi)

Thembani Ngongoma (Abahlali Spokesperson)

14 NOVEMBER 2014

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Mass Prayer Tomorrow

On the 15 November 2014 we are going to have our last General Meeting of this year 2014. We normally have General meetings (whereby all members are invited to gather to share ideas) each and every month. We have decided to hold a mass prayer at the final General Meeting for this year given that our Movement is currently under attack and facing repression.

Since last year we have lost two leaders to assassination and one youth member to murder by the police. Other members have been shot, arrested, beaten, tortured and driven from their homes. We currently have some members staying away from their homes and their areas for safety. Strange men are coming to their houses to look for them. Our leaders continue to receive threatening phone calls. Some of the Congolese leaders who marched with us last weekend are also receiving threatening phone calls now. In Cato Crest and KwaNdengezi leaders who were not members of our organisation, but who were also resisting corruption and gangster councillors, have also been assassinated. Every day death is coming nearer to us. We have accepted that more of our leaders will die.

Our movement welcomes members of all religions and those of no religion. Many of our members believe that the mercy of God always exists among us and that no weapon raised against us shall prosper if we stand in the light of God. God loves justice and is therefore on the side of the poor. We have invited a number of church leaders to be with us tomorrow. We believe that it is the responsibility of church leaders to be with the oppressed, even as we are being attacked.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is a mass democratic movement of shack dwellers and other poor people in South Africa. Our aim is to fight for, protect, promote and advance the dignity of the poor in South Africa. We look forward to a society and a world in which wealth, land and power are shared fairly.

It was not the ANC that liberated this country from apartheid. It was the people that freed uTata Nelson Mandela from prison and it was the people that

brought apartheid to its end. It will be the struggle of people that will take us to our next freedom. The mass prayer will give us courage for this struggle.

The mass prayer will be held at the YMCA Beatrice Street and will start at 09:00 a.m.

Ndabo Mzimela
Pastor Ngubane

29 JANUARY 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Occupiers Attacked by ANC Mob in Verulam

Last night and this morning around a hundred families occupying municipal flats in Hammond's Farm in Waterloo, Verulam, North of Durban came under sustained attack by an ANC mob and then the Land Occupations Unit, both acting with the support for the police.

The flats were occupied in November 2014. They had been left empty for years and it is alleged that the councillor from ward 58 began selling them for a minimum price of R10 000 each. At this point homeless residents took the decision to occupy.

Yesterday morning a municipal housing official known as Mr Comfort Gumede arrived at the flats accompanied by local councillor Mxolisi Kenneth Ndzibomvu to threaten residents with eviction. The occupiers asked them for an eviction order and Ndzibomvu said that this is an ANC Ward and where ANC rules they do not need to go to court. We over heard them speaking amongst themselves and they said that that night they were going to mobilize ANC members in order to carry out this evictions.

At around 19:00 p.m last night around 200 ANC people in ANC t-shirts and led by councillor arrived at the flats armed with bush knives, knobkerries, bottles and guns. They were chanting ANC slogans and started looting and damaging property and residents' belongings. These thugs were also stealing our money and our belongings. One woman lost her bag with her documents, driver's license, cash and medication. The local police were called in but took their instruction from the councillor who was inciting the violence. The police were there standing with Ndzibomvu and watching when we were attacked and our furniture was damaged. One car was also damaged. Some of us were seriously injured during this attack by the ANC and Thokozane Hlengwa had to be rushed to hospital. However despite all this we were able to hold on to the flats.

When the ANC left last night they said they would then send in the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. This morning at about 8:00am the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, Metro Police and SAPS came in their numbers to force us out. They came

without any court document that authorises them to carry out evictions. The eviction has been completely criminal and unlawful. We have approached our lawyers to seek legal advice and protection under this circumstance.

The Anti-Land Invasion Unit has also started to evict ANC members who got flats by corruptions and not via occupation. They are also disconnecting all the flats from electricity. One woman screamed saying she had paid money to be in those flats. They are fighting amongst themselves over corrupt allocation.

Nandisa Majola
Lungisa Blose
Mzamo Majola

6 FEBRUARY 2015

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

An Old Snake in a New Skin – From Raymond Masondo to Heinrich Bohmke and Bandile Mdlalose

In 2006, when we made it clear that we would not give up our autonomy to the NGOs and walked out of a meeting at the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) at UKZN, some NGO workers, such as Mondli Hlatwayo, rushed to call us criminals on emails and in the press. At the time we could see no difference between how these NGOs responded to our insistence on our right to organise ourselves, to think for ourselves and to take our own positions and how the state responded. They both declared that we were criminals under the control of a white man.

As everyone who is familiar with the history of our movement knows since then we have been subject to constant defamation from a small group of people, all linked in different ways to CCS. These same people have never said a word when we have faced evictions, arrests, beatings, torture and murder. We continue to see very strong parallels between how the state responds to our movement and how some NGOs respond to our movement.

Since 2006 people supporting our movement have also been defamed and in some cases also harassed and intimidated. This has included the harassment of people at work and attempts (failed) to get them in trouble with their bosses. In one case this harassment and intimidation has extended to the family of one of our comrades.

CCS has also tried, in writing, to censor us and to censor academic work on our movement. This has been done in writing and it cannot be denied.

We have never attacked CCS or the people in their wider network in return, or tried to interfere with their work. We have focussed on our struggle and left them to focus on what they want to do. But the attacks have continued. It has seemed to us that CCS has seen our movement as a rival for political space. For years activists coming to South Africa from North America and Europe have

told us that they first went to CCS where they were told all kinds of things about our movement which they later discovered to be completely untrue when they came to our meetings to see things for themselves. Recently we were informed that Patrick Bond, director of CCS, made a statement about our movement at a conference in France which is completely untrue.

After we made it clear, in 2006, that we would no longer work with CCS in any way Patrick Bond continued to tell people internationally (and in writing) that CCS was working with our movement. For this reason we had to put a short note on our website stating that we do not work with CCS. Patrick Bond tried to force us to remove this note and tried to threaten one of our comrades, a very well-known writer and activist, to ensure that our website would be what he called 'cleaned'.

The constant defamation that we have faced is, like evictions or beatings by the police, one of many attempts to vandalize our humanity. It has come under different names. One of the first names under which this defamation came was Robert Masondo who was supposed to be a concerned member of our movement who was sending out emails to the CCS list requesting help from the NGOs. There was no such person as Robert Masondo. They could not find anyone in our movement to support their agenda and so they invented a fake name. Robert Masondo was a fabrication. Later on the main person producing this defamation (and legal opinion has confirmed that it is defamation) was Heinrich Bohmke but there have been others, all connected to Bohmke and all linked in different ways (formally and informally) to CCS.

But although the names attached to this defamation have changed over the years the themes of this defamation have always been the same. They are that:

1. We are really criminals (even murderers).
2. We have no real politics of our own.
3. We are controlled by a white man.
4. Our press statements, website, and all the academic work and films on our movement are part of a giant conspiracy to pretend that a bunch of criminals with no politics is really a movement.
5. This conspiracy is all aimed at getting donor money.
6. Our movement is now dead (this has repeatedly been said since 2007).

A lot of this defamation has been very similar to the attacks against us from the ANC. Our response to attacks by the ANC in October last year is online here: <http://abahlali.org/node/14403/>

We have never met some of the people that have produced or attached their names to this defamation and none of them have participated in our meetings or done interviews with us or any kind of proper research. Newspapers and academic publications have generally refused to take these attacks seriously in view of the fact that they are not based on any credible evidence. However they are often circulated on Patrick Bond's email list.

In the one case where a person linked to Bohmke and CCS claimed to be an insider to our movement this was just not true. Handing out large amounts of money to random people in the Kennedy Road shack settlement (people who have never participated in our movement), giving out expensive gifts (such as a bicycle), running a workshop in a settlement where we only had, and not for long, one member and running after our movement by coming to big events, like marches, does not make a person an 'insider'. To be an insider a person must participate in our meetings.

On the other hand many activists, students and academics from around the world (America, Brazil, Europe, India, Kenya, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe etc.) have spent time with our movement, freely participating in all our activities and interviewing any one that they wish to speak to. Not one of the students or academics that has done proper research on our movement, or one of the activists that has spent time with our movement, considers this long campaign of defamation to have any credibility whatsoever. In fact they are all, without to our knowledge a single exception, disgusted by it. They all see it as grossly dishonest. The same is true of the journalists that have spent time with our movement, attending meetings, spending time with people and doing interviews.

Many people have noted how racist this campaign against our movement has been. It shows us to the world as criminals, people who are like children and can't think for ourselves and people who are just hunting for money. Yet our members have been committed enough to our struggle to have been arrested, assaulted, tortured and murdered. Many of our members have lost their jobs due to their political commitments. There are many people who have come to meetings year after year since 2005 without ever once asking for anything for

themselves. We have constantly refused co-option from NGOs and the state and rejected any relationship with any organisation, no matter how much money it has, that does not respect our autonomy. CCS is not the only NGO that we have refused to work with. It makes no sense at all to say that our movement is just about hunting for money. We have often refused jobs from the state. If we were hunting for money from the NGOs we would focus on issues like climate change, human rights, freedom of expression and so on. We would work very closely with CCS and other NGO projects and focus on delivering people to their events. There are no donors that focus on supporting the occupation of unused land and buildings. There are no donors that focus on supporting road blockades.

All the attempts by the NGOs to start movements from above and under their control have failed. Money does not build movements. We have built and sustained a movement for almost ten years despite very serious repression. Yet although it is the NGOs that have failed to build movements we are the ones being shown to the world as incapable of being able to think for ourselves or to organise ourselves. They continue to insist that we must accept political direction from them. One of our comrades has reminded us of the famous quote by Steven Biko that warns against the logic that blacks must remain perpetual pupils while whites remain perpetual teachers. This is the logic of a number of the NGOs and their international networks. For them we are either perpetual children who cannot be trusted with adult responsibilities or we are criminals whose politics is really just fraud.

Many people have also noticed that although the names attached to the defamation have changed over the years it is clear that the themes of this defamation have remained the same. The same lies are always repeated and the same individuals are always targeted. We have never entertained these constant lies. The media has almost always refused to take them seriously and no person or organisation that is important to us has ever taken them seriously. From 2006 until 2009 we just ignored these constant lies and focussed on our struggle. We knew that very few people were taking them seriously and we knew that if anyone was uncertain about what to think they could always come to our meetings, observe our processes and see for themselves what was true and who was being dishonest. Also, if someone was going to believe these lies without coming to

see our movement for themselves then they were not the sort of person that we wanted on our side.

In 2009 we were attacked in the Kennedy Road settlement by the local ANC acting with police support. The ANC told some incredible lies about what had happened. As usual Bohmke took the side of our oppressors. He wrote a piece in the Sunday Tribune that basically supported what the ANC was saying. This was the first time that the media took this long campaign of defamation seriously. In our understanding this is probably because Bohmke was supporting what the ANC and the state was saying and the media will always give some space for the ruling party and the state to express their positions. All of the many academics and students that had done work on our movement wrote a collective letter in response to the newspaper stating that Bohmke's article was not true. Two of our members also wrote a response to the newspaper. It was pointed out that the function of all these lies was to send us back to the dark corners so that the people who think that they have a right to own and control our struggles through the NGOs could continue to speak for us without us, and to think for us without us. We made it clear that we would not accept to be oppressed in our own struggle as well as in society.

When the matter of the 2009 attack went to court the state could not find a single witness who could provide credible testimony in support of the case for the prosecution and the whole case was thrown out of court. This was despite the use of torture by the police and death threats, and an attack on one state witness in her home, by the local ANC. In fact even two of the state's witnesses – a police officer and a resident of the Kennedy Road settlement bravely told the truth about what had happened. Bohmke had never found much support for his defamation but after this Bohmke was entirely discredited amongst most of the few people that had taken him seriously.

Since last year the defamatory attacks on our movement have come under a new name – Bandile Mdlalose. As everyone that knows the history of this long campaign of defamation against our movement can see the themes of the defamation continue to remain the same despite the fact that they are now attached to a new name.

Bandile was elected as Secretary General of our movement in 2010 at a very young age. She didn't live in a shack. She and her family lived in a four room subsidy house in KwaMashu. Her mother had support in Siyanda before joining

our movement. Siyanda was a new area to our movement at the time and the residents there were mobilized by Bandile's mother to vote for Bandile in a block vote. This was the first time we had this sort of block voting in our movement. It was strange to have someone with no record of struggle, and who was not a member of a branch, voted into a senior position like this but it was in accordance with our Constitution. Although we always try to encourage collective membership through branches or affiliated settlements individual membership is allowed.

After Bandile was elected in 2010 she was always respected by the movement and it was expected that she would be shaped by the same living politic that has shaped all of us. She was often mandated to represent the movement nationally and internationally. The movement managed and is proud to have given Bandile an opportunity to study development and politic at UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus in the adult education programme. She was given all opportunities to grow in our living politic. We understand that when new people come into our movement they will come with ways of thinking that don't fit with ubuhlali. We understand that it will sometimes take some time for new people to understand ubuhlali.

Bandile was always brave when we had to face the police as well as politicians like Nigel Gumedede. There were always some complaints from our members though. Some people said that she was rude to them when they came to the office. Mnikelo Ndabankulu, who was in our movement from the beginning, was often critical of what he often called her 'me, me politics'. There were some people in our movement, as well as in a church organisation that we work with and a university programme that we work with, who raised questions about her honesty. It also became clear that Bandile did not accept comrades from the Eastern Cape as equal members of our movement. Some of our comrades in other grassroots organizations were concerned that when she went to NGO meetings she would speak as if her being there meant that our movement was there. This has never been our politic.

When Abahlali receives an invitation to attend an event hosted by another organisation, whether addressed to the movement in general, or to one office bearer like the president, administrator or secretary, it will always be taken to an Abahlali meeting for discussion. It is only at the meeting where it will be decided whether or not Abahlali will send a representative. If we agree then

the next discussion is to collectively decide on the name of the person who will represent our movement, taking into account the nature of the invite and expectations. After the meeting or conference the person who has been mandated to attend must always report back at the next Abahlali meeting. Everyone who is chosen to attend a meeting outside the movement knows that they cannot take any decisions for the movement there. They can only bring proposals back to the movement for discussion. This practice has always been the case and a lot of young activists have had an opportunity to travel internationally. We are careful to share these opportunities around. But Bandile personalized invitations that were addressed to her as the secretary general. In doing this she travelled to Johannesburg and spent a week in Cape Town without knowledge or mandate from Abahlali as a collective. She even went to speak at CCS without any mandate. As we have explained this is an NGO that we have boycotted since 2006. Of course this decision was taken long before Bandile joined our movement but if Bandile has wanted to raise the question of the boycott in a meeting we would have been happy to have a discussion about it. But she didn't do that. She just went on her own and formed her own relationship with this NGO.

It became clear that Bandile was not willing to work through a democratic structure and that she wanted to promote herself as an individual to the NGOs. There is a big difference between using a movement to promote yourself as an individual and committing your energy as an individual to a collective movement. Some of the members began asking why the leadership was protecting Bandile. The problem with her attitudes to people from the Eastern Cape started to cause tensions. The impression that she was being protected by the leadership also started to cause some tensions in the movement. But she had been elected to her position and there was no formal complaint against her so all that could be done was to keep discussing ubuhlali and hope that she would mature into the politic of the movement. Many of us thought that she was young and that she would learn the politic of the movement in time. We can now see that we were wrong. She was never interested in ubuhlali. It was also unfortunate that after the repression in 2009 we allowed the movement to grow too rapidly, people came in with all kinds of politics and because it was no longer safe to hold camps and opportunities for careful political discussion were not as regular as they had been before the repression.

In 2013 we faced serious repression again. Three activists were killed in the struggle over the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. Others were shot and there were also arrests and beatings. Two of the people that were murdered were given death threats and knew beforehand that they would be killed. After these murders four of our members received death threats. Two people, Bandile Mdlalose and S'bu Zikode, received death threats from the ANC structures in Cato Crest. Mnikelo Ndabankulu was threatened by a caller while he was representing the movement on a radio station. Ndabo Mzimela was also threatened with death on the radio. Bandile was also arrested in Cato Crest and detained in Westville prison for a week. We gave her full support when she was inside and when she came out. But people were under very serious pressure and, as happened after the repression in 2009, this started to create some tensions. There was serious conflict between Mnikelo and Bandile in a Whatsapp group. Many of the most energetic of the younger members of our movement were part of this Whatsapp group.

At the same time Bandile started trying to privatise her relationship to new communities that approached the movement. Twice when people came to the Abahlali office to approach our movement Bandile privatised her relationship with them so that they didn't have an opportunity to connect to the movement as a whole. This happened in Wyebank and in Claremont. We didn't ever launch branches in these areas because the residents only had a relation to Bandile and not the movement and they didn't follow the processes to establish a branch. When Bandile would travel to these areas she was being driven by someone from CCS. Our movement has never worked like this. Branches have always related to the movement as a whole rather than to individual leaders. There was a lot of concern about how Bandile was behaving. But because of the repression, and the conflict with Mnikelo, we were very careful to respond constructively to the situation. However some members started to ask us if Bandile was working for CCS or if she was accountable to our members. We still hoped that when this phase of repression passed we could resolve the serious problems that were developing. We had learnt from 2009 that it is not a good idea to try and deal with difficult questions during a period of repression when people are severely stressed. It is better to request everyone to remain calm and to focus on the work that needs to be done and to have a careful discussion and a healing when things are easier.

The next problem came when Bandile advised the Ridge View Community to occupy flats on 31 December 2013. This community had not joined Abahlali at that time but she met them privately. None of the processes for forming a new branch were followed and she kept her relationship with them privatized. They had a relationship with Bandile as an individual and not with a democratic movement as a whole. Bandile also took their membership money. She charged R50 for membership whereas the cost of membership in the movement is now R20 a year. In all the years of our movement we have never before had someone charge their own rate for membership, higher than the rate decided on in our meetings. When people pay membership fees the procedure is that the money is immediately deposited into the Abahlali banking account but Bandile failed to do so. This was the first time that this ever happened in our movement. She retained the money for herself. She then promised the Ridge View people bail money and lawyers for legal representation should they get arrested.

When the occupation happened the police were waiting. Twelve people were arrested and Bandile disappeared in court leaving them without assistance or explanation. It was at this time when we got very angry calls from the community and became aware of the arrests and the deal that she had made with them. They also publicly stated that she took money from them saying that she needed the money to fly to Johannesburg to meet with and engage lawyers from Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI). No such meetings happened.

An occupation is something that needs to be carefully and democratically planned. It is highly irresponsible to advise people to occupy and promise legal and other forms of support to them when this has not even been discussed with the movement and there has been no proper planning to support the occupiers. No movement can operate like this and retain the trust and respect of its members. This was the first time that something like this had happened in our movement.

The Ridge View Community then logged a written complaint against Bandile. The complaint was referred to the Abahlali Disciplinary Committee which then communicated the complaints and all other correspondences to her. She was given the opportunity to respond and defend herself against the allegation during a hearing set for the 6 April 2014. It was further explained that

should she fail to appear before the committee the hearing would proceed in her absence. All this was in writing.

Bandile wanted S'bu Zikode to intervene and stop the DC. She also approached people outside the movement to lobby them to stop the DC. She did not approach the movement's elected structures to express any concerns. When Bandile realized that S'bu was not going to protect her from the DC and would respect the autonomy of the committee she became very, very angry at S'bu. This was the first time that she was ever angry at S'bu. Before this she always held S'bu in very high respect. She started to attack S'bu personally inside and outside the movement but she did not take her issues to the movement's structures.

Bandile began making threats that if the DC went ahead she would destroy the movement by going to the media and to Bohmke and CCS. We were not worried about the media as we had nothing to hide. As we have already explained Bohmke is notorious for his defamation and character assassination against grassroots black activists and anyone that has supported them. He has not only defamed us. He had also written defamation about other people too (also dishonest and confirmed as defamatory by legal opinion). We knew that Bandile had already formed a relationship with CCS and so we knew that the threat was serious. However we could not allow our movement to be blackmailed by this kind of threat. Also, as we have already explained, no one that is important to us had ever taken Bohmke's defamation seriously. In fact it had destroyed his own credibility. It had not damaged our movement. It now seems that those few individuals who have supported this long smear campaign against us without success are under the impression that having someone who used to be a member of our movement supporting the smear campaign will allow them to finally succeed in destroying our credibility. We are not worried. Truth remains truth and lies remain lies.

Bandile stopped coming to meetings as a participant and started to storm into meetings, disrupt them and insult and swear everyone. One of these incidents was observed by someone from an international human rights organisation who was in Durban to offer support in response to the repression that we (including Bandile) had been facing. At this time Bandile was sending emails to our international allies making all kinds of allegations. One day she stormed into a meeting, disrupted it and insulted everyone. She was asked to leave. She

then said that this was intimidation by S'bu even though it was not S'bu who asked her to leave. There are many witnesses to what happened and it can easily be shown that she was not being honest about this incident.

Our AGM last year was difficult. We have discussed this frankly. But we did hold a successful election. When there was a general meeting after the AGM to find a way forward Bandile came to that meeting with two people from CCS.

But Bandile did not attend the DC. It went ahead without her on the 6th of April 2014. This process was carefully documented, conformed to the movement's rules and was transparent and fair. The committee found that the allegations against Bandile by the Ridge View people were true and, because she did not attend the DC and there was no way of negotiating a healing, it was decided to expel her.

Bandile was informed of her expulsion in writing by email. It was made clear that despite the expulsion she would still receive full legal support from the movement for her case arising from the struggle in Cato Crest.

S'bu was not part of the committee or the process. No academic was directly or indirectly part of this process. We have been quite happy to share all the documents pertaining to her expulsion as we have nothing to hide.

We decided not to issue a statement about the expulsion as we did not want to humiliate Bandile or risk her chances of finding work. Also, very importantly, we didn't want to undermine her when she still had a case on for public violence.

The day after Bandile was expelled there was a meeting with the MEC for Human Settlements over the Cato Crest issues. There had been a long struggle to win this meeting. The delegates were inside and other members from Cato Crest were standing outside the meeting demonstrating in support of the delegates inside. Bandile arrived. She was driven by a CCS employee. She stormed into the meeting and insulted S'bu, MaMkhize Nxumalo (Abahlali General Chairperson) and the movement to the ANC and told various lies. She took the side of the ANC. The meeting was ruined.

The people in Cato Crest became so angry with her that some of them wanted to testify against her in her case arising from the struggle in Cato Crest. Some of our members in Cato Crest also insisted that we must withdraw legal support for her case. It was a difficult situation. We had to have long discussions before there was an agreement that although people were very angry with her it would not be a good idea to testify against Bandile or to withdraw legal support

for her case. Bandile had made it clear that she was going to put her personal issues before the members of the movement and that she had decided that we are now her enemies. But the politic that says that your enemy's enemy is your friend is very dangerous. She had chosen that politic. We did not choose that politic and we will not choose that politic.

Bandile approached a lot of media to attack the movement. The only newspaper that took her story seriously was Jacob Zuma's personal newspaper the *New Age*. However even this newspaper gave us an opportunity to respond to her allegations in the article.

Shortly after her expulsion she travelled to Cape Town and represented our movement at a meeting of the Social Justice Coalition as if she was still a member. This really shocked us and we had to write to some of our allies and explain that she had been expelled. No movement can have a member who has been expelled travelling around claiming to represent the movement.

Bandile was also taken to Wyebank by a CCS employee after her expulsion where she misrepresented herself as a leader of AbM.

We also discovered that after her expulsion she went to the bank and tried to make herself a signatory on the movement account. We discovered this because the bank called us and showed us the forms. This really shocked us. However although we were informed that this was an attempt at fraud we did not press charges.

A few days after her expulsion Bandile acquired a car. She told one comrade, in writing (Whatsapp), that it was bought for her by an employee at CCS.

Bandile began sending emails to everyone on our mailing list that we have built up over nine years of struggle, as well as a long list of academics around the world. In her first email she made it clear that her concern was now for Bohmke, who she named. She said that he had been unfairly marginalised from our struggle. In these emails, which legal opinion has confirmed as defamatory, highly untrue statements were made, especially about S'bu. She suddenly also started to attack Richard Pithouse. She was never hostile to S'bu until it was clear that he would not act to stop the disciplinary process against her and she was never hostile to Richard until these emails started. She knew that Richard was not involved in the disciplinary process and she remained on good terms with Richard after her expulsion. However as is widely known some people in the NGOs and their networks blamed Richard when our movement and the

Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign walked out of an NGO meeting hosted by CCS in 2006. This was when the NGOs called us ‘criminals’. Richard wasn’t even at the meeting where the decision to walk out was taken. There were a number of other people that are not members of our movement who were at this meeting, because it happened, without being planned, when the Anti-Eviction Campaign comrades arrived at workshop on housing being held in the Kennedy Road settlement. They can all confirm this.

After Bandile started sending out these emails few people, not that many, contacted us to ask what was going on. Most of the people who did contact us said that it was obvious to them that this was Bohmke’s old agenda under a new name – an old snake in a new skin. But there were some people that were concerned. Some were under the impression that there was a split in the movement. We met and drafted a letter explaining everything that had happened in a calm and clear way that tried to stick to the facts and avoid personal attacks and sent this to those people that had expressed their concern. However we still did not issue any public statement. Bandile was able to access our email account. She saw this letter and became even more angry.

When our members met Bandile and asked her why she was doing this her answer would always be the same – “for my family”. After her expulsion Bandile suddenly had money to travel to other parts of the country. It was clear that she was getting strong financial support from somewhere. She has the same right as anyone else to make whatever alliances she wants to. We don’t question this. However we do question the intentions of anyone who funds an individual to make dishonest attacks on a movement.

We were told by our friends at the university that the director of CCS (Patrick Bond) was running around the university saying that he needed to get Bandile a job at the university but that she couldn’t been seen to be working at CCS. A job was secured for her at the university. However various people – our members who are cleaners at the university, academics at the university as well as visiting activists – tell us that Bandile is at CCS every day.

We repeat that Bandile has a right to make whatever alliances she chooses. We have a right to refuse to work with Patrick Bond and CCS and Bandile has the same right to choose to work with Patrick Bond and CCS. We do not question that. But Bandile does not have a right to attach her name to lies about us in the way that she is doing. What is being said is not true and it is defamatory.

We question the motives of any organisation that funds or arranges funding for one individual who is producing constant defamation against a movement at the same time as that organisation is suffering serious repression. As far as we know the only statements issued by Bandile are attacks on our movement that continue Bohmke's old agenda and make it look like a former member of our movement is now showing that Bohmke was always right about us. We have not seen a single statement issued by her that is in support of the struggle of oppressed people.

Following her dismissal Bandile lodged an action against our movement with the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) claiming that she had been unfairly dismissed as if she was a worker that had been unfairly fired from a job. She was represented by a law firm with connections to CCS. We were very surprised that she took this action as she was expelled from a political organisation after being found to have violated a number of its rules and not dismissed from a job. We never considered her to be an employee and therefore we did not understand why she was taking us to the CCMA.

The first meeting called by the CCMA to deal with this matter was on the 14th of May. At this meeting Bandile claimed to have been unfairly dismissed and demanded financial compensation. Our response was that she had never been an employee of our organisation and that, therefore, she had never been dismissed from a job and we did not owe her any financial compensation. The Commissioner at this first meeting was Mr Mthokozisi Khuboni.

As there was no agreement between ourselves and Bandile the matter was adjourned to 10 July 2014. On the 3rd of July the law firm representing Bandile contacted us to demand all of our documents relating to Bandile's expulsion. Although their attitude was very aggressive and we were aware of their links to CCS we were happy to hand these documents over to the law firm as we had nothing to hide and were confident that the process that resulted in her expulsion was in accordance with our rules and fair.

When we returned to the CCMA on 10 July there was a new commissioner, Ms Fiona Moodley and then Ms Balkaran. We were surprised to see that at this meeting Bandile was accompanied by one of the men that, working with the local ANC, had intimidated us with threats of violence to cancel a meeting in

Newlands on 1st of June 2014. Bandile's mother and her friend attended this meeting wearing ANC T-shirts.

At this meeting at the CCMA Bandile changed her demand. Whereas she had originally approached the CCMA claiming to have been unfairly dismissed and demanding compensation she now agreed with us that she had not been an employee of our organisation and withdrew her demand for financial compensation. She asked, instead, for reinstatement.

Our guess was that when her lawyers saw all the documents relating to her expulsion they realised that the process had been fair and had therefore advised Bandile not to contest the expulsion. We went to the CCMA with the head of the Abahlali disciplinary committee and delegates from among the community members that had laid the complaint against Bandile that resulted in her dismissal. We consulted with this group of members and it was clear that they could not accept Bandile's reinstatement to the position that she held prior to her expulsion. But we always try, where ever possible, for healing where there is conflict and so we offered that she could return to the movement as an ordinary member with the same rights as all other members to stand for a position at the next AGM. We thought that this was a fair offer.

However her lawyer rejected this offer and said that her demand was that she return to her position. We could not accept this. Returning someone to a high position after they have been found to have been responsible for serious violations of our rules by a fair and careful disciplinary process would be too damaging to the credibility of our movement in the eyes of our members. Most of our members have a background in the ANC. They expect our movement to be different to the ANC and to hold its leaders to the highest standards. This is why the right to recall leaders, as well as the right to lay complaints against leaders and to have them fairly investigated, is so important.

The commissioner then made a suggestion to resolve the disagreement. She said that both parties should agree that there was no dismissal because Bandile had never been an employee. The commissioner also said that we should have described her expulsion as a 'termination of membership' rather than using the term 'dismissal' (which the head of our Disciplinary Committee had used in an email to Bandile). And she said that if we were not prepared to return Bandile to her position, and that she did not want to return as an ordinary member, then Bandile could submit a letter of resignation.

We discussed this proposal with our delegation and we agreed to it. We agreed to it because we had never considered Bandile to have been an employee, this agreement did not require us to pay compensation to Bandile or to reinstate her, both of which would have been an acknowledgement that we had done something wrong when we had not done anything wrong, and because this agreement did not question, in any way, the fairness of the process that resulted in Bandile's expulsion. Also, although a decision had been taken that Bandile's actions were so serious that she had to be expelled from our movement, we never had any intention to embarrass her publicly or to damage her chances for finding employment in the future. For this reason we were happy to confirm that Bandile had not been dismissed from a job while remaining confident that the process that resulted in her expulsion from our movement was necessary and fair.

The exact words of the agreement that both parties signed are as follows:

Whereas the Applicant claimed that she had been unfairly dismissed.

And whereas the parties agree that there was no employment relationship between them.

And whereas further the Respondent concedes that it ought not accordingly to have subjected the applicant to a disciplinary hearing resulting in her dismissal And whereas finally the Respondent concedes that the 'dismissal' is void.

It is now agreed that the Applicant has elected to forthwith submit a Letter of Resignation which will result in the termination of the membership from the Respondent's organisation.

At the same time Bandile wrote a short letter of resignation from the movement.

However the day after the agreement was signed Bandile sent out another email in which she claimed that at the CCMA we were forced to admit that we were wrong and that her name had been cleared. This is not an honest account of what happened at the CCMA. The CCMA did not investigate the allegations made against her by the Ridge View people or our process for investigating those allegations.

We still ask ourselves a question as to why Bandile had taken Abahlali to the CCMA in the first place if she conceded that she was not an employee. It makes no sense at all to take an organization to the CCMA and claim that you

were unfairly dismissed as an employee of that organization and to then suddenly change your mind and agree that you were never an employee of that organization and then claim the agreement by both sides that you were never an employee as a vindication. But this sort of manipulation of facts is typical of the long campaign of slander against us.

In the email sent out after the agreement was signed at the CCMA Bandile also made a number of dishonest statements. Once again many people noted how these statements follow very closely what Bohmke has been saying about us for many years. Bandile even said that our movement is dead. At the time we had started having to rent halls to be able to hold our ordinary general meetings on Saturdays because attendance was so high. Of course our movement faced many serious challenges, most of them related to how to organise under seriously repressive conditions, including impunity for the illegal eviction, wrongful arrest, assault and murder of grassroots activists, and the strain that the stress that comes with repression can place on personal relationships and the affect that this can have on an organisation.

We were certain that the campaign of slander and defamation against us that has been driven by Bohmke, with the support of few others linked to him, since 2006 would continue for as long as our movement continues to exist and to protect its autonomy, and for as long as the dishonest character assassination of black grassroots activists by Bohmke and others could be carried out with impunity. The fact that Bandile had chosen to associate herself with this politic, and with the NGO that has always been linked to this politic, did not suddenly make the claims that were being made true. The only thing that had changed is that CCS now had the support of a former member of our movement who had been expelled from our movement for good reason.

However our members made it very clear that this impunity to engage in character assassination by means of lies must be opposed. At a time when activists were facing assassination with impunity – as well as eviction in violation of court orders, wrongful arrests assault and death threats – it would, it was felt, be irresponsible, to allow these lies to be uncontested. We were and are not willing to allow people like Bohmke, and now Bandile too, to waste our time by having to call meetings and write long responses to every allegation that they will make. We could not allow these people to set the agenda for our movement. We had to focus on the struggle.

It was therefore decided to bring these lies into a place where evidence has to be provided for claims that are made and a neutral third party can assess this evidence. Everybody remembered how the lies told by the ANC (and supported by Bohmke) in 2009 fell apart in court. We therefore initiated a process to bring this campaign of character assassination before a judge. Papers were served on Bandile for defamation.

Bandile's first attempt to start a new organisation, Friends of Justice & Democracy, collapsed because people from the Eastern Cape did not want to work with her. She then went on to launch her own organisation, the Community Justice Movement. We made it clear to our members that we don't have all the answers, that everyone is hunting for answers and that we welcome any new organisations trying to take the struggle forward. However we were disappointed but not surprised to see that Bandile announced herself as President before her new organisation was launched. If someone announces that they are President of a new organisation before the launch, where the election is held, there is clearly a serious problem. When the election was held Ma Shezi was elected as President. However Bandile's mother persuaded people to set this aside and made Bandile president despite the election result. This resulted in some serious tensions in the new organisation. We think that this organisation is being supported by CCS with the hope that Bandile will be able to deliver the 'masses' to them as Patrick Bond has already promised people overseas that she will build a radical new organisation, one that he feels that he will be able to control and represent this time.

Two former members of our movement reported, separately, that when Bandile tried to recruit them to join her organisation she told them that Bond was her funder. They also both reported, separately, that she had told them that her emails were being written for her by an academic. She gave the name of this person to both of these people and they both reported that name to us. This academic (Ashwin Desai) is close to both Bond and Bohmke and has a long relationship with CCS. Sometime later a third former member of our movement also reported that Bandile told her that Bond was her funder when Bandile tried to recruit her to the new organisation.

Bandile got support in two areas via her mother's connections. One was the Mandela Complex flats in Newlands (96 families) and the other a small shack settlement in Pinetown (a member who has been there estimated that about 30

people live there but we don't have the exact number). She often holds meetings for her organisation in the CCS seminar room.

In December the residents of the Mandela Complex broke with Bandile and her organisation. They made it clear that she is no longer welcome in their community. Mr Elijah Cele of the Provincial Department of Human Settlements offered displaced a families a tent to stay in. Bandile worked closely with Mr Cele on this and tried to encourage the residents to move into the tent. However they refused and restated that they were no longer willing to support her organisation. Despite this she continued to try and represent them in Isolezwe. When they saw this they wrote a statement, in Zulu, which they sent to Isolezwe.

On the 23rd of December Bandile sent out another email. Attached to it was an article with Bandile's name on it from the academic journal Politikon. This article is so dishonest that it cannot be called anything other than a deliberate attempt at fraud. Unlike the New Age the journal gave us no opportunity to respond to all the lies in the article before it went to print. As with all her previous emails attacking us it is obvious to everyone that has worked closely with Bandile that these are not her words and ideas. This article is a dishonest attempt to prove the correctness of all the defamation produced by Bohmke and others over the years.

In this email Bandile implies that our movement is responsible for the murder of a member of the Community Justice Movement – Dutch Faku. Dutch was a security guard who was killed at work by criminals. One was arrested after the murder and the other was shot dead by the police. There is a newspaper article on this murder. It can be accessed here: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/one-of-durban-s-most-wanted-shot-dead-1.1799124#.VJuMfWGAIE>

Dutch lived in the small settlement in Pinetown, the only place where Bandile still has some support. There is a good relationship between us and the committee there. When our member, Thuli Ndlovu, was assassinated last year their chairperson attended the memorial and was warmly welcomed by us. After the murder of Dutch we were invited to the memorial scheduled to be held in his community. When we explained that it might be difficult to attend the memorial after Bandile's allegations the local leadership had no idea at all about Bandile's statement and were completely shocked to hear about it. They came to the AbM office to see it for themselves. They said that they were not

consulted about the statement, expressed their shock and said that they will take action within their organisation against Bandile.

We are not aware of a single person that has taken this implied allegation of murder by Bandile seriously. Not one person has contacted us about it. The media have completely ignored it, the ANC have completely ignored it and the police have completely ignored it. The ANC often tells its own lies about us but even they couldn't see a way to exploit this for their own purposes.

However, although we are not aware of a single person that took this allegation seriously murder remains a very serious allegation and so we had a meeting to discuss this allegation (and the dishonest article in *Politikon*) soon after the New Year. It was our first meeting of 2015. Just as we were starting the meeting a delegation of former members of Bandile's organisation from the Mandela Complex in Newlands unexpectedly arrived at our office. They explained that they were informed by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that Bandile had invited the EFF to a meeting at CCS to discuss the issues of the Mandela Complex people. They explained that they were outraged to hear that she was continuing to represent them without their permission and so they had gone with the EFF to confront Bandile at CCS. They reported that while they were there Bandile was receiving calls from Patrick Bond advising her to offer them food parcels. This infuriated them even more. This habit of thinking that poor black people can just be bought off with food is one of the reasons why we cannot work with Patrick Bond. In 2006 we referred to this as 'biryani politics' whether it came from the ANC or the NGOs. At this meeting one of our oldest and most respected activists said that we cannot accept this because "We are human beings, not dogs". Other black activists in other grassroots organisations have had similar experiences of attempts to buy them off with offers of food when they have raised issues about how NGOs treat them. For instance this happened at the COP 17 conference. The Mandela Complex people also said that Bandile had told them that 'Bond was her funder'.

When the meeting could continue we decided that although it was clear that no one is taking this latest allegation seriously we could not, especially with all the repression we are facing, fail to respond to this allegation. We decided that we needed to place it on record that is entirely untrue and that it is part of a long campaign of defamation against us going back to 2006. And, just as we did respond to Bohmke on the one occasion when he got into the *Sunday Tribune*,

and we did respond to Bandile in the article written in the New Age, we decided that we would respond to the Politikon article. We have written to the editor and she has given us 3 000 words in which to respond to the article. We have been given a very short time to prepare our response. In fact it is due today. To prepare a response properly would take at least two long meetings. But despite the many pressures that we are under we are doing what we can to develop a collective response in this very short time. We held our first meeting to develop our response on Wednesday. Our response will not attack Bandile personally but it will focus on the lies that are in the article, it will show that the author of this article is ignorant of well-known aspects of our movement and its history, and it will put the lies in the article in context of the long campaign of defamation against our movement.

Politikon have also stated that the first version of the article that they received was sent back because their lawyers in London found it to be defamatory. We have also been informed that it was Patrick Bond that recommended the article to them. We have to query the intentions of anyone that recommends the publication of a defamatory attack on a movement. On our understanding defamation is not the same thing as debate. We note also that Patrick Bond called a press conference at CCS to present this article, and others, to the media. We did not see any newspaper reports after this and, in fact, have not seen any newspaper reports at all on Bandile's various allegations against us aside from the one article in the New Age. It seems that it is not possible to lie with the same impunity in a newspaper as it is on an email list, and now also in Politikon.

Recently more emails have been sent from Bandile's email address attacking us. Many people have told us that they have noted the close similarity between these emails and Bohmke's obsessions and his style of writing. As people who have worked closely with Bandile we are confident that she is not writing these emails. We repeat that she has a right to choose to work with CCS and with Bohmke. If she wants Bohmke to write her emails for her that is her choice. But we do query the intentions of anyone that constantly makes dishonest statements about our movement. If Bandile was serious about the struggle she would be focusing on building her new organisation. Our position on the new organisation remains the same. If it wins support and commits itself to the struggle of the people we will be happy to work with it.

All comrades and all organizations make mistakes and we have made mistakes and we will continue to make mistakes. We welcome any discussion about how we can organize and struggle better. We welcome any discussion about how we can learn from the mistakes that we have made and the mistakes that other organizations have made. However nobody in their right mind can see constant defamation as a positive contribution to the struggle. All that Bandile's new friends offer is defamation. These are people who have always been determined to ruin what they cannot rule. What we are dealing with here is a tiny group of middle class people who are trying by all means to destroy our movement in order that they can have full control over the representation of the political space in Durban in academic and NGO spaces. They wish to eradicate us as an organisation of the strong poor so that they can continue to think and speak for the poor. They are not willing to accept our demand to 'speak to us, not for us' and 'think with us, not for us'. It is clear to us from their tactics that what they are fighting for most of all is to be able to represent the struggles of the poor internationally, especially to other academics. It is clear to us that racism is a very big part of what is happening here. It is also clear to us that this is revenge for our decision to refuse the control of the NGOs and to walk out of the meeting hosted by CCS in 2006.

The CCS model for working with grassroots structures is to offer employment to someone in that structure following which that individual will take instruction from CCS and try and deliver the support of the structure to CCS. This is not a democratic model. It is also not a model that works. Organisations that take this route quickly find that their members lose confidence in the organisation. Despite all its money and all the people that have been employed by CCS it remains an NGO with no movement. Our model for engaging with NGOs is very different. We do not accept that any of our elected leaders can take employment with any NGO. We negotiate solidarity on a collective basis, and with regard to particular projects only, with those few NGOs willing to respect our autonomy. When we agree to work together on a particular project we do so in a manner in which with all members of our organisation remain accountable only to our members.

Those who wish to know the truth about our organisation are welcome to come and meet us and sit in on our meetings. Those who are far away should remain aware that those who have always defamed us, and who Bandile has now

chosen to work with, have no personal experience of our movement. On the other hand many activists, academics and journalists from all over the world have participated freely in our processes and know very well what is true and what is not. They should also be aware that we are constantly under surveillance by the state and that if we had any big secrets they would have come a long time ago. Anyone who wishes to get more insight into why it has become impossible for some comrades to work with Bandile is welcome to meet with any member of the Ridge View, Marikana Land Occupation or Mandela Complex communities and to discuss any matter of their choice.

Bandile's new friends have our entire mailing list. It seems sure that defamation will continue to be emailed to all our comrades around the world and to a long list of academics around the world. We cannot stop this. A number of people have contacted us to say that all requests sent to Bandile's email address asking to be taken off the mailing list for this defamation have been ignored. Twice people requesting to be removed from this mailing list have had a reply to their request circulated to the whole mailing list (in both cases many people have noted that it seemed obvious to them that these replies from Bandile's email address were written by Bohmke). People who do not wish to receive these emails any more are just marking them as spam. This is all that we can advise. We apologise to those people who registered to be on our mailing list and are now receiving these emails but do not want to keep receiving these emails. The situation is beyond our control.

We are aware that the defamation will keep coming and that this statement will provoke further intimidation and lies. However we are not going to keep responding to all the defamation that will keep coming. This is the only statement that we will issue. We are also going to, with their permission of course, send out a translation of the statement from the Mandela Complex people. After that we will say no more on this matter. However we will meet Bandile in court for the defamation case and we will, despite the very short time that we have been given, develop a careful response to the article in *Politikon* showing the various points at which it is dishonest.

One thing that makes us very sad about all this is that it is obvious to us that once it becomes clear that Bandile has agreed to support this long campaign of defamation against us, and once it becomes clear just how many dishonest claims have been made in her name, she will lose her credibility. She will then

be dropped by her new friends. We expect that they will then find someone else to continue their campaign. There are always people that need money.

Our silence until now in the face of numerous lies issued in Bandile's name has not meant that we accept what is being said. We have been trying to conduct ourselves in a dignified and respectful way. We were not bought up to embarrass other people. We have been trying to, as we have always tried to do since 2006, ignore the world of lies that flourishes on Patrick Bond's email list and focus on our political work. However the accusation of murder, an accusation that is entirely untrue, is a step too far.

12 FEBRUARY 2015

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statement for the Human Rights Commission Hearings Relating to Access to Housing, Local Government and Service Delivery

Yesterday Abahlali baseMjondolo presented to the Human Rights Commission in Johannesburg. This is the statement that was sent to the Commission in advance of the hearings.

We first met on the 5th of January 2015 to begin the process of developing a response to the questions asked by the Human Rights Commission and we concluded the process on the 12th of February 2015.

We note that we have been invited to the hearings as a civil society organisation. We would like to begin by stating that we do not identify ourselves as a civil society organisation. Mostly when people talk about civil society what they mean is NGOs. Most NGOs have no members and no mandate to represent anyone. When NGOs are taken to represent the people in the name of civil society this is one more way of excluding oppressed people from important spaces and discussions. Some NGOs are as hostile to democratic membership based people's organisations as the worst elements in the state. We are also not a political party. We are a democratic membership based movement of shack dwellers and other poor people (umbutho wabantu). We currently have twenty two branches in good standing in KwaZulu-Natal, and one in Cape Town, and just over 11 000 individual members in good standing. The government, and some NGOS, have always been saying that our movement will not exist in a year's time. They are always excitedly announcing the death of our movement. But this year we will be celebrating ten years of our existence.

We also wish to note that the government always avoids going to ordinary people. Highly educated people comment on TV about matters of which they have no knowledge. The government chooses not to recognise popular organisations that exist outside of the ruling party. Attempts to engage are rebuffed again and again. Protest is the last resort. Protests become violence when the

police arrive. They are made to be violence by the police. Mostly communities continue to be ignored after a protest. If they do win some engagement they will be lied to and taken for a ride. There will be countless pointless meetings. When the government does talk to us they refuse to talk about dignity or land. They always try to channel the discussion in other directions. If they were serious about the fundamental causes of protests they would refer to dignity and land. By dignity we mean respect. When we say that we are struggling for dignity we mean that we are struggling for a society in which each person is recognised as a human being. This means that they must be engaged with respect but also that they must have access to all that a person needs for a dignified life – land, housing, education, a livelihood and so on. When we say that we are struggling for land we mean that we are struggling for land in the cities where we can access livelihoods, education and many other things.

Instead of engaging with us on the questions of land and dignity the government tries to show us to the world as criminals. In this they are supported by some NGOs and sometimes the media will support them in this too. We are under constant surveillance by intelligence. If we were doing anything illicit the government would know about it. However in this society if you are poor and black lies can be freely told about you. You can also be freely subjected to violence.

The government is violating us. The government is abusive. We cannot trust any government institution. We have always said that we wanted to bring the people to the government and the government to the people. We have always said that we wanted meaningful engagement with the government. We have always said that we want to contribute to the building of the country. However our reward for organising ourselves for this purpose has been lies, evictions by the land invasions unit, the destruction of our homes by ANC members, assault by the police and the land invasions unit, imprisonment, torture and murder.

Please note that all our answers relate to our experience in Durban.

4.1: Describe the challenges that communities face when engaging with government, particularly at a local level Most communities find that if they can access provincial and national government it is possible to have open discussions. Sometimes we have been threatened by provincial government but we have also

had some useful discussions. However the main problem is at the local level. Local government operates like a criminal organisation. It is violent and corrupt and nothing happens without going through the party bosses. In some cases there is also serious discrimination against people from the Eastern Cape.

Mostly residents do not know who to speak to. It is the councillors that are supposed to be in contact with communities on a daily basis. But the problem starts with the fact that the councillors are elected through political parties. Once a person is elected through a political party they are straight away forced (whether willingly or by coercion) to serve political parties instead of the communities. Party loyalty replaces morality. The politics of lies and blood replaces the politics of truth and the politics of dignity. Councillors should be accountable to people and not to parties.

When councillors through their formations have achieved to have a meeting there is no follow up meeting. People are just left in the dark.

The ward committees are completely controlled by the Branch Executive Committees (BECs) of the parties. They are hijacked by the political parties and used as a tool to dominate the people. The ward committees should be inclusive of all organisations in the ward such as churches, taxi associations, school governing bodies and residents' associations. Ward committees should not be party political organisations.

When the councillors and the ward committees are there to serve the parties community members are not recognised as human beings. Their dignity is denied. They have no right to participate. They are defined as members of parties and not as citizens.

Service delivery is not a democratic process. Services are delivered from above. There is no discussion. There is no allowance for grassroots planning. Services are delivered through party lines. The BECs of the ruling party always hijack delivery. This is the root cause of a lot of anger and conflict. Development must be democratised and it must be controlled by communities and not by political parties.

Take the example of KwaNdengezi. Here the councillor, Nqola (Mduduzi Christian Ngcobo), personally allocates houses, heads the contractors, represents the Municipality and acts as an official. He refuses to recognise the local traditional leader who holds the respect of many of the residents. Everything is under the control of Nqola. Anyone that opposes him is threatened. On the

29th of September 2014 the chairperson of our movement in KwaNdengezi, Thuli Ndlovu, was assassinated.

When people try to be heard they are threatened. There is a criminalisation of the attempt to be heard. When anger gets to the point that there is a march or a road blockade the politicians send in the police in the name of law and order. The people that are able to discuss matters – politicians and officials – are nowhere to be found. A demand to be recognised and heard results in violence from the state and not in recognition and negotiation. The people that have demanded to be recognised and heard are shown to the world as criminals. They find that they can be beaten and even killed with impunity. On 30 September 2013 Nqobile Nzuza, a 17 year old girl, was shot dead by the police under the command of the Station Commander of the Cato Manor Police Station. She was shot from behind in the back of the head. There were several witnesses to this murder. She was unarmed and running away from the police when she was shot. Today (12 February 2015) we heard for the first time that there had been an arrest and that a suspect will appear in the Durban Magistrate's Court on the 13th of February 2015.

Development planning and implementation should be open, inclusive and democratic.

4.2 Why do communities embark on “service delivery” protests? Has this form of protest action yielded effective results and is it sustainable?

The demand for land and dignity is the underlying reason for protest. If people were respected and recognised as human beings there would be no need for protest.

Protests have often yielded results for us. Protest has been effective at opposing evictions. Councillors that we have protested against have been removed. Plans to eradicate settlements on well-located land have been dropped. However when protest does win access to housing and services it is always delivered through the local ANC structures and our members are excluded. Not a single settlement that remains affiliated to our movement has received housing.

When we started our movement in 2005 there was a strong focus on the need for toilets. This demand came from the women. Now toilets are going up everywhere. But it took almost ten years of struggle to force the municipality to start to take the question of toilets more seriously.

Protests have sustained our movement over almost ten years. It is a way of showing our strength, it is a way of bringing people together and it is a way of freely expressing ourselves. It is not the only way. We also express our views in the media, via our press statements, our website and in court. But some people really enjoy protests and don't have the patience for day to day organising. Protests keep our movement close to its members and supporters. We organise legal protest but, when legal protests are ignored (like the way in which the Minister of Police Nathi Mthethwa ignored our memorandum submitted at a march on the 8th of November 2014), or when court decisions are ignored (like in Cato Crest where several court interdicts have been ignored by the eThekweni Municipality), or when we are facing serious repression, we also organise road blockades. For shack dwellers around the world the road blockade is what the strike is to workers. It is a way to go beyond the demand to be recognised and to start disrupting the system that oppresses us.

Sometimes, such as when an eviction is about to happen, a road blockade can be quickly decided on and implemented. But usually there is a long process leading up to it. It is not just about toying-toying and burning tyres. There is a process of meetings, discussions, and working out a set of demands. It is the same with legal protests. There is a long process of meetings, discussing and working out a memorandum that leads up to the protest. It is not just about one day on the street. There is a process that promotes collectivity, discussion and building our own democratic practices and power from below. The paper that is submitted to the politicians at the end of the march contains the cries of the people.

Our movement began with a protest. Our existence today is due to protest. It is protest more than anything else that has sustained our movement for almost ten years. When protest is criminalised by the police, the politicians and the media, and when it is just dismissed as 'spontaneous' by the NGOs and academics, a powerful tool for the poor to organise ourselves, build our collective power and express ourselves, is dismissed.

We have always rejected the term 'service delivery protests'. It narrows the meaning of our struggles. There is no room in this term for our most important concerns which are land and dignity. Also the most common reason why people decide to protest is because they are not being seriously engaged on their concerns. There is also no room in the term 'service delivery protests' for people's

insistence that the government must engage them, seriously and respectfully, on their concerns.

Of course we do need water and other services but the main reason why we protest is because we are not counted as human beings. Like the term 'civil society' this term 'service delivery protest' does not come from us. We are human beings before we need services and the main reason for protesting is that we are not respected as human beings. Protests are, above all else, a call for our humanity to be recognised and fulfilled.

4.3 Noting that research has demonstrated that many "service delivery protests" are peaceful, why are these protests portrayed as violent?

In this society people who are poor and black are immediately seen as violent, as well as dishonest and as people that are being remoted by others with bad intentions, as soon as we enter any space outside of the spaces to which the system of oppression has tried to confine us. It is considered criminal for us to organise ourselves, to speak for ourselves, to question the authority of the politicians and civil society or to make alliances with lawyers, activists and others outside of the spaces in which we are supposed to remain. We really want to stress that it is not just the politicians and the state that portrays our protests as violent when they are not. It is also civil society, academics and business. In fact it is the whole of the middle class.

We do disrupt traffic with road blockades but we have taken a clear decision that no one in our movement will attack passing motorists. Our protests are not violent. When there is violence that violence always comes from the police. They have often attacked non-violent protests with dogs, rubber bullets, stun grenades, tear gas, water cannons, baton charges and, in some cases, live ammunition. Our members, always unarmed, have often been seriously injured by the police on protests and in one case someone was killed by the police.

Everyone can see that the main perpetrator of political violence is the state and the politicians. They perpetrate serious and regular violence against us through the police, the land invasions unit, armed ANC mobs and the izinkabi (assassins). We are governed by violence and exclusion not by negotiation and inclusion and yet we are the ones that are shown to the world as violent. The violence of the system that oppresses us every day remains invisible to most of the media, the NGOs and so on.

4.4. Why do communities destroy permanent/temporary structures provided by the State in attempting to comply with their obligations in terms of service delivery generally? What is the cause of the frustration expressed by communities?

The most important point to make here is that it is rare for a library or some other building to be destroyed during a protest. However it is very common for the state to send in armed men to destroy our homes and to disconnect us from water and electricity. Yet this organised and ongoing destruction of homes and other buildings like churches, crèches and shops, and even graves, as well the destruction of our water and electricity connections, is taken as normal. The structural violence that oppresses us every day is taken as normal. It remains invisible in many people's eyes.

For us it is unfortunate if a library is destroyed in a protest. We have never done something like this. However when people do choose to attack accessible targets that represent the state their actions must be understood in the context of their lives.

Impoverished people live with constant stress and fear and anxiety about their future of their lives. Trying to find work is stress. Most jobs are stress. Trying to educate your children is stress. Dealing with health problems is stress. Dealing with the councillor is stress. There is stress in the family and in the home too. The important question is who is creating all this stress and why? When a person or a community lives with too much stress there is always the possibility that it will show itself in anger. Sometimes that anger will be misdirected. One of the tasks of a political movement is to channel anger in the right direction – against our oppressors and the system that oppresses us.

4.5 How are municipalities failing in their responsibilities towards communities?

They are not transparent. Corruption flourishes. Politicians and BECs interfere with the administrative duties of officials. They insist on being the referee and the player. They are accountable only to themselves. Again and again officials tell us that they want to work for the people. Often we can see that this is true. But it is the politicians that are preventing them from working with the people. The politicians make sure that all development goes through their hands to build their power and that of their parties. Anyone who opposes them

will face serious intimidation and repression. They will be excluded from development, threatened and sometimes subject to violence from the local party structures or the police. People who are critical are removed from the housing list. Sometimes they are put on the death list. Assassinations are becoming more common. For the politicians the communities are, like for some NGOs, a resource to be exploited for their own interests and not people to be engaged as human beings and with who a more just society can be developed.

Before Nkululeko Gwala, a leader in our movement from Cato Crest, was assassinated on the 26th of June 2013, the Mayor and the Chairperson of the ANC in Durban gave a talk in which his murder was implicitly authorised. How can we trust a municipality that is under the control of people that have given a public instruction for murder?

4.6 How do municipalities and government representatives engage with communities? Is this form of engagement effective?

We have never seen municipalities and government representatives engaging positively with communities. They are just there to give instruction and to get buy-in for projects and decisions that have already been decided on. South Africa is a country where the people are expected to obey and not to govern. Asking to participate in decision making puts a person at immediate risk of intimidation and violence.

When we have made important progress, such as in Siyanda where electricity is now being provided to shack dwellers, this is because we were successful in bypassing the politicians and negotiation directly with the officials. But it is very difficult to achieve this and it is very difficult to sustain this.

4.7 Are communities able to access information required for them to make informed decisions regarding policies that directly affect them?

We can get access to information about policies and laws. But when it comes to the actual plans and projects of the government we cannot get information. The former City Manager of Durban Michael Sutcliffe once told us that “information is dangerous”. He was not the only person to think that information must be denied to the people at all costs.

We can't get hold of something like an IDP. If you really want to get an IDP you must prepare yourself for a war. If you want to get a housing allocation list you must understand that you could be killed if you are successful. In Cato Crest people like Thembinkosi Qumbela and Nkululeko Gwala have been killed for

having access to this kind of information. Others, members of our movement and other organisations like the SACP, have had to flee the area in fear of their lives for having this sort of information.

4.8 How do you suggest that government addresses these challenges and other frustrations that communities may have in relation thereto?

The government must learn to treat people like human beings. There must be nothing for the people without the people. The state must be separated from party politics. The social value of land must be put before its commercial value. Land occupations need to be understood as grassroots urban planning and the building of communities as self-organised development to be supported and not destroyed and repressed by the state. Land is more important than housing. If we have our own land we can build our own houses. But without land we have nothing and we remain constantly vulnerable.

The government is always thinking for us instead of thinking with us. For example consider forced removals from well-located shack settlements to transit camps or RDP houses 50 kilometres outside the city. They call this 'housing delivery'. We call it 'forced removal' and 'reruralisation'. Where must our children school in these places? How must we find a livelihood in these places? They just build a house and say 'Go!'. They treat us like dogs. They are just destroying what we have without thinking, without a chance for discussion. They don't even provide transport from the relocation sites. There is no discussion of what the people want.

Conclusion

The parties are only talking about positions, not about people's lives. This is why we decided to withdraw from party politics in 2006 and to focus on building our own power. The ANC and SACP wanted S'bu Zikode to accept a position as chairperson of the Ward Committee but we said no because that is not a space to deal with people's lives. We did decide to make a tactical vote last year to try and punish the ANC for repression because they had our blood on their hands but we remain committed to building our own power from the ground up.

We are focussing on bringing up new leaders. We know that more of us will be killed and we need the struggle to continue.

Dignity cannot be delivered to us like services. Dignity is something that we have to struggle for. It is won back in struggle. It is in us and we should have no fear.

We do not believe that there can be ownership in land. Land was created for all human beings to enjoy. It was not created for the government. We remain committed to supporting occupations of unused land and buildings.

Our courage is what will carry us, and not the law or voting or protocol. Some are born with inkani (forceful determination) and others discover it in themselves in struggle or even in the home. Together we will keep discussing how to use our inkani with intelligence. Together we will keep discussing how to stay united and strong. We are committed to a world in which land, wealth and power are shared fairly.

19 MARCH 2015

Press statement · Joint statement

Statement on the Murder of Mr. Noel Dintshiantshia

Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Congolese Solidarity Campaign “CSC” are saddened by the sudden death of Mr. NOEL BEYA DINTSHIANTSHIA, who was killed by petrol bomb while he was on duty on Friday night last week. He was working at the BUFFALO BAR, owned by Mr. Naidoo, as a bouncer on the corner of Commercial and gardener Street in the city of DURBAN.

According to the deceased last words before he died, there were some customers who were making a noise and disturbing other customers at the liquor outlet. The owner sent him to tell them that they should respect other customers, but they did not listen. They continue to make noise. The owner sent him to take all of them out and make sure that they are not coming back.

According to the deceased these people told him that he cannot do that to them in their own country and that they will show him. They came back 30 minutes later behind from where he was standing outside. They petrol bombed him. When he tried to run inside the liquor outlet for help they closed the gate for him and he was not assisted accordingly. He ended up burning alone just outside the KFC while people watched him burn.

It also said that medical rescuers and police came late on the scene. He was rushed to Addington Hospital and then transferred to Wentworth Hospital in Jacobs where he died on Sunday morning around 7 am.

We are very concerned about the protection of Migrants in South Africa, especially African Migrants. It seems that we are the people that can be killed with impunity in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in South Africa too.

Mr. Dintshiantshia was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, on 15 January 1968, in the province of Kassai occidental. He arrived in South Africa in 2005. He died at the age of 47, and left behind a wife and a young daughter.

A case of murder was opened at the police station but the killers are still on the run. According to the victim’s brother the police are not doing enough to

bring the killers to book according. The remains of the deceased will be repatriated back home (DRC) next week, where he will be laid to rest.

Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Congolese Solidarity Campaign send our condolences to the family of our fallen brother who died in exile because of political instability and economic mismanagement in our country (DRC) which has led many of us to leave our promise land, and seek refuge in different countries around the world, and particularly in South Africa. The moment through which our people are living in any part of the world is one of the darkest moments in the history of humankind. Our future is dark, and scattered.

The Congolese Solidarity Campaign is a grass roots social movement which struggles for social justice, equality, and to create a free, open, and unified DR Congo open to all regardless of culture, ethnicity, beliefs, race, social origin, gender, race, and region. We are on the mission of preserving human dignity of our people. We are united by destiny and history to encompass the noble ideas of liberty, fraternity, solidarity, justice, peace and work. We are animated by our common will to build, in the heart of Africa, a State of Law and a powerful and prosperous Nation, founded on a real political, economic, social and cultural democracy.

We are proud to stand with Abahlali baseMjondolo in Durban.

We call upon the South African Police Services to immediately investigate and arrest those that were responsible for the brutal murder of Dintshiantshia. We call upon the South African government to intervene and act decisive in bringing peace and stability in DR Congo. We call upon the African Union to do justice in the protection of the sovereignty of the Congolese people. We also call upon ordinary South Africans to reject any violence against any foreign nationals and to work for a free Africa in which everyone's dignity and humanity is respected.

We are planning a Memorial Service in Durban for the late comrade before his body is sent back home. The media will be informed in due course.

Kapele Mutachi
Pastor Raphael Kabambire
Thembanani Ngongoma
S'bu Zikode

20 MARCH 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two ANC Councillors will Appear in Court Today on Suspicion of Being Responsible for the Assassination of Thuli Ndlovu

Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi, was assassinated in cold blood on the 29th September 2014 at her home. On 30 September 2013 Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer in Cato Crest during a protest. She was shot in the back of the head. Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated in Cato Crest on the 26 June 2013. Thembinkosi Qumbela was assassinated in Cato Crest on 19 March 2013.

We have always said that our city, Durban, is run by gangster politicians who are committed to use intimidation of various kinds, and even to kill, those that they cannot control. This practice of intimidation and even murder by gangster politicians has been operating with impunity for years. For years there have been no arrests after assaults, the destruction of people's homes and assassinations. None of the so called political leadership from government has ever come to us or to the families that have their relatives killed.

Thuli received numerous death threats for her activism against the councillors' housing corruption. An hour before she was killed she had told her mom that she had seen Nqola, the local councillor, driving his well-known black Nissan Navara car around the area. Thuli left her small baby Freedom and her daughter. The community has always been terrified with Nqola. A few weeks after Thuli's murder an ANC activist, Mobeni Khwela, who had worked closely with Thuli in exposing Nqola's corruption, was murdered in the same way as Thuli. After that murder we saw top government leaders visiting the family of Mobeni Khwela. This shows exactly that our lives count for nothing in the politicians' eyes and that we are not treated equal. When you organise outside of the ruling party you become a person that can be killed with impunity.

Our members, and members of the SACP in KwaNdengezi have engaged in ongoing protests and road blockades since the assassinations.

We are happy to announce that two ANC councillors, Nqola and Luvelile Lutyeku, were arrested last month. They were refused bail and will appear in the Pinetown magistrate court again today.

Our members will be there in numbers to ensure that this case is prosecuted fairly.

We wish to thank the police for doing their job despite so much of political interference in their job. We also wish to thank the local SACP members who refused to be governed by the thugs and gangsters that were imposed by the ruling party upon this community. We hope that all other similar crimes committed by politicians can be investigated and criminals be brought to book. We have repeatedly said that this Province has promoted a politic of blood and a politic of fear. We hope this can come to an end.

T.J. Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela

27 MARCH 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ISiyanda branch celebrates Electricity Installation, its Sixth Anniversary & Re-launches its Branch

It is with great pleasure that impoverished people on our own can achieve what was thought to be impossible sometime ago. It is with great pleasure that Abahlali can organise to build our power from below to use the state to develop and transform the lives of the impoverished without seeking permission from politicians or giving up our autonomy to the ruling party.

The neglected community of Siyanda VN Naik, just like many other Abahlali communities, has been denied the right to land and housing. We have been denied the right to essential services such as water and sanitation and electricity. When we started our movement in 2005 these services were denied to all shack dwellers in Durban. The government claimed to provide water but there would be a few taps for settlement of thousands of people. They claimed to provide sanitation but this only existed on paper. They openly refused to provide us with electricity claiming that our settlements, even when they were more than 30 years old, were 'temporary'.

Because of our struggle the state has been forced to start providing more access to water and to being providing electricity and toilets too – something that was previously denied. However they will also try and only provide the fruits of our struggle to settlements that remain loyal to the ANC, and through local ANC structures. Therefore we continue to be denied essential services as a punishment for speaking out against injustices, inequalities, corruption and indignity.

This Sunday, 29 March 2015 the Siyanda branch will be celebrating the sixth year anniversary of having collectively joined Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA. This is an important year for the whole movement as we will be celebrating our tenth year anniversary in few months time. The celebration comes

with some sizable achievements for the Siyanda branch like the delivery of waterborne ablution, the Settlement Database, community initiated projects such as gardens and crèches run by Co-operatives. All of these projects in one branch are run by mostly women.

On Sunday Abahlali will also be launching the electricity project that has begun already in Siyanda. The installation of electricity in the Siyanda settlement is a major achievement. Our movement will be celebrating after years of our children, men and women were being killed and maimed in fires as a result of the city's failure to electrify shack settlements. We all know that Durban City Council has been the only municipality in the country that has had a deliberate policy Not to electrify shack settlements.

Today we thank our long struggle, of ten years, to demand electrification for all. We also thank our "Operation Khanyisa" campaign which is the well organised campaign to arrange safe electrification connections from below. This campaign was started by our APF comrades in Johannesburg. Eskom, the police and the media have no problem when impoverished people are denied access to electricity and left to burn in the fires. Yet when we take matters into our own hands, in the name of justice and in defence of our communities and our lives, Eskom, the police and the media call us criminals.

It is only now we are told that this deadly policy of denying electricity to shack dwellers is being reviewed in Durban and that the city is rolling out electricity as a pilot project. Of course they will never give credit to Abahlali for this important breakthrough.

But it must be noted that the ruling party has voted against the installation of electricity in Siyanda when the motion was put forward in a council meeting. They took this position simply because Siyanda is an Abahlali branch. But despite this attempt by the council to oppose human development we still got the project going ahead. When organisation and persistence it is still possible to use the state machinery to people's favour without having to bow to politicians, there is a trick though.

The event starts at 10:00am on the 29 March 2015 at Siyanda Community Centre next to VN Naik School.

Mamkhize Nxumalo Siyanda brach Chairperson
Thembanani Ngongoma Siyanda Deputy Chairperson

14 APRIL 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Statement on the Ongoing Xenophobic Attacks

A view from below – umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu

There is a war in our city. Our African brothers and sisters are being openly attacked on the streets.

In 2008 our movement stood firm against the attacks on people born in other African countries. We committed ourselves to shelter and defend our brothers and sisters. There were no attacks in any of our communities.

For some time now we have been working very closely with the Congolese Solidarity Campaign. We have been working to build a politic from below that accepts each person as a person and each comrade as a comrade without regard to where they were born or what language they speak. In this struggle we have faced constant attack from the state, the ruling party and others. We have been attacked for having members from the Eastern Cape, members born in other countries and Indian members. We have always stood firm against these attacks. Our movement has survived almost ten years of repression.

On the 8th of April we supported a march against xenophobia organised by our comrades in the Congolese Solidarity Campaign together with the Somali Association of South African and other migrant organisations. There was a permit for the march and yet the police would not allow it to go ahead. They stopped people from leaving their communities to travel to the march. They attacked the march with tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets. One Congolese man was severely beaten by the police with a plank. One of our members, from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest, had her leg broken during the assault by the police. We also noted senior police officers accusing Abahlali: “What do you have to do with this march? Why are you supporting them?” One of our comrades from the Eastern Cape was told by the police that: “You are from the Eastern Cape, you will cause a war here and then run away to Eastern Cape. Keep quiet.” We do not know who will be next. Some of the people who are

now attacking people born in other African countries are saying that they will attack the Indians next.

But the violence used to expel us from this democracy does not only come from the police. Since 2009 we have also been openly attacked by the ruling party. At the march on the 8th of April there was another march of the so called “locals” who were screaming and saying “awahambe (“foreigners must go”). What we noted in this march that went parallel to ours was that it used people working at taxi ranks and drug addicts known as whoonga boys in Durban. Some people had been transported all the way from Port Shepstone to support this march. We were not only assaulted by the police. We were also threatened and assaulted by this group who said to us: “Why are you supporting these foreigners”. On that day the police were supporting this group.

Despite the violence and intimidation from the police and ‘the locals’ we made it to the City Hall.

Many of the Congolese here in Durban are fleeing war and the destruction of their country. Yet here they are subject to more violence, including from the police. People in the Marikana Land Occupation have also been subject to serious violence, including regular evictions, beatings, torture and assassination. Yet when we try to unite and to take to the streets to assert that every person is a person, that everyone counts, we are openly beaten by the police. Once we again we say that there is no democracy for the poor in this country. It does not matter which country you were born in, or what part of South Africa you come from, or what language you speak. If you are poor and black you are excluded from this democracy with the open use of violence.

The march on the 8th of April revealed an important lesson. These attacks are well planned and supported by powerful people. When the police began to attack a legal and peaceful march we realized that there was a bigger political plot to attack the march against xenophobia. Today in some areas the police are just escorting the thugs that are carrying out these attacks. They come in groups to ask for foreigners’ permits to be in South Africa and start stealing and looting. The police have not stopped these attacks.

Today we are told that the KZN government is organizing their own march to be held on the 16th of April. We ask ourselves why now when the march supported by migrant organisations was banned and attacked. We ask ourselves who will be marching? And who will be receiving a Memorandum and from

who? We are now clear and ashamed that just as there has been high level political support for attacks on people from the Eastern Cape there is also support for this violence. There are many in the ruling party who would rather have the poor divided than united and would rather have the poor turning against their neighbours instead of their real oppressors. There are also people who have their eyes on the businesses and homes of others.

Opportunists are emerging everywhere to use this violence to build their own power and to loot. In Clare Estate members of a group whose name is known to us did not only attack and loot Malawians and Ethiopians but forceful evicted a South African family from a house belonging to an Indian family. This family reported that this group has an official campaign to drive Indians and foreigners out of Clare Estate. When reporting these threats at the Sydenham police station the police refused to open a case against the attackers that are known to the family and the entire community. The state is not doing enough to stop this. Some senior political leaders and police only condemn the violence when on camera and in public spaces but on the side they say “bashayeni” (hit them). It is time we tell the truth about what we are confronted with on the ground, which makes our work extremely difficult. We will not stop this war for as long the police and politicians say one thing for the cameras and another on the ground.

It is very hard for us to organise effective support in this crisis when we face violence from the state and from the groups attacking people on the streets. Many of our members are scared and they are scared for good reason. The attackers have often threatened that Abahlali will be next if we continue to support our African brothers and sisters. We are fully aware that if this happens we will get no support from the police.

We believe this should be a joint fight. After our own meeting that took us the whole day this Sunday we made the following decisions:

We will work to support the development of a joint committee against xenophobia made up of South African organisations and organisations representing foreign nationals.

We will identify troubled communities and visit those communities to speak to them. We will not, like the politicians, only visit the victims in the refugee camps when the cameras are there. We will visit the communities from which the attackers are coming too.

Abahlali will continue working with migrant organisations in all our activities and engaging our members in all the communities where we have branches to bring peace.

We urge the South African government to take urgent steps to stop the attacks and to arrest and prosecute all perpetrators. We also urge the South African government, all African Ambassadors based here and the AU to work for peace and stability across the whole continent and for an Africa in which land, wealth and power are fairly shared between the people. Africa is rich. There is no reason for Africans to have to live in war and impoverishment.

We are appealing to all South Africans, even those that are silence, to help us end this war on fellow Africans. We are appealing to the church leaders, progressive forces and to the radical students to join us in this struggle. We are doing what we can. We are holding meetings – we will hold a meeting in uM-lazi in the next hour – and undertaking small acts of solidarity like arranging for South Africans to fetching the children of migrants from their schools and take them to safe places. But it is very difficult to advance a politic of peace in the middle of this kind of violence coming from both the state and other forces.

These are dangerous time. Everyone in the city is scared. The sun is about to go down and we fear that there will be a lot more killing and looting tonight. We don't know what will happen tomorrow.

S'bu. Zikode
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela
TJ Ngongoma

24 APRIL 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

UnFreedom Day 2015: 21 years of Exclusion and Repression

Once again 'Freedom Day' is here. Once again we will be told that we are free. Once again we will be lectured about our about freedom and told to accompany the politicians, businessmen and the rich to their stadiums.

21 years of shack life has not been easy for us. In 21 years of ANC rule lies and evictions have become the order of the day. The land has not been restored to the people. Our dignity has been vandalized. In 2005 we declared our humanity. The response of the ANC has been lies, the denial of life saving basic services, arrest, assault, imprisonment, illegal evictions, torture, armed attacks by members of the ruling party, the destruction of our homes by members of the ruling party and assassination. The vandalization of our humanity has become even more extreme. We are not alone. We do not forget Marikana. We do not forget all the people murdered by the police on protests around the country. We do not forget all the harassment and violence against people born in other countries.

This so called freedom has meant exclusion from democratic processes and decision making. It has meant exclusion from the housing list and, yes, it has meant that we must be removed from the housing list to be placed on the death list. We have seen miners murdered in cold blood in Marikana. We have seen Nkululeko Gwala, Thembinkosi Qumbela and Nqobile Nzuza of Cato Crest murdered in cold blood and, yes, we have seen Thuli Ndlovu murdered in KwaNdengezi. Here and there our struggle pushes back at the forces of oppression. In KwaNdengezi ANC councillors Luvelile Lutyeku and Nqola Ngcobo having been arrested and charged with the murder of Thuli Ndlovu.

On Sunday Abahlali will again be mourning the loss of our freedom to serve the interests of the ruling elites. While many South Africans will be celebrating freedom day, Abahlali will insist that the shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa deserve real freedom and real democracy. we will be joined by our comrades from the Congolese solidarity campaign.

We want to remind all democrats that our freedom is not something that is held in the hands of the politicians and renewed on the 27 April of every year. Freedom means us respecting other human beings and them respecting our right to live freely. It is freedom to organize freely in our settlements and freedom to participate in all decision making that affects our lives and our well-being. Freedom means a right to our land of birth that is free from eviction by the land invasion units. Freedom means land and dignity. Freedom means that land, wealth and political power must be shared. Freedom means that South African belongs to all who live in it no matter where they were born or what language they speak.

While freedom day is celebrated by the ruling party on the 27th of April, Abahlali will hold our Unfreedom Day Rally on Sunday, 26 April 2015, at 11am at Cato Crest Sport Ground. We will use this opportunity to condemn xenophobia and to remember our fallen heroes and heroes with a special gesture.

TJ Ngongoma
Ndabo Mzimela
Zandile Nsibande

20 MAY 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Back to the Durban High Court

Following several brutal and unlawful evictions at a gun point by the eThekweni Municipal Land Invasion Unit in Cato Crest (Marikana land occupation) and Lamontville (Sisonke Village) Abahlali baseMjondolo won several court interdicts against the Municipality. Each and every time we secured an interdict, or an undertaking from the Municipality to cease its illegal behaviour, the interdicts and undertakings were ignored and the Municipality continued with their violent and unlawful evictions. It is clear that the eThekweni Municipality considers itself to be above the law and impoverished black people to be beneath the law.

In these evictions several comrades were violently attacked before being unlawful evicted. One of them was Nkosinathi Mngomezulu who was shot by the Commander of the Land Invasion Unit with live ammunition and spent more than a month in hospital. Although there were many witnesses to this shooting, and although statements were issued stating clearly who was responsible for this shooting, there was never any arrest. The law does not apply to the authorities of the eThekweni municipality. At the same time we can be beaten, shot and have our homes destroyed with impunity.

Cato Crest is the same community that lost the lives of Nqobile Nzuza, Nkululeko Gwala and Thembinkosi Qumbela who were shot dead by the police and the izinkabi zosopolitiki (politicians' hit men). In Cato Crest alone residents were evicted more than 12 times, while in Sisonke they were evicted more than 24 times. These evictions were not just unlawful but also criminal and immoral. In each eviction the residents resisted and rebuilt. The fact that the comrades are still occupying the land is due to their own inkani (forceful determination), and not the law.

These evictions show how cruel our state departments are towards the poor. When evictions are carried out peoples' homes are demolished and their possessions are broken and scattered in the mud. The perpetrators are members of the SAPS, the City Police, private security companies and sometimes also structures

of the ruling party. People, including the elderly and children become the first victims when they lose every little thing at the hands of those who are supposed to be their protectors.

The government tried to justify these evictions, especially in the media, by reference to a blanket interdict granted by Judge Koen on 2013 March 28 which interdicted anyone from occupying one thousand five hundred and sixty eight properties owned by the state. The interdict was obtained by the MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal and was in obvious violation of the both the law and the Constitution. Court orders cannot be granted to enable the state to act above the law and the Constitution.

We could not continue with the situation where the Municipality, the police and the politicians And the ruling part remain above the law and we can be evicted, beaten, shot and murdered with impunity. In February 2014 Abahlali baseMjondolo joined the appellant Sisonke (Zulu and 389 others) in the Constitutional Court. The court found that the MEC's blanket interdict was inconsistent with the Constitution and invalid. However the Constitutional Court only ruled on the legality of the blanket interdict referred the matter back to the Durban High Court to rule on the legality of the evictions that had been justified in terms of this court order. This Thursday, 21 May and Friday, 22 May Abahlali will be going to the Durban High Court in our numbers to support our legal team from the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa.

We also wish to state our serious concern about Operation Fiela. This is an armed attack on the poor by the state that is mainly targeting people born in other countries. However we have noted that the state has also repeatedly said that the 'crimes' that will be targeted include what they call 'land invasions' and we call 'land occupations'. We are asking ourselves if we will have to face the army next. In Johannesburg Operation Fiela resulted in an armed state attack on the Thembelihle settlement in Lenasia, a settlement with a long history of struggle. In KwaZulu-Natal the provincial government is trying to set up it's a privatised armed anti-land invasion unit. We have won many victories in court (using the law) and on the ground (using our own inkani) in the struggle to ensure that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. But it is clear that the state is determined to regain its control over the allocation of land by means of organised state violence – the police, the army, private security companies, local party structures and anti-land invasion units.

The land question is a matter of justice but the state seems determined to try and make it appear as a matter of criminality. The Freedom Charter says, “our people have been robbed of their birth right to land, liberty and peace”. It goes on also to confirm that, “All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose”. The land question should be resolved by peaceful negotiations, negotiations that start from the position that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. However the state seems determined to suppress the land question via the use of violence perpetrated against the poor. The state seems determined to place itself above the law and poor black people beneath the law. It seems determined to criminalize and militarize a question of basic justice.

TJ Ngongoma
Ndabo Mzimela
Thinabantu Khanyile

15 JUNE 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

AbM Youth League Youth Day Statement

This year we will use the well celebrated youth month to build our own power from below through the University of Abahlali.

Our grand parents have struggled against colonialism and our parents have struggled against apartheid. Our brothers and sisters of 1976 have also struggle against all forms of discrimination and oppression. Today we wish to salute all their determination for real freedom and real democracy. While they were fighting these battles they also had a responsibility to bring us up. We feel that we have to do the same and not watch them when they have to struggle twice. It is our turn as young people to make sure that we have real democracy and real freedom today. The South African youth of 1976 contributed so dearly and paid a high price for the freedom that we continue to struggle for.

We have decided that we will not sit quiet and suffer in silence while our parents have to struggle again against neo-liberal policies and corruption that has turned our comrades into monsters. We have decided that we will not keep quite when our parents are made landless and homeless by the so called “Land Invasion Units”. We have decided that we will not tolerate corruption, exclusion, death threats and the assassination of leaders and comrades who are both parents and comrades to us.

Today we have decided that we will put much more efforts in building this country into a safe home for all. We know that in order to succeed in this our inkani will always be necessary to destroy forces of darkness. The forces of capitalism want private profit and wealth accumulation which save the interest of the few that dominate.

We have seen how the police were used to repress opposition to the corruption and injustices of the old regime and today we see a lot of similarities. Hector Pieterse was killed in the same way as Nqobile Nzuza of Cato Crest. The youth continue to take the struggle for justice forward and the police continue to murder us.

Abahlali Youth League will use the Annual Celebrated June 16 to bring together young people and embark on the shared discussions that make the University of Abahlali. We will use this day to build our own power of knowledge from below. We will learn, reflect and critique our consciousness to a deterioration of Ubuntu. We have realized how much power and knowledge we have and still need to have in order to confront the forces of shame and division. We will be meeting at Denis Hurley Hall from 9:00 to 14:30 p.m. It is situated at the Cnr of Denis Hurley Street and Cathedral.

Scelo Ngidi Abahlali Youth League Organiser
Nandipha Chala
Mazwi Nzimande

30 JULY 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Road Blockade Happening in Siyanda Now

The ANC in eThekweni now support land occupations but only ANC members are allowed to build. When we began our struggle in 2005 the ANC was attempting to ‘eradicate’ shacks. We successfully opposed attempts to ‘eradicate’ numerous shack settlements in different parts of Durban and smaller towns in KwaZulu-Natal. We have also supported many land occupations which we see as the ‘peoples’ land redistribution programme’ or ‘land reform from below’ and as a form of ‘grassroots urban planning’. The ANC has long referred to land occupations, which they have called ‘land invasions’, as criminal acts and have used state violence and other forms of repression to try and prevent them.

While some senior leaders in the ruling party continue to act from above to try and criminalise land reform from below there has been a major shift at the lower levels of the party in eThekweni. The programme of land occupations from below is winning support from the ruling party. We are pleased that our hard fought struggle against landlessness is being supported. However the same logic that applies to ‘service delivery’ is now being applied to the occupation of land. Just as you have to be a member of the ruling party to benefit from service delivery so to you now have to be a member of the ruling party to benefit for the occupation of land. In a number of areas where we have branches – including Siyanda, Shallcross, Sisonke, Palmiet and Joe Slovo – our members report that people are being told that members of the ruling party are now mandated to occupy land. In all of these areas members of the ruling party are not being evicted while others, especially those who are independently organised, face evictions. These evictions are always unlawful and often violent. This selective eviction has caused anger in communities as a whole.

In some cases ANC members are willing to unite with people outside of the ruling party to oppose evictions. After the assassination in September last year of Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi, residents in the area united across political lines. Our members worked with members of the South African Communist Party to demand the arrest of the local councillor. He has since been

arrested and charged with the murder. Where ever possible we will build the broadest possible alliances against evictions.

We have been told that in Siyanda the Ward 41 Councillor, Lucky Mdlalose, has allocated sites to his supporters in order to build shacks. His supporters were able to successfully build but the shacks of other residents who built without the mandate of the councillor were demolished. On the 4th July the Land Invasion Unit came to demolish shacks but left those of the supporters of Lucky Mdlalose. We hope that the ruling party will now stop these selective evictions and endorse a fair and equitable people's land redistribution programme that does not discriminate on the basis of political affiliation or where people come from.

Right now in Siyanda both Abahlali and ANC members are on the street and are blockading the road in protest against the selective evictions of Lucky Mdlalose. This comes after the Land Invasion Unit arrived to demolish shacks built by non ANC residents. The media can rush to Siyanda right now to speak to protestors and see the situation for themselves.

Nogolide
Zoliswa
TJ Ngongoma

8 AUGUST 2015

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Women's Assembly to Build Women's Power

The Abahlali Women's League will be honouring the power of those women who organised a march to fight for the rights of all women in 1956. We wish to salute the women who said "enough is enough" and 'no more dompass woza ID'. Now is our time to make a difference. We will honour the women who marched in 1956 by holding an assembly of the women to build women's power in our communities, in the struggle and in society.

The assembly of the women will be held at 9:00 on Monday 10 August at the Hindu Surat Hall in Prince Edward Street. Each branch has been invited to elect 15 women to attend.

This assembly will take the form of a dialogue. It will give us a chance to discuss our lives and the role that we can play in our communities, in the struggle and in society. In 2015 many women continue to live under oppressive conditions. We are oppressed by capitalism, by the ruling party and by those men who do not accept the equality of women. The ruling party is trying to misuse culture to keep rural women oppressed.

We are aiming to break the silence of those who are scared to expose the people who are taking advantage of women and, also, our children. Some of our members are being threatened not to tell the untold stories. We want to build the confidence of women in their own power so that they can be brave like those of 1956. We want to play a clear role in bringing back dignity of poor women. We need to address issues like literacy, access to spaces of learning, food security and land. We even want land ownership to the women of every age including those who are less than 40 years. The question of land has been used by the government in a manner that excludes women – particularly women in shacks and rural communities. Women must have the same rights to land as men.

The women living in the shacks are at risk of abuse, fires, evictions and diseases. We want our women to be financially independent by developing support

groups that will strengthen us to learn from each other because we have different skills. Others are dress makers, bead makers and some can crochet. We are already making projects that aimed at building women's co-operatives.

We want to expose the killers of women some of them who are government officials and politicians. Our world is full of shop shooting, corruption and things like xenophobia. We want a South Africa and an Africa that belongs to all who live in it.

We want to support women to access education. We believe that when you educate women, you are educating the nation. Our children must learn from us about the importance of education.

We want murders and rapists to be properly prosecuted. There cannot continue to be impunity for violence against women.

However the main objective is to resist evictions and support land occupations because the land in Africa always belonged to the people but now its owned by the capitalists. We want to eradicate the system by which land is bought and sold and restore the land to the people. Land must not be bought and sold. It must be allocated to people on the basis of need.

On the 26th of August 2015 the Abahlali Women's League will join others in our movement at Durban High Court where Christian Nqola Ngcobo the ANC ward councillor will be appearing on suspicion of murdering Thuli Ndlovu. Thuli was our chairperson at Kwandengezi branch. She was murdered in cold blood in September 2014. Nqobile Nzuza was killed by the SAPS at Cato Crest in September 2013. We are deeply disturbed by the murder of our comrades and we will honour our fallen comrades at our Women's Day event on 10 August 2015.

We also note with a deep concern how the Public Protector Thuli Madonsela is being threatened by those in support of corruption. Today we wish to salute her work and stand in solidarity with her.

The women of Abahlali want to say SEKWANELE NGOKUBULAWA KWEMBOKODO!!

Zandile Nsibande
Sindi Mkhize
Nomusa Nxumalo

19 AUGUST 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali will be Back in the Durban High Court this Thursday, 20 August, to receive the judgment that has been reserved since 21 May 2015

Following repeated brutal and unlawful evictions at a gun point by the eThekweni Municipal Land Invasions Unit in Cato Crest (the Marikana land occupation) and Lamontville (Sisonke Village) Abahlali won several court interdicts. Each and every time we secured an interdict, or an undertaking from the Municipality to cease its illegal behaviour, the interdicts and undertakings were ignored and they continued with their violent and unlawful evictions. It is clear that the eThekweni Municipality considers itself to be above the law and impoverished black people to be beneath the law.

In these evictions several comrades were attacked before being unlawful evicted. One of them was Nkosinathi Mngomezulu who was shot by the Commander of the Land Invasion Unit with live ammunition and spent more than a month in hospital. Although there were many witnesses to this shooting, and although statements were issued stating clearly who was responsible for this shooting, there was never any arrest. It is clear that the law does not apply to authorities of eThekweni municipality. At the same time we can be beaten, shot and have our homes destroyed with impunity.

Cato Crest is the same community that lost the lives of Nqobile Nzuza, Nkululeko Gwala and Theminkosi Qumbela who were shot dead by the police and the izinkabi zosopolitiki (politicians' hit men). In Cato Crest residents were evicted more than 12 times, while in Sisonke they were evicted more than 24 times. These evictions were not just unlawful but also criminal and immoral. In each eviction the residents resisted and rebuilt. The fact that the comrades are still occupying the land is due to their own inkani (forceful determination), and not the law.

These evictions show how cruel our state departments are towards the poor. When evictions are carried out peoples' homes are demolished in the process. The perpetrators are members of the SAPS, the City Police and private security companies. People, including the elderly and children, become the first victims when they lose every little thing at the hands of those who are supposed to be their protectors. People's homes are turned inside out, their possessions left broken and lying in the mud. This is very damaging to our children and their sense of safety in the world.

The government tried to justify these evictions, especially in the media, by reference to a blanket interdict granted by Judge Koen on 28 March 2013 which interdicted anyone from occupying one thousand five hundred and sixty eight properties owned by the state. The interdict was obtained by Ravi Pillay, the MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal. It was in obvious violation of the both the law and the Constitution. Court orders cannot be granted to enable the state to act against the law and the Constitution.

We could not continue with the situation where the Municipality, the police and the politicians remain above the law and we can be evicted, beaten, shot and murdered with impunity. In February 2014 Abahlali baseMjondolo joined the appellant Sisonke (Zulu and 389 others) in the Constitutional Court. The Court found that the MEC's blanket interdict was inconsistent with the Constitution and invalid. However the Constitutional Court only ruled on the legality of the blanket interdict and referred the matter back to the Durban High Court to rule on the legality of the evictions that had been justified in terms of this court order. This Thursday, 20 August, Abahlali will be going to the Durban High Court to receive the judgement that has been reserved since 21 May 2015 when the matter was heard in court.

If the government wins the case they will have won the legal right to treat us as if we are beneath the law. If we win the case the government might continue to act outside of the law but they will not be able to claim that their actions are lawful. It will be clear to all that we are dealing with a criminal state.

It is not just us who are being treated as if we are beneath the law by a government that is acting as if it is above the law. We also wish to repeat our serious concern about Operation Fiela. This is an armed attack on the poor by the state that is mainly targeting people born in other countries. We have noted that the state has also repeatedly said that the 'crimes' that will be targeted include what

they call 'land invasions' and we call 'land occupations' and 'urban planning from below'. We are asking ourselves if we will have to face the army next. In Johannesburg Operation Fiela resulted in an armed state attack on the Thembelihle settlement in Lenasia, a settlement with a long history of struggle. In KwaZulu-Natal the provincial government is trying to set up a privatised armed anti-land invasion unit. We have won many victories in court (using the law) and on the ground (using our own inkani) in the struggle to ensure that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and to realise our right to the city. But it is clear that the state is determined to regain its control over the allocation of urban land by means of organised state violence – the police, the army, private security companies and anti-land invasion units. We continue to work closely with migrant organisations, especially the Congolese Solidarity Campaign, to oppose xenophobia from below.

Abahlali baseMjondolo has used this weekend to stand in solidarity with mine workers in Marikana and their families as they mourn the loss of their comrades, friends, fathers and brothers. To join those who gathered in Marikana in the North West to remember the fallen heroes Abahlali visited four settlements on Saturday, 15 August to carry our living politic. We presented it at KwaGonowakho in New Hanover and also visited the uMhlalane branch, also in New Hanover, to talk about work in progress in securing housing for them. On Sunday, 16 August we have launched a new branch called Marikana in Tamboville, Pietermaritzburg. We have also relaunched the Tumbleweed branch in Howick.

These launches and political discussions were marked by a deep reflection on the meaning of Marikana today. We started our meetings with a moment of silence in honouring the mine workers who were killed by the state. We have put ourselves with the men on the mountain, the women and children in the shacks, the relatives in the rural villages and in the feet of those orphans and widows who lost their loved ones.

We have discussed the meaning of a government that kills the governed in the name of public order. In 2005 when we started our movement we asked ourselves who counts as the public, and who does not, and why. We also asked ourselves why oppression counts as order and resistance is taken as disruption and crime. Ten years later we continue to discuss these questions. We remain committed to being out of order when order is oppressive.

We decided that there is no better way to honour the dedication and commitment that the workers have shown on behalf of all of us than spending our time and our energy building the power of communities and resistance from below. We note that the state does not regret having committed such a crime against humanity. It has not apologised for the massacre or held anyone accountable. Across the country it continues to intensify its war against the poor.

We feel that Marikana is everywhere as we feel that we are living Marikana lives every day. The difference between our daily Marikana from the Marikana of the mine workers who were murdered by the state is just a question of the number of comrades killed in one day. The state has many ways to kill us every day. We are killed by the police, municipal security, the anti-land invasion unit and the izinkabi. We are killed by the decision to deny us a right to land, decent housing, electricity and water. We die with bullets, in fires, in storms and from diseases caused by our impoverishment. Our children continue to die from diarrhoea. Some of our young people are dying slowly from whoonga.

The weekend was full of reflection and emotion that will forever live with us as we remember the highest price paid by mine workers of this country for standing up for a just wage, a living wage.

The land question is a matter of justice but the state seems determined to try and make it appear as a matter of criminality. The land question should be resolved by negotiations, negotiations that start from the position that the social value of land must come before its commercial value and that everyone who lives in South Africa has a right to be treated with dignity and to have a say in all decisions that affect their lives. However the state seems determined to suppress the land question with the use of violence perpetrated against the poor. The state seems determined to place itself above the law and poor black people beneath the law. They want to show us to the world as criminals so that they can justify the oppression of our lives and the repression of our politic.

For almost ten years we have been saying that we don't count to this society. We will continue to insist that our lives, our black lives, matter. We are not prepared to accept a situation in which human beings are treated as animals or as rubbish. Whatever the outcome of this judgement we will continue to do all that we can to defend our humanity and to take the struggle for land, housing and dignity forward.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with our comrades in Turkey who are facing serious repression. For almost ten years our Turkish comrades have stood with us when we have faced repression. The struggle in Turkey can be followed at this website: <http://www.sendika1.org/category/english/>

TJ Ngongoma
Ndabo Mzimela
Thinabantu Khanyile
Zandile Nsibande

20 AUGUST 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Breaking news: Abahlali baseMjondolo has won an important victory in in the Durban High Court against the MEC for Human Settlements and the eThekweni Municipality

The MEC sought the confirmation of an interim order which, he said, permitted him to restrain the “invasion” of over 1000 properties within the Durban area, by directing the eThekweni Municipality and the Police to “take all the necessary steps to prevent any persons from invading or occupying the properties” to “remove any materials placed” on the properties and “demolish any structure” placed on the properties.

The order was granted in March 2013. Since then, it has been used to evict many hundreds, if not thousands, of poor people living in shacks on open land in Durban. Two of the affected communities: Sisonke Village (formerly known as Madlala Village and represented by the LRC in Durban) and Cato Crest (represented by SERI) together with Abahlali, acting in the public interest and on behalf of its members intervened in the case in order to have the interim interdict set aside.

SERI and the LRC successfully argued that this was an eviction order in disguise, sought and given interim effect without any of the occupiers of the properties being joined to the proceedings. Eviction, the lawyers argued, is governed in law by PIE and section 26 (3) of the Constitution. They argued that in law the process prescribed by those instruments must be followed before the eviction of unlawful occupiers is undertaken. The interim order granted to the MEC was not sought or granted under PIE, nor could it be. It should therefore, the lawyers argued, be discharged.

At the hearing, the MEC sought to amend the interim order. Our lawyers attacked the amendments. The presiding Judge agreed, set aside the interim order, and refused to amend it in the manner requested by the MEC. The Judge also forced the Municipality and the MEC to pay the costs of the court action.

This means that the MEC and the Municipality cannot claim that they are acting lawfully when they evict people in violation of the PIE Act and the Constitution. As with our defeat of the Slums Act in 2009 this victory is a clear setback for the long standing and ongoing attempts by the state to roll back the limited rights given to unlawful occupiers at the end of apartheid.

We wish to express our gratitude to Socio-Economic Rights Institute and the Legal Resource Centre for their hard work in and out of the court. We are always encouraged to have such high level legal representation for our movement and our struggle. Our murdered comrades – Comrade Thembinkosi Qumbela, Comrade Nkululeko Gwala, Comrade Nqobile Nzuza and Comrade Thuli Ndlovu have not given their lives in vain.

We are committed to expanding and intensifying our struggle for land, housing and dignity as the best way of honouring their efforts in the struggle for land, housing and dignity.

Today as we celebrate another victory we are also reminded of many of our members who fought and resisted evictions carried out at a gun point in this country. Makhonkwane, Nkosinathi Mngomezulu and others survived the bullets from eThekweni municipality's land invasion unit. Their blood has not fallen for nothing.

This victory goes a long way. For example in Pietermaritzburg, where we have a growing membership, the uMsunduzi municipality has earlier this year proposed a similar order to the MEC order, in order to evict thousands of shack dwellers. We hope that today's judgement has put a stop to all kinds of similar proposals. The rest of the province and our country has a direct benefit to this order.

Our struggle to humanise our world is carried out in our families, our communities, in the streets, in the courts and in the media. We do not only occupy land. We occupy sites of power too. We are very clear that it is only by building the power of the oppressed that oppression can be overcome.

We know that our city, eThekweni, has no regard for the rule of law. They may still continue with their eviction as they please. We will hold onto our inkani and resist all kinds of eviction in our occupations and settlements. We believe Amandla ewethu ngenkani and we will hold onto it until our humanity counts as well. It is a victory for all of us in the Republic and it is a victory for our future generation.

One thing we are worried about as we celebrate though is the risk of attack on our movement and individual leaders. Previously victories in court have been followed by violence against us from ANC members acting with state support, from the police and the land invasions unit. We have asked our comrades to be very careful as we celebrate. The izinkabi are out there. We also heard that Nqola Ngcobo, the ANC councillor who has been charged with murder of Thuli Ndlovu and rearrested for shooting other community members, recently has received a second bail in Pinetown Magistrate court. So we have all reasons to be scared as the so called councillors become hitmen.

The judgment is attached.

T.J. Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela

25 AUGUST 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two ANC Councillors to appear in the Durban High Court after being charged with the murder of Thuli Ndlovu

Mduduzi Christian Ngcobo, also known as Nqola, an ANC councillor in KwaNdengezi Ward 12 and his comrade PR councillor Luvelile Lutyeku are due to appear in Durban High Court tomorrow to answer to the charge that they are responsible for the murder of Thuli Ndlovu. The two councillors have been appearing in the Pinetown Magistrate's court for several times and had received a bail of R10 000 each. A few weeks after being given bail Nqola was rearrested and charged with attempted murder in KwaNdengezi after he was caught firing shots at some people. Just last week Nqola was given a bail again.

We have repeatedly said that some of our so called political leadership are gangsters. It is they and not people who are struggling for land and dignity who are the real dangers to our democracy. They are leaders during the course of the day and are hitmen at night.

We have stood against these gangsters and we will continue to stand against Nqola and his hitmen. If the government of the day says nothing about these izinkabi, who will it going to govern tomorrow? How will it govern tomorrow?

We call upon all progressive forces to stand together to expose such gangsters and to ensure that they have no place in our society. If our leaders can be killed with impunity today others will not be safe tomorrow.

Nqola has terrorized the KwaNdengezi community. We must ask ourselves as to who is Nqola working for? How long will he implicated in the murder of activists in KwaNdengezi? Thuli is not the only one whom Nqola has allegedly murdered.

TJ Ngongoma
Ndabo Mzimela
Zandile Nsibande

10 SEPTEMBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Land Occupations are Urban Planning from Below: A Response to Ravi Pillay, Mbulelo Baloyi & Nigel Gumede

After apartheid the new Constitution (1996), and then the Prevention of Illegal Eviction [PIE] Act (1998), gave some protection to people occupying land without the permission of the state or the capitalists. It was still possible for people to be evicted but only after an order of the court had been issued. In 2005 the Constitutional Court insisted that the Act “expressly requires the court to infuse elements of grace and compassion into the formal structures of the law”. When evictions were allowed they were not supposed to be carried out violently or to leave people homeless.

In 2005 the government announced that ‘slums’ would be ‘eradicated’ in South Africa by 2014. The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial government announced that ‘slums’ would be ‘eradicated’ in the province by 2010. The eThekweni Municipality spoke as if it was a scientific fact that ‘slums would be cleared’ by 2010. On this basis anyone struggling for land and housing was shown to the world as a troublemaker, a liar, a criminal or an agent of the ‘third force’.

It was clear that the main strategy to ‘clear the slums’ was mass evictions rather than providing people with decent houses. Since the Slums Act was passed in 2007 the provincial government in KwaZulu-Natal has been trying to reverse the limited legal rights given to occupiers after apartheid so that the government can evict people more easily. At the same time land occupations have been presented as if they are a political or criminal conspiracy, a matter for the police, other armed forces and intelligence, rather than a popular response to social injustice and, therefore, a matter of social justice. The eThekweni Municipality, like many other municipalities around the country, also set up an armed unit to destroy land occupations. This unit has consistently acted violently and in violation of the law. The government is attempting to rule us at

gun point and with violence rather than through participatory democracy and with negotiation.

In 2009 our movement succeeded in having the Slums Act declared unconstitutional. For this we were punished with severe repression. Illegal and violent evictions continued and our movement, and other occupiers, continued to be shown to the world as part of a criminal and political conspiracy. However people continued to occupy and to hold land despite serious repression. The Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest was evicted more than twenty times, two comrades were assassinated and a third was executed by the police. Others were assaulted, shot, tortured and arrested. However our members continue to hold that land. They have installed electricity and water and built crèches.

By moving from land occupations to occupying the City Hall, the streets in central Durban, the courts and space in the media our movement was able to show the world that the government was acting violently and illegally. We began to win wider support for our occupations. We have successfully held all the land occupied by our members and there have been many new land occupations, or expansions of existing occupations, organised outside of our movement.

However in March 2013 the MEC for Human Settlements in KwaZulu-Natal, Ravi Pillay, obtained a court interdict that authorised the municipality and police to take any necessary steps to “prevent any persons from invading and/or occupying and/or undertaking the construction of any structures and/or placing any material upon the immovable properties” listed, and to “remove any materials placed by any persons upon” that land. This was an attempt to roll back the limited protections offered to occupiers by the Constitution and the PIE Act. It was an attempt to return to how land occupations were treated under apartheid. It was an attempt to achieve by the backdoor what the government had failed to achieve with the Slums Act. The state used this interdict to claim that the ongoing armed attacks on the Marikana Land Occupation were lawful. On the 20th of August we succeeded in having this interdict declared unlawful and unconstitutional.

Since then Ravi Pillay, his spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi and the notorious Nigel Gumede, head of Human Settlements in the eThekweni Municipality, have been trying to win back some credibility in the media. They have been saying that:

While some people respect the law and wait for houses to be delivered our movement is a 'racket' engaged in 'queue jumping'.

Land occupations make it difficult for the government to plan its housing projects and therefore they slow down delivery and the 'eradication of slums'.

Action will be taken to protect land from occupation including setting up a privatised provincial land invasions unit which will be an armed force with its own intelligence capacity.

It is not true that government houses are only allocated to ANC members.

Our movement is only active in ANC controlled wards and is not hostile to other parties.

Today there are more people living in shacks in the eThekweni Municipality than at any other time in history. The year 2010 came and went, and the year 2014 came and went, and the number of houses being built each year by the Municipality declined and the number of people living in shacks grew. Today the Municipality says that the housing 'backlog' is 400 000. They have been using this number for some years now. At the same time they admit that they are not reaching their annual target for building houses. Nationally the government says that 2.2 million households are living in shacks. According to the government this number increases by 350 000 every year. But the government says that it only builds 140,000 houses every year.

It is therefore clear that:

The number of people living in shacks is growing and will continue to grow in coming years.

The government's house building programme is not reducing the number of people living in shacks.

Under the current circumstances most people living in shacks will die before receiving a government house.

In Durban the government has lost the ability to prevent new land occupations.

The housing crisis in Durban is not just a question of the number of people living in shacks and the number of houses being built by the government. It is also a question of how urban land is allocated, where houses are built, how houses are built, how development is planned, the size and quality of houses and how houses are allocated. In this situation our responses to Pillay, Baloyi and Gumede is as follows:

The Allegation of Queue Jumping

The allegation of queue jumping goes back to the days of the notorious former City Manager Mike Sutcliffe. Since our movement was founded in 2005 the government has spoken as if there is an orderly process that will result in everyone living in a shack receiving a home. The fact is that, if things continue as they are, most people living in shacks now, as well as most people who will build new shacks in the future, will die without receiving a house from the government. The main reason for this is that as impoverished people we don't count to the government. They prefer to waste money on things like uShaka, the Moses Mabhida Stadium, the Commonwealth Games, or Inkandla, rather than to build decent, well located homes with and for the people.

The government speaks as if there is a housing list and that we are trying to jump the queue on this list. In fact it is well known that there is no housing list. Houses are allocated through the Branch Executive Committees of the ANC which have replaced the Ward Committees. Sometimes allocation is done on the bonnet of a car at night. Whatever big decisions are made above the ward committees are made on the 21st floor of the ANC offices in Commercial City.

We have had several meetings with Ravi Pillay in which we have demanded that an open and transparent housing list is established and that the allocation process is made open and transparent. We have made these demands since 2005. They have consistently been denied because not having an open and transparent list, and an open and transparent way to allocate houses, serves the interests of corruption. Corruption is what holds the ANC together and gives it its power.

Any politician or government spokesperson who claims that we are 'jumping the queue' must be challenged to provide a copy of the housing list and an explanation of how houses are allocated.

Furthermore it is well known that our movement has won many victories against evictions and for upgrades as well forcing well located land to be made available for public housing. For instance it was our movement that first demanded that land owned by Moreland must be expropriated for public housing. We put thousands of people on the streets in support of that demand. Now that Cornubia is being built on land that the government got from Moreland you will not find any member of our movement being allocated a house in Cornubia. It is always ANC members that benefit from our struggles. Any politician

or government spokesperson who claims that we are 'jumping the queue' must also be challenged to show evidence of our members being allocated houses.

The Allegation that Land Occupations Slow Down Delivery

The land question in South Africa has its roots in historical dispossession. Justice requires that the land be restored to the people. The ANC was founded to deal with the land issue. The Freedom Charter (1955) states that: "All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose". It also states that: "All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security". It is now more than twenty years after apartheid and we remain without land and without housing. The government has no plan to ensure that we can access land and housing. The ANC has no confidence to the Freedom Charter. It has disregarded the mandate of the people, the same people that freed its leaders from prison, allowed others to return home from exile and elected it into power. We are told to embrace the 'politics of patience' but patience only means accepting that our oppression will continue for ever. It means that we must continue to live in undignified and sometimes life threatening conditions for ever.

People occupy land because the government has failed to restore land to the people and to secure the people's right to the cities. Land occupations are a popular response to government failure. The government always says that they have money for housing but that they don't have land. Land occupations are a way in which the people identify available land. A progressive government would recognise the social value of land occupations.

Land occupations take the programme of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid forward. They take the programme of the Freedom Charter forward. They take the struggle for justice and the Right to the City forward. Land occupations are land reform from below. They are urban planning from below.

In many cases the people that occupy land have previously been (illegally and violently) evicted by the government and occupy because they have nowhere else to go. This is what happened in Cato Crest.

Whenever land is occupied the state claims that it is land that has been identified for 'housing delivery'. Mostly they are lying. They should not be believed when they claim that land occupations are on land identified for 'housing delivery' unless they can show proof of this. But if it does happen that land is occupied

in an area where development is planned this should be a matter of negotiation. If development was undertaken in a democratic manner people would be happy to negotiate with the government and, if necessary, move to alternative and equally well located land to accommodate development. The problem is that development is a top down process that is totally corrupted and often carried out at gun point.

The Promise to Secure Land

The money that will be spent on setting up a Provincial Land Invasions Unit is money that should be spent on providing services and houses. When the government decides to treat the crisis of land and housing, which is a matter of justice, as if it is a problem of criminality they are criminalising poverty. This means that they are continuing to govern us according to the logic of colonialism. They want to use armed force to suppress an urgent question of justice when they should be using negotiation and participatory democracy to ensure the democratisation of the cities in terms of the allocation of land, the allocation of money and decision making. Even when they use private security officers they are heavily armed. We have been struggling, for many years now, for the social value of urban land to be placed before its commercial value. This is the way to decolonise the urban question. Pillay and Gumede are committing the government to a violent and repressive future. They are committed to continuing to govern in a colonial way. This has been well explained by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

The Claim that it is not True that Government Houses are Only Allocated to ANC members

There are two ways to get a government house in Durban. You must either be an ANC member recognised as loyal to the local Branch Executive Committee of the party or you must pay for the house. The corruption in housing allocation is obvious. In the morning people can be seen leaving RDP houses in their police, prison warder and Transnet uniforms. Nkululeko Gwala had documented evidence of corruption in housing allocation. He was assassinated for this. We have this information. Information is very dangerous in Durban. However we have evidence of corruption that, with certain guarantees, we can share with anyone that doubts that extent of corruption in housing allocation.

The BECs control the Ward Committees. The only people in the Ward Committees are ANC business people and, in some wards, the sort of NGOs where 'NGO' stands for Next Government Official. These NGOs are loyal to the ruling party. The BECs operate according to ANC policy and not government policy or the law. This is where the allocation of housing is corrupted.

The Allegation that our Movement Only Opposes the ANC

Since our movement was founded in 2005 we have been accused of being a front for the Third Force, the IFP, COPE and now the DA. When we were formed most of our members come out of the ANC but we took a decision to be independent of all political parties and to this day no one can hold membership of any political party, or have a job in an NGO, and be a leader in our movement. We are a membership based and democratic movement and all decisions are taken via democratic processes. We have always kept our autonomy from all political parties and NGOs. It is true that in 2014, after we faced severe repression, including assassinations, our members took a decision that we should make a tactical vote against the ANC in protest at repression. However we do not work with any political party and are well organised in wards controlled by all parties in Durban.

Conclusion

Over the last twenty years the government has failed to resolve the land question and the housing question. They have failed to secure the right to the cities. They have failed to democratise urban planning. This is why people are now undertaking urban planning from below. A government that was on the side of the people would understand this, it would recognise the social value of land occupations and work to democratise our cities. However the ANC wants to criminalise poverty and govern the cities with violence and repression. The ANC are managers of a neo-colonial state. They refuse to recognise our humanity. Our struggle for land, housing and dignity continues. We are well aware that more of us will lose our lives in this struggle but we have no choice but to continue.

Thapelo Mohapi
Ndabo Mzimela
Zandile Nsibande
S'bu Zikode

23 SEPTEMBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The First Annual Thuli Ndlovu Lecture

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will be launching an annual lecture in honour of Thuli Ndlovu. Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated in cold blood on 29 September 2014. The first lecture will be held close to the first anniversary of the assassination, on 24 September 2015. We will continue to hold the Annual Thuli Ndlovu Lecture every year in September.

Thuli was a mother of two girls, a daughter, a fearless activist and the Chair-person of our branch in KwaNdengezi near Marianhill. She resisted the repressive and undemocratic practices of Nqola, an ANC ward councillor. She led the struggle against the sale of land and corruption in the allocation of land in KwaNdengezi by Nqola, one of the gangster councillors in the ANC in Durban.

After a long struggle Nqola was arrested, along with another ANC councillor, Luvelile Lutyeku, and charged with the murder of Thuli and one other person. They are still in and out of the Durban High Court on these charges. We will continue to struggle to ensure that justice is served. Without struggle the lives of people who are poor and black count for nothing in this country.

We know that Thuli's spirit has never died and that she continues to struggle with us. Thuli is not the only comrade to have given her life for the struggle. Nqobile Nzuza was executed with a shot to the back of the head by a well-known police officer on the 30 September 2013. Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated on the 26th of June 2013 and Thembinkosi Qumbela was assassinated on 15 March 2013. There has been no justice for these murders.

We are not the only people in South Africa for whom death continues to be the price that has to be paid for insisting on our dignity. The whole world knows that thirty four striking miners were murdered by the state at Marikana on the 16th of August 2014. More than fifty people have been killed by the police during street protests since 2 000. More than 450 political assassinations have been documented in KwaZulu-Natal. NUMSA has also lost members to assassination in KwaZulu-Natal. Last week Jabulani Sokhela, from the New Germany settlement in Reservoir Hills, died while trying to escape a violent police attack on a road blockade at the Quarry Road settlement in Clare Estate. If you are

poor and black and you organise outside of the ANC you are taken as a person that can be killed with impunity. Your life does not count as the life of a human being. If you do not accept that a human being should be left to live like a pig in the mud you can be killed like a dog.

Murder is not the only form of repression against members of our movement. Some of our members have been assaulted and tortured by the police. Some of us have lost our land, our homes and our belongings at the hands of ruling party thugs acting with the support of the state and the police. Some of us have lost jobs and have been blacklisted from access to work and to state development. Many of us will only be able to access land, water, sanitation and electricity outside of the state (and the market) for as long as we remain in the struggle. There has also been the constant production of defamation and character assassination trying to show us to the world as criminals who are being used by others.

The Annual Thuli Ndlovu lecture will be held to honour all those who have fallen in the struggle and all those who have suffered repression and the vandalism of their humanity at the hands of the state, the ruling party and other regressive forces. We are going to remind the government of the day of its responsibility to protect its citizens even if they are critical of the state and the ruling party. We are going to remind all other forces that claim to be progressive of their human duty to stand with all those who face repression when they stand up for their dignity as human beings.

Today each time we act justly we act fearfully. We are constantly reminded that we risk death while the politicians and the greedy prosper. Today it is our time to honour our heroes by intensifying our struggle against all forms of repression, corruption and indignity that exist in our society. Land, cities, wealth and power must be shared fairly. There will be nothing for us without us.

The lecture forms part of our Tenth Year Celebration of our movement to be held on the 3 October 2015. The lecture will take place on the 24th of September 2015 at Prince Edward Hall (Hindu Surat Foundation Hall), from 10:00 to 11 a.m. The movement has invited S'bu Zikode to give the first lecture. The time to reflect on the journey travelled despite the politic of blood has come.

TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
MaMkhize Nxumalo
Ndabo Mzimela

30 SEPTEMBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Celebrating a Decade of Struggle

On the 19th of March 2005 residents of the Kennedy Road settlement in Clare Estate in Durban organised a road blockade. There were fourteen arrests. This event began a process of discussion with residents of nearby communities and on the 6th of October 2005 our movement was formed. During the last ten years we have survived serious repression, including assassinations, and won many victories. On the 3rd of October we will celebrate a decade of struggle at an event at Curries Fountain, Durban, from 10:00 a.m. to 16:00 a.m.

Abahlali baseMjondolo emerged out of disappointment and unkept promises. Residents of Kennedy Road were promised housing on a piece of land close to the settlement. On the 19th of March 2005 a bulldozer started working on the land. The residents assumed that the promised development was starting. However the workers on the site told them that they were there to build a brick factory. People gathered, the construction was stopped and the councillor was called. Instead of coming he called in the police. When he arrived he called the people gathered at the site ‘criminals’ and instructed the police to arrest them. A demand for negotiation was met with arrests, dogs, tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets and arrests. All charges against the fourteen people that were arrested were later dropped.

Neighbouring settlements joined the process of discussion and action that followed the road blockade and the arrests on the instruction of the councillor. The name ‘Abahlali baseMjondolo’ emerged out of these discussions as a name that could accommodate all shack dwellers. No NGOs or donors participated in the process that led to the formation of our movement.

Our movement was formed in response to a failed government. In 1994 we voted for the ANC. We had the hope that a black government would be biased towards the poor. People had respect for the ANC. Although it was through the struggles of the people that Mandela and others could return from prison, and Tambo and others could return from exile, it was the ANC that brought up democracy as a state system.

But ten years after this democracy was launched it was clear that a new movement, similar to that of the United Democratic Front, was required to give people the power to question the government. It was clear that a new movement was required to question whether in fact the kind of rule that we were experiencing was the democracy that we were anticipating or something that was, in important ways, similar to apartheid. We had to ask this question because we found that after ten years of democracy we were still people that did not count to the society. We were still living like pigs in the mud. We were still seen and treated as criminals when we wanted to be included in decision making about our own future.

We were wondering if the horse had changed and the saddle had changed but the jockey was still the same. The movement was formed to question this democracy. Most members were in the ANC but there was a perception that you couldn't question the ANC inside the ANC. We created our own homemade political space, from the ground up, outside of party politics.

From the beginning it was clear that the ANC, the NGOs, most academics and various other forces were all agreed that we are people that can't think. All our meetings were open to all. Anyone who wanted to could observe our discussions and how we came to decisions. However we were always accused by the ANC, and other regressive forces, of being a front for other interests. We have been called a front for the Third Force. In KwaZulu-Natal we have been called a front for COPE, the PAC, EFF, IFP and the DA. In Cape Town we have been called a front for the IFP.

From the beginning we drew a clear distinction between party politics and living politics, or state politics and people's politics. In 2006, after careful thinking together, we launched a 'No Land! No House! No Vote!' campaign. Before each election after 2006, local and national, we repeated the same process of taking a collective position on how to respond to the election. Until 2014 the decision was always to continue with the boycott.

A genuinely democratic government would welcome the self-organisation of the poor. However the ANC turned against its own people. It showed itself to be dishonest and without conscience. It is clear to us that the ANC will always try to crush what it cannot control. In this respect we do not see much difference between the ANC and the regressive left, few as they are and powerless as they

are among the oppressed. It is not surprising to us that their dishonesty takes such similar forms.

During the last ten years we have been subject to regular arrest, assault and harassment as well as torture, the destruction of our homes, exclusion from jobs, all kinds of lies and murder. The number of arrests quickly reached a hundred and we have not kept count since then. One person, who later accepted a leadership position in the ANC, and is now in the SACP, pled guilty to a charge of making a self-organised electricity connection and paid a small fine. Without exception every single other arrest has either resulted in the charges being dropped before the case has gone to trial or the case failing in court. We have constantly been arrested on fabricated charges as part of a long attempt to attack our spirits. We have constantly been criminalised by the state and other regressive forces despite the fact that although there have been hundreds of arrests, and despite the fact that we are under constant surveillance from intelligence, there has never been a single successful prosecution of one of our members on any charge.

Repression reached its most serious levels in September 2009 when we were attacked by the ANC in Kennedy Road and many of our members were driven from their homes (there was also an armed police attack on the Pemary Ridge settlement later on that year), when three comrades were murdered in Cato Crest in 2013 and in September 2014 when Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated in KwaNdengezi. It has been noticeable that serious repression has often followed major court victories and that all the assassinations have followed access to information that shows serious corruption in local ANC structures.

Our movement has always been membership based and democratic. We currently have twenty eight branches in good standing – twenty seven in KwaZulu-Natal and one in the Western Cape. The process to join our movement is slow and the minimum size for a branch is fifty members. There are clear rules that all branches must adhere to in order to remain in good standing. When deemed necessary by the members leaders, including senior leaders, can be, and have been, recalled.

In 2014, after a long and open democratic process, it was decided that we could not continue to boycott elections when the ANC was killing us with impunity. A decision was taken that, in the interests of our own safety and our survival as a movement, we needed to go beyond the withholding of our votes

and to punish the ANC. The majority of our members concluded that it was necessary to hit the ANC where it hurts. A decision was taken to make a tactical vote for the opposition party in KwaZulu-Natal. We made it clear that we did not identify with the policies of the opposition but that the majority of our members had decided that we had to raise the costs of repression for the ANC. This decision came out of serious opposition to the ANC among our members and not from support for the opposition party. We continued to draw a clear distinction between living politics and party politics and did not give up any of our autonomy to the opposition party, or include them in our organising and decision making.

When two ANC councillors were arrested after the assassination of Thuli Ndlovu some comrades concluded that we had made the right decision as this was the first time that the ANC was not able to repress us with impunity. Other comrades take the view that we should continue to boycott all elections or that we should make it clear that, while always keeping our autonomy, we would be willing to support a genuinely democratic and radical electoral alternative even if it has no popular support in KwaZulu-Natal (where most of our members live and where we have faced serious repression). When the next election comes we will, as we have always done, take a collective decision on how to respond. This decision will be entirely in the hands of our members.

Over the last ten years some of our members have left the movement to work for parties and NGOs but we are very much proud of the fact that our movement has retained its autonomy from all NGOs and parties for ten years. We have collectively refused all kinds of offers of money and many of our members have refused all kinds of individual offers of money and jobs. We remain committed to a bottom up system in which leaders must facilitate democratic decision making and in which neither any leader, or the movement as a whole can, at any level, act without a mandate from the members.

We have won many victories over the last ten years. When we began our movement the twelve settlements from which it formed were all facing eviction. They are still there today. There have been many new land occupations too. When we began our movement electricity was denied to shack dwellers in Durban. Today there is an agreement that it should be provided and although it is slow the roll out has started. When we began our movement most settlements had no working toilets or showers. Today ablution blocks are being rolled out.

When we began our movement government, NGOs and academics would all talk for us. Today we are able to speak for ourselves and we have not just occupied land – we have occupied space in the media and in all kinds of political and other discussions. When we began our movement there was no independent political instrument for shack dwellers and other poor people. Today we have a powerful movement that can contest the state, the ruling party, private landowners and other forces in communities, in the streets, in the courts and in the media. Since the Slums Act was first passed in 2007 the state has continually being trying to roll back the limited gains won for people occupying land outside of the law in the new Constitution and the PIE Act. We have continually defeated these attempts. We have fought a long and hard struggle against transit camps. The Municipality called them ‘housing opportunities’. We called them ‘human dumping grounds’ designed to break our political autonomy and our hold on occupied land. As a result of committed resistance the Municipality has now promised to stop building these organised attacks on our dignity as humanity beings. However many of our members, and many others, remain in the transit camps. Since 2008 we have consistently and seriously opposed xenophobia. There has never been any xenophobic attack in any area where we have a branch. We continue to work closely with migrant organisations integrating them into our activities. Many thousands of people have been able to remain on occupied land and in the city as a result of our movement and the broader struggle of the poor. Neither the state, the ruling party nor private land owners have been able to fully exclude the poor, especially when organised, from participating in decision making about the allocation of land. We have, although sometimes at a very high price, been able to allocate land to ourselves.

However whenever we think, speak and act for ourselves we are criminalised. When we do win important developmental concessions they are always channelled through party structures and are never made available to our members. There continues to be massive corruption in the state’s public housing programme and it continues to fail to build enough houses for the people, to build decent houses and to undertake development in a participatory and democratic manner. People continue to living in inhuman conditions in shack settlements. No one has been arrested for the attack on our movement in Kennedy Road in 2009 or the two assassinations and one police murder in Cato Crest in 2013.

The ANC, especially at the local level, is increasingly trying to divide people according to the countries or provinces in which they were born. The ANC is also trying to make the question of land and housing a security question instead of a matter of justice. It is trying to roll back the gains relating to protection from eviction that were won after apartheid. It wants to rule us with the gun rather than to engage in negotiation.

The two periods of intense repression, in 2009 and in 2013 and 2014, both put our movement under huge pressure. This pressure created various kinds of difficulties for us but we have healed and moved forward. Today we have more branches in good standing, and more members, than we have ever had at any point in our history.

Today we find ourselves the enemies of the ANC, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. In Gauteng the government has asked us to engage with it on the land and housing issue. That will never happen in KwaZulu-Natal. In this province the politic of blood continues to dominate. The ANC claims to be in support of the Freedom Charter which clearly commits it to sharing the land and to housing the people. However it is trying to move towards a criminalisation of poverty and a repressive urban agenda. We continue to carry the mandate of the struggle against apartheid and colonialism. We continue to struggle for land, for equality and the right to participate in all decision making relating to our lives and communities. The ANC has sold out. We are continuing the struggle.

After ten years of struggle we remain committed to the principle that there should be nothing for us, without us. We don't want people to talk for us, or to decide for us, in our absence. Our concern in this regard is not only with the government and the developmental NGOs that work with the government. We are also clear that we want people who wish to be in solidarity with us to think with us, not for us. Support for NGOs that claim a right to speak for the struggles of poor while having no mandate to do so from any credible organisation that has emerged from within the struggles of the poor is not the same thing as solidarity with the struggles of the poor.

After ten years of struggle we remain committed to a living politics. A living politics is a politics which everyone can understand, that is close to people's daily lives and begins from the situation in which they find themselves. It is also a politics where people represent themselves, leaders are expected to obey

members and a bottom up approach is encouraged in the struggle and as an aim of the struggle.

After ten years of struggle we remain committed to a politics that has the dignity of the poor as its main objective. We are all human beings before we are anything else. Oppression constantly vandalizes our humanity. Resistance restores our humanity. Dignity requires land, decent houses, gardens, crèches and schools. But it also requires that government plans development with and not for the people. Dignity cannot be delivered. We insist that each person is a person and must count as a person. We insist that we must be recognised as people that can think the same as all other people.

In this system we are only taken as important by the parties on the days when we are asked to vote. We are only taken as important by the NGOs when they want to use us to be able to bus in large numbers of people to make their events look good. We want to be taken as important every day.

We will always retain our political autonomy. The state needs to come under control of society. At the moment it is the other way around. We want a different kind of democracy. A radical democracy. Moving towards this goal requires us to build the power of those who have been made powerless in this system and to reduce the power of those who have been made too powerful in this system.

After ten years of struggle our organisation remains a learning organisation. We continue to educate ourselves in discussion.

There have been difficult times over the last ten years, especially after the repression of 2009 and 2013. However our movement has survived and our struggle continues. Inkani, which is a kind of forceful determination, is the foundation on which the strength of our struggle is built. The land that we are occupying now has been won as a result of inkani. Inkani accumulates through the experience of oppression and repression when this experience is faced in togetherness.

Our struggle for land, housing and dignity continues. Our struggle to ensure that land, wealth, cities and power are shared fairly continues.

We thank all those who have stood with us.

TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela

8 OCTOBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Lecture Has Been Rescheduled

The First Annual Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Lecture

The First Annual Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Lecture, in honour of our comrade assassinated in KwaNdengezi on the 29th of September last year, was scheduled to take place on the 24th of September 2015.

The lecture was disturbed by the taxi strike that was going on at that time. Only 178 comrades were able to reach the venue on foot. A decision was taken to hold a meeting and to reschedule the lecture for another time.

The First Annual Thuli Ndlovu Memorial Lecture, will now be held on Sunday the 11th of October. At 07h30 the national council of Abahlali, together with the provincial council (which includes all the branch chairpersons in the province) and the KwaNdengezi branch will visit the grave of Thuli Ndlovu and do a short prayer as a sign of respect. At 10h00 the lecture will start at the Hindu Surat Hall in Prince Edward Street in central Durban. We will also light candles to honour all our comrades who have fallen in the struggle for justice, equality and dignity.

Ndabo Mzimela
Thina Khanyile
Nomusa Nxumalo

20 OCTOBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Statement of Solidarity with Protesting Students

The whole country is watching the struggle of the students at universities around the country.

When we began our struggle ten years ago we felt that we were on our own. Today workers and students are also in struggle. Many are now organised outside of the ruling party that has so brutally repressed our struggle and many other struggles. We no longer feel that we are on our own. This is a time of new hope.

The Freedom Charter clearly states that:

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

More than twenty years after the end of apartheid we still do not have land and housing. A progressive government would welcome a struggle for land and housing but our struggle for land and housing has been criminalised. Over the last ten years we have been arrested, beaten, slandered, jailed, tortured, forced out of jobs, driven out of our homes and assassinated for standing up for land and housing, for what was promised in the Freedom Charter and by the ruling party.

The Freedom Charter also clearly states that:

- The doors of learning and culture shall be opened
- Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit.

Yet for millions of our people the doors of learning remain shut. Whole families get into debt to send one child to university. Students who are standing up for the promise first made in the Freedom Charter, and repeated many times since then, are now being shown as criminals and as shortminded in the media. They are facing violent attacks from the police and arrest.

Our struggle for land and dignity has meant that we have had to insist that the social value of land must come before its commercial value. Students are insisting that the social value of education must come before its commercial value. Just as land should not be bought and sold so also education is not something that should be bought and sold. Just as we occupy land students are occupying universities.

Many of our young people, and even some of our older people, would like to go to university. There are people in our movement who had to abandon their studies for the struggle. During the struggle there was a slogan 'Liberation now, education later'. But those who sacrificed their education for the struggle were never offered 'education later'. This generation also deserves the chance to study, even if they are now retired. This is a question of justice.

We all wish for our children to be able to go to university one day.

However it has pained us when young people who have been nurtured by our communities, by our work, sacrifices and struggle, go to universities, forget us, and become part of the system of oppression. The universities should not stand above society. They should be part of society. There should never be a fence around a university. Poor people and workers should be as welcome as anyone else in every university in South Africa. Black people must feel at home in all of our universities.

Many of the students that have come to be in solidarity with us from all over the world have told us that they were first radicalized in struggles around university fees. We hope that many of the students who are now struggling against university fees in South Africa will become part of the larger struggle for human dignity.

When our movement started ten years ago we had some connections to the Socialist Students' Movement in Durban. Recently we have twice been able to send delegates to meet with the Black Students' Movement in Grahamstown.

We have often worked closely with radical students and academics from South Africa, and from around the world. When they are able to humble themselves and their knowledge is brought into our movement, and mixed with our knowledge, a powerful force can be created. We have learnt from them and they have learnt from us.

However over the last ten years we have also faced serious racism from some academics and students. For many academics and students we, as poor black

people, are seen as criminals and as people who can't think like other people. We are seen as people that cannot think for ourselves, organise ourselves and lead our own struggles. We are seen as people who must always be under the control of someone else. It is thought that our only role is to provide 'the masses' that can be bussed into meetings and used for projects over which we have no control. Some white academics and students have thought that they should think for us instead of with us. When we have stood firm against this racism we have been criminalised and slandered. We see no difference between how these academics have behaved and how the state has behaved.

Although we are not in the universities we have also experienced the racism in the universities and we offer our full support to the challenge by the students to the serious racism in our universities.

In our ten years of struggle we have learnt that in order to be taken seriously we have to work outside of the official channels because those channels are set up by the system of oppression and work to sustain its power over our lives. When we occupy land and blockade roads we are told that we are 'out of order' and called 'violent' and 'criminal'. When the police attack us it is described as 'restoring order'. However our experience has clearly shown that when order is oppressive it is good to be out of order.

It is our hope that the struggles in the universities will connect with the struggles in the mines and the factories and the struggles in the communities. It is our hope that a powerful and democratic national movement of movements can be built, a movement of movements that respects the autonomy of all organisations and struggles, a movement of movements that can bring the state and capital under the control of the people, a movement of movements that can ensure that the land, wealth, cities and power are shared fairly and that the doors of learning are opened.

Inkani iyo ezovula indlela.

T.J. Ngongoma
Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande

3 NOVEMBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Struggle Continues: A Road Blockade, Two Comrades Shot

The struggle continues after our successful celebration of our ten year anniversary at the Curries Fountain stadium.

Road Blockade in Sisonke Village

Yesterday the Sisonke Village Abahlali branch (Lamontville) took to the street and blockaded the road after a long wait for a ward councillor to respond to their demand. The community of Sisonke have been in the area for five years without water, electricity and toilets. Instead they have faced constant illegal and violent evictions. The local leadership of AbM have tried to have meetings with the ward councillor and wrote letters to her but she never responded.

The accumulation of anger reminded Abahlali that their power still remains with them and they took to street to express their anger and demand that the councillor come and address them. Instead of the councillor coming to see them they were attacked by a well-known member of the ANC by the name of Madlala who threw stones to Abahlali. This ANC member was assisted by the police firing rubber bullets. This member of the ANC loudly said that we must 'go back to the Eastern Cape' if we want to protest and stop disturbing 'their area'.

Evictions in Savannah Park

As always happens unlawful evictions continue to be the agenda of the day in eThekweni. On Sunday morning at around 08:00 in the morning the Anti-Land invasion Unit with SAPS and the Metro Police carried on with their culture of attacking vulnerable and unarmed occupiers. This time they attacked occupiers in Savannah Park. They shot two of our members with live ammunition. One comrade was shot in the left side of the eye and the other was shot in the leg. They were denied the right to open a case against the police.

Police have become the protectors of politicians and municipality. They do not serve as peace keepers. They do not protect the people.

As usual victims of police brutality will never be allowed to exercise their democratic right to open a case against the government. Instead we were threatened to be arrested.

The councillor in the area is Nomvula Shembe. Rumours have been spreading that she will 'deal with' Abahlali after we opened three new branches in her ward.

Ever since AbM was formed in 2005 ANC councillors always want to 'deal with' Abahlali instead of providing land for the people and stopping to selling land for profit. They are against land redistribution from below. They are against any organisation of the people outside of the ruling party. The struggle continues.

Our Congratulations to the Students

As a movement we wish to express our solidarity to the students who have been struggling around the country. Their courage and determination has given us all hope. We were very pleased that one of our comrades, Ndabo Mzimela, was able to join the march on the Union Buildings.

S'bu Mbanjwa (Savannah Park)
Sbonelo (Sisonke Village)
Zandile Nsibande
Ndabo Mzimela
TJ Ngongoma

18 DECEMBER 2015

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Occupy, Resist, Develop

The year 2015, the tenth year of the existence of our movement, has almost come and gone. On the 3rd of October we gathered at the Curries Fountain Stadium to celebrate ten years of struggle. More than four thousand comrades participated in the celebration. We have survived years of serious repression – including arrests, assaults, torture, imprisonment, the destruction of our homes, slander and assassination. In these ten years we have won many victories in the struggle for land and dignity.

We are committed to putting the social value of land before its commercial value. We are committed to land reform from below. We have successfully occupied and held many new lands during the last ten years. This was the most difficult struggle to wage. It needed courage and inkani. It needed the ability to move from the land, into the streets and the courts. We are proud that we have been able to occupy land and build our own homes and develop our own communities for our own families.

Many of our comrades have paid a very high price for their commitment to this struggle. This is the year in which we commemorated all our comrades who have lost their lives in the struggle. The Annual Thuli Ndlovu Lecture was launched on the 24th September in honour of this courageous, fearless and radical woman who, in the midst of death threats, continued with the struggle for the betterment of the people of KwaNdengezi and Abahlali in general. Thuli was a fighter, a strong woman who did not back down even when she was receiving death threats from the ANC local councillor. Thuli refused to be silenced by those who abuse the rights of the people. She was shot seven times.

Two ANC ward councillors (Mduduzi Ngcobo known as “Nqola” and Velile Lutyeku) were charged with murder and will be appearing at the Durban High Court on the 26th January for her death. This is the first time that those who oppress us have been held accountable for their actions.

The Thuli Ndlovu Lecture will be held annually in honour of all our comrades who had fallen in the struggle for land, housing and human dignity. We call

on all our members, progressive forces and all women's rights organisations to come in numbers on the 26th of January to support Thuli's family and Abahlali in the Durban High Court where the accused councillors will appear before the judge.

We have continued to struggle against xenophobia working closely with migrant organisations, including the Congolese Solidarity Campaign. We have worked hard to tie the struggles of oppressed South Africans and migrants together. We are proud that we have stood strong against xenophobia and that we have been willing to take real risks to stand with our comrades from other countries. We have also continued to take a clear and strong position in support of our LGBTI comrades.

Joining our movement is a serious commitment. It is a slow process and one that must be collectively undertaken. This year we have launched a number of new branches in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. We are also preparing to launch three new branches (Good Hope, Driefontein and Protea South) in Gauteng.

We do not only struggle to occupy land. We also struggle to occupy space in the media, in universities and in important debates. Land is often won and lost in local struggles but we also struggle for a just country and a just world. This year we have been able to meet with comrades in America, Brazil, India, Ireland, Nigeria, Norway and Zimbabwe. We were very pleased to be able to send one comrade to the MST political school for militants in Brazil.

We are very pleased that membership based grassroots organisations are slowly starting to be able to occupy a space in the international solidarity networks that used to be completely dominated by NGOs. We have also been able to win space in discussions from which we have previously been excluded. We were surprised but pleased to be able to participate in the South African Human Rights Commission's National Hearing on Access to Land, Housing and Service Delivery. We are very pleased that we were part of this historic and strategic contribution to building democracy and our country for the better.

The struggle for land reform from below will continue in 2016. The struggle to build democratic people's power from below will continue in 2016. But after careful discussion we have decided that our main focus in 2016 will be to improve the conditions on the lands that we have occupied and held.

We have occupied. We have resisted. Now is the time to develop.

Nelson Mandela said that “If the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government”. We do not want our children to suffer the way we have suffered. It is better to die a martyr than to die in vain. It is better to die with dignity than to live in humiliation. As those who gathered in Kliptown for Congress of the People in 1955 said “THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY”.

Thapelo Mohapi
TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

29 JANUARY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ANC councillors facing murder charges to return to court

Two ANC councillors facing charges of murder, Mduduzi (Nqola) Christian Ngcobo and Luvelile Lutyeku, are due to appear in the Durban High Court on Monday, 1 February 2016. These alleged izinkabi (hitmen) are charged with assassinating Thuli Ndlovu, Abahlali baseMjondolo KwaNdengezi Chairperson and a senior leader member of our movement, on 29 September 2014. Both suspects are councillors of the ruling party and the party has protected them despite these serious allegations. We are told that they are still working for the party and receiving their normal salaries.

It is very dangerous for our society when “leaders” are supported even when they become violent to the extent of killing those who are governed in the name of democracy. We have said many times that the politic in this province is bloody and violent. We have said that some councillors in Durban are leaders during the day and become izinkabi in the evening. We are facing a gangster state.

In recent weeks we have witnessed a number of deaths in the taxi industry, especially in the KwaNdengezi area. The provincial government has failed to act decisively to protect lives. We have witnessed at least 40 people being killed in the hostels in Durban, particular in Umlazi and KwaMashu townships. In all of these violent acts the state is becoming familiar and slowly the society is getting used to it. The danger is that it is becoming acceptable that people can be killed with impunity. Last week we witnessed the killing of ANC and SACP members in Inchanga as a result of a dispute over a councillor position as we head to the local government election. If the ruling party displays such violent acts amongst its own members then the nation is clearly not safe. Those of us who organise outside of the ANC, and who stand against its oppression to the people, are certainly not safe. Everyone who accepts a leadership position in our movement understands that they are risking their lives.

When the two ANC councillors appeared in Durban High Court on the 25th of January 2016, they were escorted by ANC members in ANC t-shirts. This shows that they enjoy party support even at this time when they face such serious charges of murder. Our members, mainly women, were also present at the court. They, as well as journalists, were openly threatened by Nqola, his brother and ANC members. We have often received public death threats from ANC members while attending court hearings. It has become normal.

People who are poor and black are being killed with impunity in Durban and in KwaZulu-Natal. We call on all progressive forces to stand against the politic of blood and to defend democratic values and practices. If we are not able to stop the politic of blood and fear, the politic of death threats, assaults and assassinations, there will be no future for the poor. Without space to organise freely we can't build the power of the poor and if we can't build our power we can't build a just society.

We encourage those journalists who were openly threatened in court by Nqola and his thugs to report these threats. We call upon Nqola's party to isolate and disown all the Nqolas that have infiltrated the party as Blade Nzimande has called.

We are not confident that the local government elections will be fair and free in Durban and in KwaZulu-Natal. We are not confident that we will be safe.

Zandile Nsibande
TJ Ngongoma
MamKhize Nxumalo

12 FEBRUARY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Struggle for Human Dignity Continues in the Shadow of Death

Life is always difficult in the shacks. If you are poor and black you can be killed with impunity. But it is not only the politicians and their izinkabi, or the police or private security companies that take our lives. We live in life threatening conditions every day. We die in the fires, from disease, drugs and crime. Our children die from diarrhoea. Our neighbours die because the roads next to the settlements are not made safe for pedestrians. The economy excludes us. The development of the cities excludes us. We are denied access to land, electricity, water, housing, education and work. We are also denied the right to participate in the discussions about the future of our society and in decision making about our lives and communities.

We do not count to this society. We are left to live a life that is dangerous, exhausting, and stressful. Death is always close by. We can work for years and still have nothing to give our children. We are treated like animals, not people. We are treated like rubbish. It is only in our struggle that the value of our lives is affirmed. We struggle for dignity but we also find dignity in struggle. We bury our dead with dignity.

On the 11th of January 2016 we were very sad to lose Khaliphile Jali. Jali contributed immensely to the struggle of Abahlali in Kennedy Road before we were driven out of the settlement in 2009. He was one of the Kennedy 12. He was one of the men arrested on fabricated charges and kept in Westville prison for a year. The charges against him, and the others, were thrown out when the case came to court. There was no apology for this fraud, this abuse to these men and their families. Jali was 33 years old. He had 3 children. He had been sick for a while before he passed on. He was laid to rest on the 24th of January at his Dayimane home in the Eastern Cape. He will be remembered for his courage in the fight against injustices and oppression.

On the 14th of January 2016 Abahlali also lost Baba Khumalo, an old umhlali from the Siyanda branch. He had a heart attack and passed on. Baba Khumalo was also a poor man. The stress of impoverishment means that heart attacks, high blood pressure and panic attacks are common, even among the young. He died fighting for dignified housing for his family and community. Baba Khumalo was married to MaZulu and had four children as well as grandchildren. We were very encouraged by the manner in which Abahlali branch in Siyanda supported and cared for the Khumalo family. At times of great loss like this the meaning of ubuhlali is confirmed as a living practice. Our struggle is not just about service delivery and materialism. It is also about the proud spirit of belonging to a collective who are determined to humanise the world.

On the 24 January 2016 we lost another comrade. James Nyathi was an umhlali who lived in the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. He was electrocuted to death while visiting a friend in a settlement in Chatsworth. He died instantly. Nyathi was originally from Zimbabwe. He was undocumented. He came to South Africa long time ago, while he was young, and found himself a partner who is a South African. They had one child. Nyathi was a very active comrade in good standing in our movement. When the police discovered his body he was registered as an unknown individual because he didn't have papers. The state wanted to bury him as an unknown person. But he had family, neighbours and comrades. His Cato Crest comrades refused to accept that the state should bury him. They went to identify and claim the body. They located his family and neighbours back home. The Cato Crest branch raised R6 000.00 from within the land occupation and negotiated with a funeral parlour to ensure that Nyathi had a dignified funeral. For us ubuhlali is well demonstrated in this tragedy. When comrades value human life we do all we can to lay our fallen comrades to rest with dignity. In the week of Nyathi's passing the Abahlali Women's League were up and down with food, donations and support to his wife. The spirit of neighbourhood and the love and care we witnessed during this difficult time for Nyathi's family confirmed ubuhlali.

On the 6th of February we were very sad to lose another leader. Isac Mabika was an Abahlali branch coordinator. He was originally from Mozambique. He was 33 years and had two children with his South African partner. Mabika was a very active member and a leader in our Briardene branch. He was attacked by an unknown man at 6 in the morning and killed with an axe. Even in this

time of great loss we were encouraged by the spirit of ubuhlali and unity of the community working hand in hand with the family to repatriate his body back to Mozambique. The suspect is still at large and no arrest has been made. Abahlali held a Memorial Service to honour Mabika on Thursday, 12 February. He will be laid to rest in Mozambique on Sunday, 14 February.

To be poor means to live with death as a constant presence. It means that daily life is a struggle for survival. As we struggle for land and dignity we must also take care of the sick and bury the dead.

TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Thapelo Mohapi

12 MARCH 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Policy Conference

Abahlali baseMjondolo will hold a policy conference on Sunday the 13th of March at 9 am at the Surat Hindu Association Hall (Prince Edward Street) in Durban. Each of the 28 branches currently in good standing has been invited to nominate 9 delegates to attend the conference. The delegates will all be expected to report back to their branches for further discussion.

The purpose of the conference is for us to discuss and think together and to come to agreement on the way forward on a number of pressing matters. Various matters will be discussed including the following:

1. Our movement has grown hugely over the last ten years. We will discuss various issues relating to how best to respond to this growth.

2. From the outset we always made a clear distinction between people's politics and party politics. However many new members in our movement come into the movement from political parties. We will discuss the distinction between an autonomous movement and political parties and what this should mean in terms of how we understand and define our own politics. This includes the ideas and that language that we use to think about our politics.

3. The various community projects that we have out into place.

4. Working in collaboration with other progressive movements in South Africa and internationally.

5. This year we have decided to eradicate the 'DEPENDENCY SYNDROME' forced on to us by the government. We have decided to take the initiative to develop our own lives. 'OPERATION ASAKHISANE' is going to change the face of our movement. We have been successful in occupying land, now it is time to develop our lives.

6. We need to take a collective position on the coming local government elections. The meeting will begin a process of careful discussion around this question.

In the past ten years we have been mobilised by our own suffering and poverty. We have realised that we are not poor but we are made to be poor.

Poverty is political. We were made poor and we continue to be kept poor so that others can be rich. We are sick and tired of being used by the government. Our lives do not matter to this government but our votes do. We are given food parcels when they need our vote. They pretend to care when the elections are around the corner. Our lives have been put in danger. Enough is enough.

We have already decided to embark on a series of development in our areas. The people whom we have entrusted with our vote have let us down. It is time that we rise up and be the drivers of our own freedom. Unlike this government we want people to be part of their development.

PHAMBILI NGENKANI PHAMBILI!! ALUTA CONTINUA!!

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
Thembani Ngongoma

22 MARCH 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Special Announcement on the Local Government Elections

On the 13th of March we held a policy conference to discuss a number of important issues. Each of the 28 branches currently in good standing in KwaZulu-Natal was invited to nominate 9 delegates to the conference.

One of the issues that was discussed at the conference was the matter of the upcoming local government elections. There was a long process, prior to the conference, in which this matter was discussed in our branches and in all other movement structures.

In ten years of struggle to build the power of the poor from below we have faced serious repression, including assault, imprisonment, torture and murder. More than twenty years after apartheid millions of our people remain impoverished. We are still living like pigs in the mud. Our dignity has not been restored to us. Our land has not been restored to us. We are told that we are living in a democracy but we are ruled with violence and intimidation.

We all know that many South Africans, especially black South Africans, had to pay a heavy price of death in order for those who are left behind to enjoy freedom. We were living in crisis during apartheid and we continue to live in crisis today. Our situation is urgent. Therefore the movement feels that it has a duty to decisively and consciously respond to all aspects of the crisis that we are confronting.

We would like to invite the media to a press conference where we will announce our decision about the local government elections.

Details regarding the press briefing are as follows:

DATE: 24TH MARCH 2016

TIME: 10: 00

VENUE: ABAHLALIBASEMJONDOLO HEADQUARTERS

347- 351 Dr Prielley ka Seme aka West Street

Suite 517- 20 Tower B

Durban CBD

Office number

Thapelo Mohapi
T. J Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

22 APRIL 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Once Again We Will Gather to Mourn UnFreedom Day

On the 24th of April 2016 Abahlali baseMjondolo will gather to mourn UnFreedom Day. We will meet at the eThekweni FET college sports ground from 10:00 to 15:00.

The 27th of April is a historical day in the calendar of SA. It is a day which all South Africans should enjoy and celebrate. But in ten years of struggle we have never celebrated this day.

The people who betrayed us are the same ones that we brought into power with our struggle and our votes. They took an oath to respect us. But although their power came from us they vandalized our dignity. We have refused to celebrate this day because we are forced to live like pigs in the mud. We have refused to celebrate this day because when development does come it comes from above, with guns, and is often aimed at forcibly removing us from the cities. We have refused to celebrate this day because we were promised decent housing and yet are forced into transit camps. We have refused to celebrate this day because our demand to be included in all decision making that affects our communities and our lives has been treated as criminal. We have refused to celebrate this day because when we insist on our humanity our homes are destroyed, we are slandered, beaten, arrested, tortured and murdered.

We say that twenty two years of fake freedom without land, decent houses and decent jobs means nothing. We say that twenty two years of fake freedom without the right to participate in all discussions relating to our lives and future means nothing. We say that we see no reason to celebrate the loss of our hard earned democracy, which is now serving the few while millions are still impoverished.

The purpose of UnFreedom Day is to reject the lie that the politicians that repress us have freed us. In fact it was the struggles of the people that allowed them to return from prison and from exile. We mourn this day instead of celebrating it to highlight the impoverishment, landlessness and indignity to which the

people are subjected. We face shack fires, floods, crime and disease. For many of us there is no work. When there is work it is often exploitative. Our young people face addiction. Women and girls face abuse. Crimes are perpetrated against us by those brought to power by the struggles of the people. These crimes are committed against us with impunity.

We are not the only ones living under the politic of blood. The whole world saw it at Marikana. Today people continue to be murdered at the Glebelands Hostel.

But struggle is also everywhere. Workers have rebelled. Students have rebelled. Learners are organising. Because we have always known that struggle will open the road ahead we consider this to be a time of hope. We will celebrate struggle.

We have won many victories in the last ten years. We have occupied and held land. We have defeated plans for mass evictions. We are now committed to the struggle to develop the land that we have won in struggle. We will celebrate the many victories that we have won.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is a people's movement that has developed its own philosophy which is the living politic as opposed to the party politic. We are more concerned about our lives and building our own emancipatory politic than party politic. We are a people's movement and not a civil society organisation.

UnFreedom Day is not just an assembly of our members. We also invite all the shack dwellers who are not members of our movement, the transit camp dwellers and all those living in RDP houses (with or without title deeds) to join us. We invite all the workers who labour in the homes of the rich, in the factories and elsewhere and are paid peanuts and disrespected. We invite all the students who are demanding that the doors of learning are opened to all. We invite all the women who are standing up for the freedom, safety and equality of all women. We invite all the migrant organisations that are struggling against xenophobia. We invite all the church leaders, academics and activists who are willing to speak with and not for the people, and to struggle with and not for the people, to join us.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
T.J. Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

13 MAY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Seven Wards to Protest Against Mining in Mbizana on Monday

On Monday the 16th of May 2016, Abahlali baseZilalini Mbizana in the Eastern Cape, who are part of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA, will hold a protest march which will start at Bulala Sports Ground at 08:00 am and proceed to the Rumdel Construction premises at Pele Pele Bus Stop where the officials from Rumdel Construction, representatives from the Department of Public Works and representatives from the Mbizana Municipality are expected to receive a memorandum of demands.

The protest march is a follow up to the march that was held earlier this year on the 23rd of February of which the residents have not received any response from the above mentioned authorities. Seven wards from the Mbizane Municipality will gather to participate on this protest march.

Among other issues pertained in the memorandum of demands is the mining of the crush stone and the construction of the R61 road from Umthavuna to Bizana without the consultation of the local residents. As a result the residents find themselves not benefiting out of this project. This is another project to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The other concern from the residents are the issues of nepotism, corruption and bribery from those who want to be employed in the construction of the road. In some cases it is alleged that women have to exchange employment for sex in order to get some work on this project. There is also another concern that the committee that was organised by Inkosi uJongamampondo and that initiated the construction of the R61 road is not a legitimate committee. The above form part of the demands that are in the memorandum of Abahlali baseZilalini. Abahlali baseMjondolo as a movement is fully in support of what Abahlali baseZilalini are fighting for. The land and wealth of this country must be returned to the people. There must be nothing for any community without that community. There must be no corruption and nepotism.

Due to the experiences that Abahlali baseMjondolo has had over ten years of struggle we know that it is common practice by government and the private sector not to allow full participation of communities in the making of decisions about projects and or developments that affects their lives directly.

It is the same thing that is happening in the Northern Kwazulu-Natal where the mining does not benefit the local people either directly or indirectly. It is the duty of every person to voice out their concern in a peaceful way. It is the duty of every authority to listen to the people and to obey the people. If the authorities do not listen to or if the authorities prefer to lie to the people and to shut the doors of negotiations in the face of the people that is when the situation becomes ugly.

We call on every progressive movement to support this protest especially those who fight against the corruption that ensures that the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. More than ever we need to fight against the capital and the predatory forces in the state that continue to oppress the impoverished and marginalised.

We struggle for a world in which land, wealth cities and power are shared. We struggle for a work in which the dignity of all people is respected.

Thokozani Mthwane
Phumlani Diya
Thapelo Mohapi
Thembani Ngongoma

19 MAY 2016

Urgent press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Death threats in Bizana after an Abahlali protest march against Rumdel mining and road construction

On Monday Abahlali baseZilalini, who are part of Abahlali baseMjondolo, organised a protest in Bizana. It has invited all sort of trouble.

The peaceful march was a success with more than 800 people in the protest. Rumdel representative Mr Johan Human received the Memorandum of demands despite all threats that were made by Mbizana municipality claiming that the march was illegal. The police were friendly to us and work closely with us knowing that we had followed all the legal procedures in term of the Regulation of Gathering Act. We had the support of workers and some local taxi owners' associations.

However after the march the organisers of the march started receiving death threats from some well know taxi bosses in the area. Yesterday at about 14:00 the organisers of the march were attacked in the broad day light by few taxi bosses in front of the police while at a meeting. Later in the afternoon, at around 16:00, four women wearing Abahlali t-shirts were assaulted and their t-shirts were torn. One woman was from Lukholo, one from Madadane area and two from Redoubt. Another woman was attacked by a well known traffic officer by the name of Chester at Mancakweni. These attacks were all separate incidents.

Some Bizana Taxi Owners Association bosses are beneficiaries in the mining company, so the march was limiting their possibilities for profit and benefit. Mr Faku who is a Forman at Rumdel had made some threats that he would send taxi bosses to assault organisers of the protest. Last night our leadership in Bizana were hunted by taxi bosses, their drivers and their assistants. Some of the leadership had to sleep in different safe homes fearing their lives. Some had to be hospitalized as a result of these attacks. We will be opening criminal charges this afternoon with the police. We take death threats very seriously given the recent killing of Bazuka Hadebe who was killed in eXolobeni as a result of the

struggle against mining saga. The politic of blood has arrived in the Eastern Cape.

Right now anyone wearing an Abahlali t-shirt in Bizana is being attacked. Those who are attack our members claim that we are EFF members, or Delangokubona of whom we have no knowledge, or SACP because the SACP in the province happened to have dispute with the ANC. Our movement, the EFF and the SACP all have red as our colour however we are separate organisations. We want to make it clear that we are members of Abahlali baseMjondolo and not of any political party or Delangokubona.

We call on the Eastern Cape government, Rumdel Construction Company and all progressive organisations and democrats to defend democracy in Bizana and the Eastern Cape. We ask them to reject corruption, nepotism, sexism, and mining mafia and promote peace and a fair distribution of wealth in the area.

Democracy is under sustained attack in our country. Too many people have been too silent for too long. We all need to stand up against the gangster state.

Thokozane Mthwane
S'bu Zikode
TJ Ngongoma

19 MAY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Judgment to be Handed Down in the Trial of the ANC Councillors Accused of the Assassination of Thuli Ndlovu

Thuli Ndlovu, our chairperson in KwaNdengezi and a brave and respected comrade, was assassinated in her home on the 29th of September 2014. She was very active in the fight against corruption and the abuse of the rights of impoverished people. She was in the forefront in the protests against the selling of RDP houses. Thuli was also a mother of two children who must now remain without a mother for the rest of their lives.

Our movement faced serious repression since it was formed in 2005 including arrest, assault, torture, murder and the destruction of our homes. We are not the only people who have had to face the politic of blood in KwaZulu-Natal. NUMSA comrades have also been assassinated. Murder has been carried out with impunity at the Glebelands Hostel and elsewhere. There is now regular violence, including assassination, within the ANC.

For years we were only able to face some accountability from the state when we sued the police. But assassinations were carried out with impunity. However, as a result of sustained struggle, the state was forced to act in the case of the assassination of Thuli Ndlovu. Two ANC councillors, Mduduzi Ngcobo and Velile Lutyeku, as well as the alleged gunmen, Mr Ndlovu, were arrested and they have stood trial.

Tomorrow, Friday 20 May 2016, the Durban High Court will hand down judgment in this case. The month of May 2016 has become a historical month where the movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo has for the first time had an opportunity to witness justice in practice.

We have had good results from the courts when we have sued the police. We have also had good results from the courts when we have opposed evictions and attempts to ban our protests. We have also had good results from the court when our comrades have been arrested on trumped up charges.

However the justice system has failed us when comrades have been arrested on trumped up charges, detained, assaulted and forced to go to trial even though there is no evidence against them. The justice system has also failed us when there have been no arrests when repression, including torture and murder, has been carried out against us.

But our members have now regained some confidence in the justice system of this country, in the sense that the accused persons of high political profile have at least appeared before the judge to answer to such serious charges. Whether the accused persons are convicted or not this will still be an important step forward for our movement and for the majority of South Africans who are impoverished people. This is because we are usually taken as people that can be killed with impunity. When there are assassinations independent witnesses to such cases are usually very much reluctant to come forward with evidence due to acts of intimidation and death threats from the culprits.

After having received all the evidence and argument from the prosecution and the defence this matter is now in the hands of the judge to hand down judgment. We have heard all what happened to Thuli in the High Court. We heard how the conspiracy to assassinate her was set up, discussed and carried out. We have also heard how the payment to the gunman was made. We heard about the role of cellular phones in planning this assassination. We have also heard about the report back after the mission was completed from the gunman. We have heard closing argument both from the state and defence. All that is left, is to hear is the judgment from Judge Ploos van Amstel tomorrow morning at the Durban High Court.

No matter what the outcome of this case will be, whether the accused are found guilty or not, it is and shall remain a fact that the orphans left behind after this assassination will never experience the care, warmth and love of their mother. Thuli Ndlovu was also the breadwinner for her family.

TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Thapelo Mohapi

20 MAY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Justice for Thuli Ndlovu!

Breaking news: ANC Councillors Velile Lutyeku and Mduduzi Ngcobo, along with their hitman Mlungisi Ndlovu have been found guilty of murdering Thuli Ndlovu in the Durban High Court.

Today, the Durban High Court has found that all three accused are guilty on count one of murdering Thuli Ndlovu. They were also all found guilty of conspiring to murder Thuli Ndlovu and accused number one Mlungisi Ndlovu, the gunman was further sentenced to 12 years for attempted murder. This was because when Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated Sphesihle Madlala was shot at his stomach but survived. When Ploos van Amstel J handed down the judgement he said that the community is not safe if the three were to be allowed back in the community.

Abahlali wish to welcome the judgement. We are very honoured with such judgement as it will send a clear message to the hitmen and their bosses. Our country is full of violence, corruption and political intolerance. We have lost three comrades in Cato Crest without anyone being prosecuted. Today we are pleased that the so called untouchable has not been able to be above the law.

We wish to send our gratitude to the police who have worked tirelessly investigating and bringing the culprit to account for their actions. We send our gratitude to all the comrades who struggled tirelessly to ensure that justice would be done – including those who are members of other organisations in KwaNdengezi. We have shown that through organisation and struggle the state can be brought under the control of the people.

We thank Thuli Ndlovu's family, the KwaNdengezi Branch and all Abahlali members and our friends and supporters who have always stood with us in this long journey. Today, we say that Thuli Ndlovu's soul can now rest in peace. We will now find closure as we feel justice has been served.

The politicians who use blood to ruin have no place in our society.

TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande
Thapelo Mohapi

15 JUNE 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

Youth Day Drug Awareness & Talents Competition Event

We as the youth of the South African nation want to live in peace and dignity regardless of colour or race. We want to live in a society where there is free quality education and everyone can develop themselves to their full potential. We want to live in a society where there is work or an income for everyone. We want to live in a society where the social value of urban land is placed before its commercial value and cities are governed and planned democratically.

We are organizing ourselves under the banner of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement of South Africa Youth League. We are committed to a radical social transformation. We stand for a bottom up democracy that restores power to the people. It is not just the political system that needs to be democratized. The allocation of land, the planning of the cities and the economy as a whole also need to be democratized.

Millions of young people have no jobs, no income and are not able to study. Many of us are suffering from depression and anxiety. We fear for our future. We fear to disappoint our parents. We fear that we will not be able to provide for our own children. Many young people are turning to drugs to try and help them to cope with impoverishment and desperation.

As a movement we try to offer as much support as we can to all comrades who suffer with addiction.

As the youth we have been able to identify our enemies. Racism is our enemy. Sexism is our enemy. Capitalism is our enemy. Corruption is our enemy. Repression is our enemy. Hatred of the poor is our enemy. The culture of violence is our enemy. Amongst these enemies of our humanity one that is silently killing us as the future generation of this nation is drug abuse.

We all know that drugs are easily accessible by us as young people. There is a general perception that drugs are manufactured in the suburbs by well-to-do people but mostly distributed in the townships and in the shack settlements. We collectively condemn this kind of practice and therefore are seeking a way

in which this scourge can be prevented since we all know that drug dependency is very difficult to break away from.

There is also a general perception that some of the police personnel and politicians are involved in drug trafficking. This needs to be seriously investigated. The state health care system needs to recognize the crisis and provide a massive programme of support for all young people struggling with addiction. At the same time real opportunities need to be created for young people.

Therefore as Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA Youth League we have decided to hold a Drug Awareness Day where we can be able to receive more in depth information about drugs and addiction and offer our support to all young people struggling with addiction.

Drug abuse is not a ghost enemy. It is concretely manifested in the daily lives of young people in the shack settlements. The people who are profiting from this crisis roam our streets every day. We are living everyday with the results of the addiction crisis and with criminal activities caused by the impoverishment that has been imposed on us by our society.

We are prepared to organize and mobilize against the scourge of drug abuse. For us our youth is part of the political, economic, cultural and social environment of our people. We are not separate from the people. We are proposing an action and strong forces with potential and ability to transform our current crisis reality to build a better life that is free from violence, crime and drugs abuse and holding on to a new human values that reflects our collective commitment, with our comrades around the world, to construct a new paradigm in human society.

In the spirit of those who came before us and fought a good fight in the 1976 Soweto uprising Abahlali Youth League will hold a Drug Awareness Day at the Surat Hindu Hall (Prince Edward Street) on Thursday 16 June from 9 – 3.

We would like to invite all those young people who are concerned about what addiction is doing to the youth to come and gather with us as we say no to drugs in our communities and yes to a fair distribution of land, wealth and power.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Develop. Resist.

Thapelo Mohapi
Nandipha Chala
Abahlali baseMjondolo office

14 JULY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Evictions at gun point continue at the Kennedy Road settlement

We have faced many evictions in the city of Durban since our movement was formed in 2005. Almost all these evictions have been violent, unlawful and criminal.

We have stopped almost all these evictions through organised resistance, mass protest and action in the courts. When the state has attempted to change the law to make it easier for them to evict us we have defeated them in court. In 2009 we won against the “Slums Act” at the Constitutional Court. Last year we also won against the “blanket order” sought by the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Human Settlements. The “blanket order” was intended to authorise mass evictions and to prevent the occupation of at least 1 568 properties in KwaZulu-Natal.

However evictions continue, especially against people who are not organised. On Friday, 8 July 2016 at about 10:00 a.m. the eThekweni Municipal Anti-Land Invasion Unit stormed a section of the Kennedy Road settlement. As always they were armed and they demolished homes without any notice or eviction order. It was a violent, unlawful and criminal act. Some families were still inside their shacks when they were demolished. The Anti-Land Invasion Unit assaulted people and vandalized their belongings including their furnitures, etc. At least 30 shacks were destroyed.

Some of these shacks had been built by the municipality to accommodate victims of a shack fire. In 2014 there was a shack fire that destroyed more than 200 shacks. The municipality refused to allow people to rebuild their shacks. The municipality took several months to build a ‘transit camp’ (government shacks) as an alternative to self-built shacks. After the ‘transit camp’ was completed there was serious corruption in the allocation. Some of the government shacks were distributed to wrong people, while others were sold to people who never had their shacks burnt. As a result of the corruption in the allocation some of the government shacks were used as spaza shops while others were rented out. More

than 20 people whose shacks burnt down did not get the government shacks that were supposed to be allocated to them. These families were left to live in a community hall for more than a year.

The eThekweni municipality eventually responded to complaints and protests by building another 'transit camp' along the side of the M19. However this 'transit camp' did not have enough government shacks to fit everyone who was still homeless after the 2014 fire. Early this year, after further complaints, some families were given building material by the municipality to build for themselves. It is very disturbing that the very same municipality that gave permission for people to build on this land and provided the building material is now illegally and violently tearing these shacks down.

It will be remembered that the Public Protector came to visit the settlement late last year and was told about corruption in 'transit camp' construction. The Public Protector discovered that each government shack in the 'transit camp' was built at the cost of R35 0000 amounting to a total of R35 million. She was probing these allegations. The building of 'transit camps' has become a big business for people in the ANC and the rampant corruption in the building and allocation of these government shacks is used to enrich people in the ruling party and to strengthen the power of the party against the people.

After the violent and unlawful demolition of shacks last Friday residents protested. They blockaded the M19 and burnt a municipal motor vehicle. On the following day, Saturday, a municipal truck and a municipal bus were burnt on the M19. There were passengers in the bus when it was attacked and some people were injured.

This protest was not organised by our movement. We do not have members in that 'transit camp'. The residents affected by the demolitions organised the protest independently of any organisation. Our leaders, their families and other well known members of our movement were driven out of the Kennedy Road settlement by the ANC, at gunpoint, in 2009. We do still have strong supporters in the settlement but none of them were affected by the recent eviction or participated in the protests that followed the eviction.

We have always warned that the anger of the impoverished and oppressed can go in many directions. We have always insisted that the state must relate to us in a peaceful and democratic manner. We have always opposed state violence and criminality. We have always carried out our struggle in a well organised and non-violent manner.

We support many forms of struggle – including, where necessary, land occupations and road blockades – but we have always insisted that struggle must be conducted in an organised and non-violent way. When we organise a road blockade we will always make sure that no one is threatened or harmed. We will always allow an ambulance or other emergency vehicle through the blockade.

We are in solidarity with the residents of Kennedy Road who continue to face shack fires, who have not been allowed to rebuild their homes after the 2014 fire, who have been forced into government shacks or have been denied access to government shacks due to corruption, who have faced illegal and violent evictions at the hands of a criminal state and who have been lied to for so many years by Nigel Gumede and the eThekweni Municipality. We are also in solidarity with the people who were in the bus when it was attacked on Saturday.

We condemn the violent acts of the state and we condemn the violent act of the protestor or protestors who threw a petrol bomb at the bus.

If the municipality continues to govern impoverished people in a violent, unlawful, corrupt and criminal way there will be a risk of more incidents of this kind. The way forward is for the municipality to learn to negotiate with impoverished people in a respectful and democratic manner so that conflicts can be resolved in a just and peaceful way.

We are trying to set up a meeting with the eThekweni municipality that will be aimed at working out a way forward. We will continue to urge the eThekweni municipality to deal with communities in a non-violent, respectful and democratic manner. We will remind them that as Abahlali we are committed to non-violent and democratic forms of struggle. We will urge the eThekweni Municipality to respect the laws of this country and to engage meaningfully and respectfully with communities. We will, once again, remind the eThekweni Municipality that the anger of the impoverished and oppressed can go in many directions. We will remind them that unlawful, corrupt and violent forms of governance cannot move the city towards a just peace.

S'bu Zikode
Zandile Nsibande
TJ Ngongoma
Thapelo Mohapi

27 JULY 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Our lives count for nothing as we are left to die in the shacks

Rain is usually considered as a blessing. It is often considered as a gift from the Almighty and amaDlozi. During the drought we were all waiting for the rain to come. But the storms in Durban hit impoverished people, and especially shack dwellers, very hard. Peoples' possessions and homes were damaged and destroyed. Lives were lost.

Our lives do not count as human lives to this society. It is sad and shameful that we are living the life that we are living.

In eNsimbini, which is one of our settlements, we lost two comrades as a result of the storm. The two comrades were in their shacks when they were forcefully knocked down by a landslide of builders' rubble and buried alive in mud. The incident took place on Monday at around 15h00 pm. It was difficult to recover their bodies because they were covered by the heavy concrete rubble and mud. The remains of Mr Nkosinathi Raphael Myeki were recovered on Tuesday morning at around 8:00. The remains of Ms Ntombifuthi Prudence Sithole were recovered at 15:30 in the afternoon on Tuesday. Both bodies were discovered by members of the community who worked tirelessly digging in search for the bodies together with the eThekweni Fire Brigade who arrived on the scene at around at 2:00. Mr Myeki worked as a security officer and was preparing to go to work when the storm took his life. He leaves behind a four year old daughter. She depended on her father. Miss Sithole leaves behind two children who will no longer have a mother.

This is not the only shack settlement that was affected by the storm. Silver City in Umlazi, Kennedy Road, eKuphumeleleni (Shallcross), Foreman Road and Briardene were all hit hard. In Briardene more than twenty shacks were destroyed by the storm. In settlements with community halls people are residing in the halls at the moment. In the settlements without community halls people have to rely on solidarity from neighbours and comrades.

We hope that the eThekweni Disaster Management will treat these incidents as disasters and provide the necessary support that is required. We also call on

the eThekweni Municipality and the provincial government to provide assistance to all who have been affected by the storm. We also call on the churches to provide counselling to the affected families, especially those who have lost their loved ones. Abahlali will continue to provide the necessary support to these two families in these difficult times as well as to others who have lost their homes. These are the difficult times for the impoverished in South Africa and we need to unite more than ever before in order to reject and overcome impoverishment. We need one another in this time of need. Our strength is in our togetherness.

We also advise politicians not to use the death and destruction caused by this storm as a platform to canvass for elections. These are trying times for the people who are living in shacks. We are poor, not stupid.

We as the impoverished are always affected whenever there is fire or storms but it is unfortunate that some of the media do not see this as important coverage. They are mostly concerned about the effect that the storm has caused in the economy rather than the lives that have been lost. It is for this reason that we as the movement say that our lives do not matter to this society. We did not choose to live the life that we are living.

The municipality continues to fail to provide the infrastructure (like storm water drainage) necessary to make our settlements safe. They continue to fail to provide decent housing for the people. Houses that are meant for the impoverished are sold by some councillors on a daily basis. Greedy politicians who only think for themselves and their families are worsening the situation.

The struggle for housing will continue. The struggle for dignity – to insist that we are counted as human beings – will continue.

We would like to make a call for humanitarian support to our friends, comrades and partners at this trying time. We will appreciate any support that will assist families with rebuilding their houses as well as clothing, blankets and food as the poor and marginalised try to salvage what has been left in the aftermath of this disaster.

Our deepest condolences go to the families of Nkosinathi Myeki and Ntombifuthi Sithole and to all others who have lost their loved ones at this time.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Thembani Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

5 AUGUST 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Women's Power Meeting

As part of the commemoration of the 60 year anniversary since the heroines marched to the Union Building against the Pass Laws and for gender and racial equality on the 9th August 1956 Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will hold a Women's Power Meeting at the Surat Hindu and Association Hall in Prince Edward Street in Durban on the 7th of August.

We will be honouring the Heroines who marched in 1956. We will also be honouring Thuli Ndlovu, Nqobile Nzuza, Thembi Zungu, Bongi and Fikile Nkosi who lost their lives still fighting for dignity and equality for women living in the shacks.

The theme on the day is 'Women can bring transformation' As the country celebrates the 60 year anniversary of the famous demonstration of women's power in action, 20 years of local government and 22 years of democracy we are reminded of role played by the heroines of the 1956 march. Abahlali acknowledges and respects the rights of women and encourages women's full and equal participation in all aspects of politics. Women played a huge role in the realisation of this country's freedom from apartheid and women play a huge role in the struggles of the oppressed today. Women's power is at the centre of the politics of the strong poor.

The Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League wants to create awareness about issues that affect women's lives on a daily basis. We want to educate women to be self-sustained. We want to encourage young girls to be able to be self-sustained. Women in shacks face many challenges such as patriarchy, impoverishment, ageism, parenting challenges, addiction, gender based violence and abuse and unlawful evictions. The Women's League stands for the full equality of women in the movement, in our communities and in society.

In order to enhance the role of women in our communities, Abahlali plans to engage with the municipalities by being involved in all development that takes place in our communities regardless of political affiliation. We want community projects to be community driven and women must play a big role in these

projects. As women we want to take part in economic development and urban planning in order to ensure that urban planning and economic planning are democratised. We need cities for all, land for all and an economy for all. Impoverished women who live in shacks and rural areas must be part of all the important discussion about our cities, our rural areas and our economy. Conferences must be made accessible to the poor and there must not be a fee in order to be part of the conferences. These conferences are not accessible to poor women.

The movement has developed an 'Operation Siyakhisana' where women will take a centre stage. In order for women to conquer all the challenges that we face we need to educate ourselves on how to face these challenges. The women in our movement have started an investment scheme where they invest R1 a day. This is to encourage women to be self sustained and not rely on their male counterparts.

Women have been oppressed for too long. It is time that we rise and start doing things for ourselves.

WATHINT' ABAFAZI WATHINT' IMBOKODE UZOKUFA FINSH!!

Contact persons:

Zandile Nsibande
Sindi Mkhize
Joyce Majola

12 OCTOBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

S'bu Zikode to Speak at Schools in Estcourt on Friday

S'bu Zikode, the current president of Abahlali baseMjondolo has been invited to speak to the learners at the two schools that he attended: Inkosi Mjwayeli Primary School and Bonokuhle High School where he was matriculated. Both Bonokuhle and Inkosi Mjwayeli are situated in Estcourt in eMangweni, eMoyeni.

Since the movement was formed more than ten years ago we have struggled to get children into schools at the beginning of each year and to ensure that children from impoverished families have access to schools, to all facilities and opportunities at schools and are not discriminated against at schools. In some cases our members have been elected on to School Governing Bodies.

Although we are committed to justice and not charity we understand that people in immediate need and crisis must be given immediate support. For more than ten years we have worked to support families who have lost school uniforms and books in fires. Tomorrow morning we will be providing this kind of urgent support to people in the KwaNxumalo area of Shallcross who recently lost everything, including school uniforms, in a shack fire. Where we can we have also worked to support the schools where our children study. We are currently working on a project to get computers into a school.

The movement also supports school leavers to access tertiary education with advice and support. Over the years we have developed good relationships with various organisations that can provide bursaries and scholarships. Sindy Mkhize has led this work.

Our movement stands for a high quality public education system that is accessible to all, including older people who did not have the opportunity to study. Municipal libraries have been very important resources for many of our members and we also support further development of the library system.

Many of our members have come to Durban and other cities from rural areas. Our members have often taken what they have learnt about organisation and struggle back to rural villages and towns. They have often taken the struggle home. As time passes this means that the links between our struggles in the cities and rural struggles are becoming stronger.

We are very pleased that S'bu Zikode, and our movement, have been given the honour of addressing learners at these two schools. Many of us were educated in deep rural areas where there were no resources and no hope for a better future. We feel the need to return back and contribute in our schools. Sindy Mkhize will accompany S'bu Zikode on the visit to these schools. They will discuss possibilities for offering support to these schools.

The talks at the two schools will be given this Friday, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Abahlali office
Thapelo Mohapi
Inkosi Mjwayeli Primary School, Coordinator Mrs MR Nkomo
S'bu Zikode

13 OCTOBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to launch a new branch in Ekurhuleni

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA is expanding to a new province: Gauteng. This Saturday Abahlali baseMjondolo will be launching a new branch in Good Hope, Ekurhuleni in the Gauteng Province. The launch will be held on 15th October 2016 at 10:00 in the Good Hope Community Hall.

Abahlali baseMjondolo has been successfully expanding a living politics into other provinces. The movement has recently launched two branches in the Western Cape. The movement is also set to launch branches in the Bizana municipality, Eastern Cape. New branches have also recently been launched in KwaZulu Natal: Gonowakhe, Umshwati Municipality and Bhambayi, Durban.

Last year we celebrated ten years of struggle at the Curries Fountain Stadium in Durban. The movement has grown immensely since its formation in 2005 in Kennedy Road. The movement has managed to fight against the injustices experienced by the impoverished and marginalized in South Africa. Through political education, the movement has equipped communities that are currently living in shack settlements to become strong in the struggle. This has attracted many communities in other provinces to mobilize themselves and reach out to the movement for assistance.

In most cases, people who are impoverished and marginalized – especially the shack dwellers – are often taken as people who cannot think for themselves. Abahlali has created a home for these people are welcomed and respected. In most cases, government imposes development plans without meaningful engagement with the people. Abahlali are advocating for communities to be given the platform and opportunity to voice their say with regards to the development of the land and other issues. We always say ‘nothing for us without us’.

The new Good Hope branch will be launching a local council which will seek to address all issues of development in the community. Abahlali will also be meeting with the community of Harry Gwala settlement to discuss building a solidarity network with other grassroots organisations that are fighting the same struggles.

We will continue to fight for the rights of the impoverished and marginalized, especially the shack dwellers. The growing interest in the movement encourages us to continue to fight for justice. We stand for a society and a world of equality. We stand for a society and a world in which land, wealth and political power are shared fairly.

Thapelo Mohapi
TJ Ngongoma
Zandile Nsibande

26 OCTOBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Upcoming Engagements with Solidarity Networks

Our movement is committed to internationalism. We have always understood that while some struggles, like the struggles against gangster councillors, are local other struggles, like the struggle against capitalism, are global. International solidarity has been extremely helpful to us when we have faced repression and we have always offered our solidarity to our comrades elsewhere in the world when they have requested our support. We have learnt a lot from comrades in other struggles in other parts of the world and we have always been happy to host comrades from elsewhere in the world who want to learn from our.

For a long time poor people's struggles in South Africa were always represented internationally by NGOs and academics. By insisting on our autonomy and our right to represent ourselves we have built our own international networks. All our comrades travel abroad with a clear mandate from the movement and provide a full report on their experiences when they return home.

We will be embarking on a series of exchange visits throughout the world in the month of November. These exchange visits are imperative to the movement as they extend the solidarity network with other radical movements in the broader international community. In these visits, the movement gets to learn from other movements that are engaging similar struggles. Relationships are formed which become the basis for solidarity actions in the future.

The Deputy President will be attending a session at meeting the International Network for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) to be held in Argentina. This meeting will bring social movements together to discuss the issue of land and building frameworks for a living solidarity by developing common programmes of action and commitment. More than a hundred movements from more than 60 countries will be present. This meeting will be held from 13th November 2016 to 20th November 2016.

The President will be attending the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: engaging in achieving greater social justice. It is the Third World Meeting of Popular Movements. It will be held in Rome from 1st – 7th November 2016.

The Secretary General will be attending a meeting on Inequality and Injustice hosted by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). The focus of the meeting will be on reducing inequality within and between countries by building the power of the poor from below. The meeting will be held in Oslo, Norway. The SG will be discussing the lived experiences of local grassroots movements in the South African context. The SG will also be visiting trade unions with other progressive organisations linked to NPA. This meeting will be held on 23rd November 2016.

The National Deputy Secretary and the Provincial Secretary of the movement are currently attending the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement's (MST) III International Course on Political Training for Political Educators.

The Senior Administrator and the Chairwoman of the movement recently attended the United Nation's Habitat III conference held in Quito, Ecuador. This conference discussed urban planning, the urban agenda and sustainable development. Some of the resolutions taken at the conference that affect grassroots movements were related to informal settlement upgrades.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mzwakhe Mdlalose
Zandile Nsibande

4 NOVEMBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Solidarity with the MST in Brazil

The National School Florestan Fernandes in Guararema, São Paulo, is the political school for the MST – the Landless Workers’ Movement in Brazil. Our comrades have had the honour of studying and teaching there. We have just received the statement below from the MST. We currently have two comrades at the school.

We are in full solidarity with the MST and all the comrades at the school.

Thinabantu Khanyile (Abahlali baseMjondolo)
Augusto Juncal (MST)

Police invade ENFF without search warrant

In the morning of this Friday (04) about 10 police and civilian police invaded the National School Florestan Fernandes (ENFF) in Guararema, São Paulo.

According to the reports, the police officers arrived at around 9.25 am, closed the school gate and jumped the reception window giving shots into the air. The shards of collected bullets prove that none of them were rubber but lethal.

At this moment the police are in front of the ENFF, they have withdrawn and are awaiting a warrant of arrest.

The MST repudiates the São Paulo police action and demands that the government take the appropriate measures in this process. We are a movement that is fighting for the democratization of access to land in the country and not a criminal organization.

2 DECEMBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

World Aids Day

Yesterday was World Aids Day. The movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo held a youth workshop to discuss this disease. There are a lot of beliefs that people have about this disease some of which are myths. We spoke about these beliefs being careful to separate the myths from the reality. 56 young representatives from all our branches in and around Durban attended this workshop which was held at the Prince Edward Hall. The aim was for us to educate ourselves so that this knowledge can then be spread in the branches. The youth in this country are the ones that are infected the most in our society, so the movement took an initiative to empower young people with knowledge. We discussed how the disease is contracted (including what role impoverishment and gender inequality play in this) and how medication can infected keep people alive and healthy and stop the transmission of the virus from women to their babies. We also discussed how health questions are political questions. We talked about how this disease hits impoverished people the hardest and how it was as a result of struggle and building alliances across society that access to medication was won. We also discussed the crisis in the public health care system and how we need to make alliances to struggle for decent health care for all.

The HIV pandemic is a social justice issue. To resolve this issue we need decent health care for all, an end to impoverishment and real equality between women and men.

We are proud to have had HIV positive people in leadership positions in of our movement.

We also discussed the 16 days of activism against the abuse of women and children campaign, which began on November 25th. There is a history in our country of women not being treated as adults and we have some concerns about how this campaign puts women and children into the same category. However we have taken a strong position against domestic violence and all other forms of abuse in our movement. We are clear that this is not just a personal matter but that it is also a political matter. For this reason we see this high profile national campaign as an opportunity to raise the discussion of gender equality and gender based violence in all our work.

Zandile Nsibande
 Lisa Nene
 Thapelo Mohapi

12 DECEMBER 2016

Press statement · Joint statement

Picket Against Kabila at the DRC Embassy in Pretoria

The Congolese Solidarity Campaign, based in Durban, South Africa, would like to inform the media and the public that it will organise a picket outside the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The details are as follows:

Date: 15th December 2016

Time: 09h00-12h00

Address: 791 Schoeman St, Eastcliff, Pretoria

The Congolese Solidarity Campaign will be in Pretoria together with Abalali baseMjondolo and other progressive African movements. The protest aims to declare the Congolese Solidarity Campaign's decision to refuse to acknowledge Mr Kabila as president of DR Congo, and to oppose him from extending his power unconstitutionally beyond the 19 Dec 2016, the date at which his second and last term in office expires.

We remind the Congolese people and members of the international community that article 64 of the constitution of DR Congo states clearly that "every Congolese has the obligation to defeat any individual or group of individuals who take power by force or violate the dispositions of the present constitution".

By remaining in office beyond 19 December 2016, Mr Kabila declares war on DR Congo and on the Congolese people. We call on all Congolese all over the world to rise up and defend themselves and their country.

Our country was plundered by Leopold. After the murder of Lumumba the plunder continued under Mobutu. Today the plunder continues under Kabila. We must restore our country to the people, stop the plunder and build a just and equal society.

No one will do it for us without us. We must do it for ourselves. Progressive members of the international community who want to be in solidarity with us are welcome. We stand for a free, democratic and united Africa in which the wealth is restored to the people.

Revd Bahebwa Kabambire
CSC President
Thapelo Mohapi
AbM General Secretary

14 DECEMBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two Lives Lost in a Shack Fire in Bhambayi, Inanda

The festive season is the time for most people to gather with families and friends, but for those of us who are poor and living in shacks this is only a dream. We have to watch our shacks so that they do not get burnt while others are celebrating. We have to protect this because it's all we have.

We also have to safeguard our homes against the illegal evictions that are carried out by the municipality's land invasion unit. We are still living in shame 22 years post apartheid. It is unfortunate that the very government that our parents entrusted with their vote is still abusing their dignity and their basic human rights. The Freedom Charter committed the liberation struggle to provide land and housing to the people. The right to housing is a right that is enshrined in the Constitution but this right has not been properly addressed by this current government. We are often told that we must be patriotic about our country but how can you be patriotic when your stomach is empty? How can you be patriotic when you do not have a roof over your head? Recently on the 10th of December 2016 the country celebrated 20 years since the Constitution was adopted. This beautiful Constitution has not been properly implemented. This is because the people in power are only interested in serving themselves and their families.

On Saturday the 10th December 2016, on the very same day that the country was celebrating 20 years of the existence of the Constitution, two people in Bhambayi in Inanda, Durban were electrified and killed while trying to assist a neighbour whose shack was burning. This terrible accident took place around 4 a.m. in the morning. The two people whose lives were lost are Bonginkosi Hlanganiso and Zandile Mjaja.

The community in this area has tried on a number of occasions to engage the ward councillor on issues affecting them. One of the issues that they have discussed is that of electrifying the area. Instead of responding to the problems

that are affecting the community the councillor becomes arrogant and abusive to the community, calling them names.

Electricity is life; poor people who are living in shacks have the same rights as the middle class and the elite. According to the Constitution we all have the right to basic services. It was only last year that the municipality in eThekweni made it legal to electrify shack settlements. This came after a long struggle for the electrification of the shack settlements. The fact that it took so long to win this struggle for something as basic as electricity is a sign of a government that does not care about the poor and the marginalised people in our country especially those who are living in shacks.

It is very unfortunate that in this country when poor people die in such conditions the media does not report on it. They see this as “not news worthy”. That is why we say as a movement that our lives do not count to the South African government or to other elites as we are left to die a shameful life in shacks.

A memorial service will be held for Bonginkosi Hlanganiso and Zandile Mjaja tomorrow at 6: 00 p.m. at the Gandhi Settlement Park, Ward 52.

Blessing Nyoni
Thapelo Mohapi
Thembani Ngongoma

20 DECEMBER 2016

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

2016: A year of progress for our movement

The year 2016 has come and gone. As we move from one year to another we need to reflect on the year that has been.

2016 has been a good year in the movement. Since our movement was formed in 2005 we have been subject to serious repression – including slander, various kinds of dirty tricks, assault, arrest, torture, the destruction of our homes and murder. There has been impunity for this repression which has mostly come from the police and the ruling party. But during this year, as a result of long struggle and building various kinds of alliances, we made a major break through against impunity for repression. Two ANC ward councillors and a hired hit man were sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Thuli Ndlovu, who was our chairperson in the KwaNdengezi branch. The High Court also denied the two councillors (Mduduzi Ngcobo and Velile Lutyeku) and the hit man (Mlungisi Siphesihle Ndlovu) leave to appeal. This was a turning point in the movement since for the first time those who are usually considered to be above the law were given prosecuted, convicted and given a hefty sentence. This sent a clear message to those who continue to repress and murder activists that the arm of the law is long. This case took more than two years to be concluded.

This was also the year in which we held our elective General Assembly where 28 of our branches, all in good standing, and each represented by 15 members, elected the Provincial and National Council. This was a democratic process where our members elected leaders of their choice. Our movement has always stood for participatory democracy, organised through a system of elected councils, as both a means of struggle and a goal of struggle. We continue to see the building of democratic popular power from below as the form of struggle that will open the road to a more just future in which land and wealth are shared and human dignity is respected.

On the 24th of April this year we held our annual Unfreedom Day event. This event is held every year to contest the idea that freedom arrived for all in 1994. Impoverished people continue to be oppressed by an unjust economy, life

threatening and undignified living conditions, a lack of access to free quality education, urban planning that works to exclude rather than to include, a form of democracy that is not participatory and repression by the state and the ruling part. Thousands of people attended the event, and for the first time in the history of the movement UnFreedom Day was covered by the SABC.

We also received a lot of media coverage in Isolezwe as well as Ukhozi FM and Umhlobo Wenene FM this year. The media is an important terrain of struggle and we appreciate the work of all journalists that remain committed to doing their work with honest and integrity.

This was also the year that Local Government elections were held. As a movement we took a firm stand that we will retain our autonomy and not enter in any electoral agreement with any political party. But we encouraged our members to register to vote so that they could vote for the political party of their choice. We decided to take this position because we needed to respond to the repression that we were facing, including assassinations, on all terrains of struggle. We do not undermine the role played by those who fought against the evils of apartheid. However those who took from them with the hope of carrying on with the good work have forgotten the purpose of the struggle. They now serve their own interests and the interests of their families and repress people who threaten their private access to wealth and power.

Unemployment and the lack of access to free quality education is resulting in a crisis for many young people. There are high rates of substance abuse in our communities. On 16 June we held an awareness campaign. We invited experts on drug addiction and abuse. The use of drugs in our communities has been prominent, especially among young people. The theme was “Young people are the Leaders of Tomorrow”.

This year we also held a Women’s Power Meeting where women in our movement discussed issues that affect women and how women can sustain themselves instead of depending on their male counterparts. Women at this meeting came up with brilliant ideas in starting projects that can sustain them. The “Women can do it” workshop was also kick started as a result of this gathering. This workshop has become a useful tool in the upliftment of women in our movement. The movement also held a Gender Equality Meeting where women and men engaged in robust and helpful debates. The full equality between men and women is both a means of struggle and a goal of struggle.

We continued our work against xenophobia. We continue to take the position that everyone that lives here is from here and that each city, as well as the country, belongs to all who live in it. We are proud to have members who were born in other countries in elected positions in our movement. We also continued to work closely with migrant organisations, especially the Congolese Solidarity Campaign – a radical organisation in the tradition of Patrice Lumumba.

The first of October was an important day in our calendar where we officially launched the Thuli Ndlovu Monument as part of honouring and remembering our comrade who fought against corruption until the day she was assassinated.

This year also has seen the leadership of the movement kick starting a new round negotiations with the leadership of eThekweni Municipality. These negotiations are still ongoing. The relationship between this municipality and Abahlali has been hostile in the past 11 years of the existence of the movement. As part of the Operation Siyakhisana that the movement is embarking on it is important that we engage the government as certain forms of development are impossible without government. We can occupy land on our own. But development requires a partnership with government. We entered in these discussions with the municipality purely on the issue of developing our settlements. Also this year on the 17TH July the newly elected mayor of the eThekweni Municipality Cllr Zandile Gumede publicly apologised to the membership of the movement for all the wrongs that the ruling party and municipality has caused to the movement in the past. This was well covered in Isolezwe and Ukhozi FM. We take this admission and apology from the Mayor as a significant breakthrough.

Our movement has always been committed to internationalism. We were pleased to host comrades from movements in various other countries. We were also pleased that our members could travel to Ecuador, Argentina, Zimbabwe and Norway. Two of our members were able to attend the MST political school near Sao Paulo in Brazil which runs for seven weeks. This year there was a new development in our international work. The president of the movement was invited to a meeting organised by the III World Meeting of Popular Movements which took place in Rome, Italy on the 2nd and the 5th of November this year. The meeting was addressed by Pope Francis and was attended by Bishops from all the regions in the world. Our President was given the opportunity for a personal engagement with the Pope.

In closing the year the movement held its HIV and Aids Awareness Day on December 01st. We honour the struggle that has won access to medication for people living with HIV and AIDS and are proud that HIV positive people have been able to serve in elected positions in our movement. The movement has also taken part in the country's 16 days of activism against the abuse of women and children. We take a clear position that abuse in the family, or in intimate relationships are a political matter, a matter of justice, and not a private matter.

As we move from one year to another it is hard to wish our membership a merry Christmas and a happy New Year knowing very well that it is difficult to celebrate in the conditions that we are still living under. We still need to safeguard our homes against fire, floods and evictions during this time. Some of our members who are going to their rural homes are very aware of the fact that they might return back home and find their homes destroyed either by the fire, flood or by the Land Invasion Unit. What we can say as the movement is that all of us must return in one piece because we still need to fight against our enemies which are capitalism, racism and political gangsterism. We need to unite more than ever before in the new year to fight against these enemies.

We thank all our comrades, in South Africa and around the world, who have stood with us this year

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
T.J. Ngongoma

3 FEBRUARY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo Choir to Record

People who are living in shack settlements are often considered as people who are aimless, people who do not have a purpose in life. We are often regarded as a burden to the state. It is often believed that the shack settlement is a place of criminality.

When we resist our oppression we are slandered and repressed, even to the point of being murdered. We are supposed to remain in silence. We are supposed to know and keep to our place in an oppressive society. We are supposed to accept that our lives and our dignity will be undermined in the name of progress.

It is only through coming together in struggle that we can defend our dignity and humanity and build a world based on equality and justice. As repressive forces rise around the world democratic popular organisation will be the only way for the poor people of the world to defend themselves.

We have begun our programme for the year with our first General Assembly for the year, attended by around 650 members from 34 branches.

Music, poetry, dance and theatre have always been important in our movement. Some of the artists that have grown in our movement have been well recognised outside of the movement. In 2007 the Dlamini King Brothers beat 108 other choirs to win the 11th Annual Isicathimiya Competition held at the Playhouse Theatre in Durban. This is the biggest and most important isicathimiya competition in South Africa. In January 2009 they released their debut album Hlis'uMoya.

We are now pleased to announce that the Abahlali baseMjondolo Choir will have an opportunity to record their first CD at the Fort Hare University. This is a wonderful opportunity for the choir and for the movement. The Abahlali baseMjondolo Choir has been performing at Abahlali events and General Assemblies since 2015. They are all from the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest where they faced eviction more than 12 times. Their popularity in the movement led to them being adopted to be the Abahlali National Choir. The total number of members in the choir is 29, which comprises of 27 women and 2

men. Their songs mainly relate to the history and the journey of the movement. In their songs they mention those comrades who lost their lives in the struggle such as Nqobile Nzuza, Nkululeko Gwala and Thuli Ndlovu. The recording will begin on the 6th January.

Elton Rahanana, one of the poets in the movement, will also have an opportunity to record. His poems are about the struggle of the movement.

We all know that Fort Hare University is one the Institutions where many of our prominent political leaders in the Southern African region have been graduated. So we are very proud that our choir, which sings of the struggles of impoverished people, will now have this prestigious opportunity to also become part of the history of Fort Hare.

A number of our comrades have travelled the world doing solidarity work. This is very rare for people as poor as the shack dwellers. The recording of the choir is also very rare for such people. This sends a message to those who think that people living in shack settlement are people who cannot think, are criminals or people who do not want to do things themselves. This sends a message that we are also human being who count in society and that we do have talents like any other people.

The Death of 94 Patients in Gauteng

The death of 94 people, some from dehydration and starvation, who were trusted to the care of the provincial government in Gauteng shows, once again, that people who are black and impoverished do not count to this society. Our lives mean nothing. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families who have lost their loved ones. Just as impoverished people cannot be accommodated in cities when land is commercialised so to we cannot be accommodated in the health system or the education system when they are commercialised. Land, education, health care and all the means for a safe and dignified life must be made freely available to the people.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibandé
Mzwakhe Mdlalose

17 FEBRUARY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Assembly With Branch Leaders to Strategise in Advance of Negotiations

Abahlali to Hold Assembly to Strategise on Democratic and Participatory Development in Advance of Negotiations with the Municipality

This year we will be pursuing Operation Siyakhisana. We have successfully resisted evictions and we have successfully occupied land. We have recently won the provision of important infrastructure in some settlements like electricity and ablution blocks. Now is the time to build, to plan and develop from below. We are beginning negotiations with the eThekweni Municipality on this programme as well as other matters like free access to sanitary pads and uniforms for our kids, as well as justice and respect for settlements that have experienced repression and brutality from the Municipality in places like Clare Estate, KwaNdengezi, Cato Crest, eKuphumeleleni and Lamontville.

We have always supported participatory in-situ upgrades from shack settlements to formal housing in which community members are fully involved in planning their own development. We have been struggling for a democratic and participatory form of development.

Tomorrow we will hold a conversation on in-situ upgrading at the Prince Edward Hall on Saturday the 18th February 2017 at 08:00 am. The event will be attended by more than 200 leaders from all 34 branches of the movement in Kwazulu-Natal.

Experts in the development of shack settlement will be presenting ideas and comparative experiences on possibilities for democratic and participatory forms of development with a focus on in-situ upgrading. We aim to equip our members with all the relevant knowledge to inform our discussions and to prepare us for the negotiations.

Now that we are facing a less hostile attitude from the KZN government and the eThekweni Municipality we want to push for the maximum advantage

of the impoverished, the people whose lives are taken as rubbish and whose dignity is always vandalised.

In the past 11 years of the movement's existence the relationship between the state and Abahlali was very tense. This resulted in the killing of some of our leaders. Others had to go to flee their homes and communities as a result of the slander, torture and threats that were directed to them by the state.

Our struggle against the injustices directed to shack dwellers has gone a long way. The land that we have occupied and fought so hard for has finally being won. We are now settled. It is time to develop the land. Hence the negotiations with the municipality in eThekweni on how we as a movement can work together in order to improve the living conditions in our settlement. We have Occupied. We have Resisted. Now it is time to Develop the land that we have successfully occupied. We want to speak development – participatory development.

As we move from one phase of our struggle to another we have decided that we must not leave our people behind. We want to all be part of developing our lives. In most cases when development is brought to our communities it is imposed on the people. Houses that are built are not decent, they are not in good condition and corrupt officials and politicians sell these houses that are meant for the poor. Hence we say “Nothing about us without us”. People's real participation in the development of their lives and full transparency at all points in the process will ensure that corruption does not take place. It will ensure that no building materials are sold and that the houses that are built are in good condition. We also wish to participate in designing the houses and other infrastructure.

We enter in this chapter knowing very well that we have scars. Some of our comrades today are living with bullets in their body. Some have lost their lives in the struggle. As we progress we dare not forget the role that they have played in the realisation of these negations. We are here today because of them. They risked their lives for the struggle for dignity and justice.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mzwakhe Mdlalose
Zandile Nsibande

17 FEBRUARY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Launch its First Village in Bizana, Eastern Cape

For more than ten years we have waged a struggle for land, housing and dignity in the cities. Our struggle in the cities has often been influenced by ideas and practices from rural areas and struggles. From time to time our comrades have taken some of the ideas and practices of the movement back to rural villages and rural struggles.

On Sunday we will launch our first village in Bizana in the Eastern Cape. For some time we have been part of the solidarity work undertaken to reject corruption, nepotism, and the theft of the land by black capital monopoly in Bizana. In early 2016 Abahlali supported the march by Bizana Abahlali baseZilalini against unfair business practices by Ramdel, a construction company contracted to build a road. The local community was not consulted on the project and job opportunities were denied to local communities. Among those employed there were strong allegations of bribery, sexism and nepotism.

The local Bizana authority failed the local community. The stone mining machines were operated against the knowledge of the local traditional authorities. Human remains were dug as the stones were stolen to construct the road. Efforts were made by the community to engage the contractor and the local municipality only to be ignored. Some pensioners reported that they are unable to receive their grants and that they are often disrespected while they have to wait in the queues for long hours.

We all know the eXolobeni mining project that has resulted to the assassination of comrade Bhazuka. We had an opportunity to also meet with comrades from Qhawukeni late last year. We also met with the Amadiba Crisis Committee. In that meeting we also agreed to work in solidarity with each other. These comrades will also be part of our launch this Sunday.

Abahlali has noted that there is a lot of Abahlali comrades working and staying in KwaZulu-Natal who have also supported the move to have an Abahlali

presence in the Eastern Cape. We will be launching at B16, KwaMzize Village under Chief Makhosini comprising of six wards. Ward 17, Ward 18, Ward 20, Ward 22, Ward 23 and Ward 29.

The launch will take place on Sunday, 19 February at KwaMzize, B16 from 10:00am to 1pm

Mzwakhe Mdlalose Abahlali National Organiser

Thapelo Mohapi Abahlali General Secretary

Fano Mathumbu Interim Local Organiser

11 MARCH 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Political Education Camp

The movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo SA will hold a Political Education Camp on the 11th March 2017 at the Hindu Surat Hall in Prince Edward Street. The camp will start at 18h00 and continue until sunrise.

The camp is platform where our members can be together and reflect about our movement, our struggle our society and our world. This is where we educate one another about Ubuhlalism, which is our political ideology. This is where we reflect on our lives and our histories.

We are also going to be watching some of the documentaries, such as Biryani and the Councillor and Dear Mandela, that were compiled in our twelve years of existence and struggle. After watching each documentary our members will get an opportunity to reflect on the road that we have travelled.

Our movement has a culture of political education where we learn from each other and remind ourselves about Ubuhlalism. We remind ourselves that we are in struggle because we are impoverished. We remind ourselves that we were purposely made to be poor and that we are purposely kept poor. We remind ourselves that struggle opens the road to justice and that we advance along that road by building the power, the democratic power, of the oppressed.

The camp will also give the opportunity to our members to raise their concerns in their branches.

As a movement we have gone through a lot in the first decade of our existence. For the past ten years we have been regarded as the as a threat to peace and stability in the country. Our peaceful means and attempts to meaningfully engage with the state were met with arrogance, death threats, torture, arrests and the exclusion and assassination of our comrades.

Our aim has always been to see a just and equal society, built on respect and human dignity. We remain committed to a society where justice becomes the order of the day. As we forge engagements with the state we will always reflect on the work that we have done and the road that we have travelled. We

will continue to fight for and promote, protect and advance the interests of the impoverished and marginalised people of our country.

Our movement believes that leaders are made in struggle. An important part of our political work is to build tomorrow's leaders today. This is why we believe that we must continuously train our people in order for them to become good leaders. Part of this political education camp will be to equip one another about how to deal with issues that we face in our branches.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

28 MARCH 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Bhambayi Protests – The Rule of Lies Continues to Tear Apart Our Hopes for a Better Future

The anger of the poor can go in many directions.

In the local government elections those who led the war against our movement, a war that claimed the lives of a number of our members, were defeated. The Nigel Gumede administration, an administration that we described as an alliance of gangsters, was removed from power. After the election the new administration approached us to acknowledge the repression that we have suffered, to offer their apologies for that repression and to promise to work with us in a respectful and dignified manner. Many promises were made.

They promised that they would work with us to develop a participatory and corruption free project to develop our land occupations through in-situ upgrades. They promised that they would make reparations to all our members who have suffered repression from the attack on Kennedy Road in 2009 and onwards, including the assassinations in 2013 and 2014. Since these promises were made we have given the new administration an opportunity to be leaders and not monsters that evict and exclude for their own profit and turn to slander, torture and murder when people stand up for their human dignity, their families and their future. Of course we had no reason to believe that their promises would not turn out to be more lies. We know that politicians in our city have never been honest to themselves nor to the city's residents. But we waited in anticipation for this glorious turn of things. But again all we have seen more lies after more lies. We are committed to assisting our country to get rid of the rule of lies.

In Bhambayi, the Ward 52 ANC Councillor, Zulu, has made it clear that his mandate is to get rid of Abahlali. Councillor Zulu has a deep hate for Abahlali and its leadership and has made it clear that as long as he remains as a councillor he will not entertain Abahlali. On the night of Sunday 26th March, at around 9:00pm, while Abahlali were at a meeting to discuss their future, Councillor

Zulu arrived with some men and dropped off a man known to Abahlali. The man opened fire shooting Mr Banele Nyamela, the husband of one of our members, in the back. Mr. Nyamela is now fighting for his life in hospital. It is alleged that the gunman was sent by the ANC Councillor to kill Abahlali Local Council Chairperson Mrs Nyuswa. Mrs Nyuswa has been receiving death threats for some time now. Abahlali in Bhambayi are protesting for decent housing, for unfulfilled promises to be kept, for discrimination against people from the Eastern Cape to be stopped and for corruption in housing allocation to be investigated and suspects to be arrested. The gunman is allegedly working for the eThekweni Municipal Security Guards. He is a known gangster and a warlord who works closely with local councillor and is in ANC structures in the ward. Our members and other people in the community protested through out the night on Sunday and for the whole day during Monday. The tactic that was used was the road blockade. Eventually a number of politicians came to talk but all they offered were lies.

The leadership of Abahlali also continue to receive death threats in Sisonke Village in Lamontville in Ward 74. In this ward the ANC councillor is also refusing to acknowledge Abahlali. The Ward 17 Councillor in Ekuphumeleleni continues to harass Abahlali members and to threaten them with eviction even though an attempted eviction was stopped by the court a few years ago. The Ward 56 councillor in eTafuleni continues to harass Abahlali and to swear at them and threaten them. This councillor has likened Abahlali to “colonial British settlers who must cease to exist” saying that by its nature Abahlali are temporal.

The shooting of Mr. Nyamela in Bhambayi in Ward 52 and the harassment and threats against our members in Wards 17, 56 and 74 mean that the Municipality is negotiating with us in bad faith and that we are actually at war once again. All these councillors were reported several times to the eThekweni Municipality Speaker and to the Mayor and yet no action has been taken. We have decided that we will do all we can to protect our communities and the lives of our leaders. We will not wait for another assassination by another councillor. We wish to remind the ANC that two ANC councillors from KwaNdengezi are currently serving life sentences for the murder of our comrades.

If the Municipality was serious about negotiations, and if they were serious about keeping their promises, they would have instructed their ward councilors and their committees to engage Abahlali and not to treat us as the enemy – an enemy that can be freely threatened and even killed. There can be no negotiations without peace. If the new administration in the City Hall wants to continue with the negotiations they must ensure that there is peace and that our members can organise freely and safely in every ward.

We wish to make it clear that should our local council chairperson in Bhambayi, Blessing Nyuswa, come to any harm we will hold the ANC accountable.

We take our humanity, our dignity and our future seriously and we will resist a return to repression with all of our courage and force.

Blessing Nyuswa Abahlali Local Council Chairperson in Bhambayi
Nomzamo Mabhena
Thapelo Mohapi

13 APRIL 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two ANC Ward Councillors Have Launched a Local Militia in Durban

In our previous statement we reported that our members are facing serious intimidation and harassment from ANC councillors, and their committees, in a number of wards in Durban. This included the shooting of the husband of one of our members in Bhambayi, in Ward 52, on the 26th of March 2017.

On Saturday the 08th April 2017 two ANC Ward Councillors from Wards 52 and 57 officially launched an armed vigilante group known as 'Qina Mhlali', a well known slogan from our movement. Witnesses say that the group was mainly made up of men armed with all sorts of weapons. These weapons included spears, bush knives, pangas and guns.

According to the two councillors this group will 'fight against crime' in their respective wards. This is a matter of serious concern to us. We all know that people who have organised outside of the ANC have been presented as 'criminals' in the past. This happened in 2009 when senior ANC leaders called our movement 'criminal' before, during and after our members were attacked by an armed informal militia in the Kennedy Road settlement. That militia identified itself as ANC and it also identified itself as Zulu. We are also highly aware that when xenophobic attacks have been organised the attackers, who have often had support from politicians, have said that they are attacking 'criminals'.

There was no democratic process in these two wards leading to the formation of this armed vigilante group. It was simply announced by the two councillors. They have effectively set up an armed militia. This takes us back to the xenophobic violence that has been organised to divide our communities since 2008 and the attack on our movement in Kennedy Road in 2009. It also takes us back to the 1980s and the way in which so-called 'black on black' violence was used to attack the progressive movement.

The station commissioner of the area told the Abahlali Local Council in the area that as the police they do not recognise this structure. He said that it is

against the law for the community to take law in their own hands. He was very clear that it is against the law for anybody, including councillors, to organise armed groups.

We do not believe that the purpose of this militia is to fight crime. It is clear to us that the purpose of this militia will be to use violence and intimidation to repress free political activity in these wards. We call upon all democrats to join us in opposing this militia and to take a clear stand for the rights of all people, including impoverished black people, to organise freely and to live without fear and intimidation.

Blessing Nyoni (Local Chairperson)

Thapelo Mohapi

George Bonono

19 APRIL 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The eThekweni Municipality continues to demolish people's houses illegally

The illegal demolishing of people's houses still continues in the eThekweni Municipality. As we speak people in Marianridge are destitute and have nowhere to live after the eThekweni Municipality illegally demolished the homes in which they had lived for more than three years.

When the community members asked the security guards for an order from the court they were met with rubber bullets. Some were physically attacked by the officers. A seven months pregnant woman whose home was demolished was severely beaten by security guards. She is currently in hospital. When the leadership of the movement arrived at the place the security guards were still there and continued to demolish the houses. It was clear that people were still living in these houses. The houses that were demolished had beds and fridges and so on.

According to the ward councillors from wards 13 and 15 the land has been earmarked for housing development for the coloured community. This is how the politicians divide people. Some years ago the politicians tried to prevent Indian people and African people from struggling together in Motala Heights which is nearby. Some said that Motala Heights is for Indians and that new houses in Nazareth are for Africans. In Kennedy Road our movement was attacked by politicians for including people from the Eastern Cape in the community, in the struggle and in the leadership of the movement. In Cato Crest it was said that government houses should not be for people from the Eastern Cape and that people from the Eastern Cape must 'go back where they came from'. There are many other examples of these attempts to dominate the oppressed by trying to divide us. Our movement has a clear position – if you live in a community you are from that community irrespective of where you were born or what language you speak. We always work to unite the oppressed and to build the power of the oppressed against those who seek to divided us.

In Marianridge the Ward councillor, Sifiso Ngcobo, has 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 are often told that we are living in a democratic free South Africa where people are free to work and live wherever they want. But that it is not the case here in Kwazulu-Natal. It has become a norm in this province to openly discriminate against people from 'outside the province'.

The community of Marianridge has decided to take to the street early this morning to voice their anger at their illegal, violent and oppressive treatment by the municipality. The police have responded by shooting at them. They police made no attempt to discover the reasons as to why the people decided to take to the street. One of the police officers was overheard by one of the community member saying that they must shoot at them before the media arrives, so that the protestors are not heard by the public. This form of suppression was used by the apartheid regime. It continues to be used to do. The security guard are on standby as we speak to prevent anyone from trying to rebuild. They open fire to anyone that is trying to rebuild.

The police in the area are on the side of the councillors. 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.

We had hoped that when the new administration took office in Durban that the new leaders were, as they promised, going to engage with us. But it seems that we are facing the same gangsterism as we faced from the previous administration. It has become clear that we are only important to the politicians during elections when they want our votes. Our lives do not matter. People are attacked by the very people whom they have voted for.

We live in a state of unfreedom. We are ruled by gangsters who use every means to divide and repress us. The struggle for land and dignity continues. The struggle for freedom continues.

Derek Mayifela
Musa Zikhali
Thapelo Mohapi

21 APRIL 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

UnFreedom Day 2017: The poorest of the poor will gather once again

On the 23rd April 2017 the movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo will once again convene its annual Unfreedom Day event. It will take place at the Springfield Sports Grounds at eThekweni FET College. It will commence at 09:00 and run until 15:00.

While the rest of the country celebrates 23 years of “Freedom” we the impoverished, the marginalised and the oppressed will be mourning the absence of this freedom that our mothers and fathers fought for so hard. We say that as long as we are still landless, homeless and impoverished we cannot say we are free. As long as we are subjected to floods and shack fires we cannot say that we are free. As long we are not recognised as human beings and for as long as our lives do not matter to the politicians and the government we cannot say that we are free. As long as we are divided by politicians who say that those who are born in the Eastern Cape and those who are born in other countries must ‘go back where they came from’ we cannot say that we are free. As long as we face assault and eviction when we occupy land and arrest, assault, torture, imprisonment and assassination when we organise independently we cannot say that we are free.

It was the struggles of the people of this country, including the workers in the factories and the mines and people, including impoverished people, in communities, that freed political prisoners and allowed exiles to return home. Yet now the politicians claim that they own the struggle and that anyone who organises outside of their control is an enemy.

These same politicians have been in power for more than twenty years and while they and their families have become very rich millions of us remain impoverished. More than 50% of unemployed people are living in shacks. The politicians are free. We remain in a state of deep unfreedom.

We as the movement have decided that instead of going to the stadiums to celebrate the freedom of the few with the politicians we will be gathering together in one place as the impoverished and marginalised people of this country to voice our concern that after 23 years of so-called 'freedom' we are still living in inhuman economic and political conditions. Whenever we raise the issues that we are facing we are slandered, repressed and even killed by the very people whom claim that they represent us. We cannot fool ourselves anymore and say that we are free. The correct name for the conditions in which we live and organise is oppression.

We are very concerned about what is happening in our country at the moment. We have been living in junk status our whole lives. This is not new to us. But we are well aware that the current situation will hit hardest on us as the already impoverished.

The theme this year for our UnFreedom Day Rally is "Consolidating the power of the impoverished from below". The RDP came and went and we remained impoverished. Then there was 'the second transition' and 'the Lula moment' and we remained impoverished. For as long as impoverished people are sidelined in this so-called "Radical Economic Transformation" we will continue to be oppressed. The only way forward is for the working class and the impoverished to build our own political power from below via autonomous organisation and to use that power to create a more just and equal society.

We call on all progressive movements that are fighting to build the power of the impoverished and the working class from below, and all those who are concerned about the political and economic crisis in the country, to join us when we mourn our lack of freedom. Oppression is oppression and we will name it as such. We call on all responsible media to gather with us when we say that we are not free, that we remain landless, impoverished and subject to violent repression. This 23 years of so-called 'freedom' without land and real economic and political freedom for the black majority means nothing. We are expecting thousands of people to gather with us at the Springfield Sports Ground in eThekweni FET College.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
T.J Ngongoma

21 MAY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

ANC Intimidation in Newcastle

Abahlali baseMjondolo continues to grow and to expand throughout Kwazulu-Natal, and the country as a whole. People in this country have had enough of impoverishment and oppression. People in this country have had enough of the lies told by the politicians when they seek votes. Abahlali baseMjondolo has become an alternative home for such people. Thousands of people are joining our movement in search for land, dignity and freedom.

The leadership of the movement is currently in Newcastle where today, the 21st May, we will be launching our first branch in Osizweni Township in the Majuba District Municipality, Newcastle. Yesterday we had held a political education meeting in Volksrust in the township of Vulindlela in Mpumalanga.

The people of the Vulindlela Township are face with a lot of challenges. They are not recognised as human beings by the council. The municipality consist of 11 wards but the mayor is failing to address the issues face by the communities in these wards. People who want to develop their own livelihoods are not receiving any support from the government in Mpumalanga. They are not even given land to develop livelihoods. There is a lot of corruption and nepotism taking place in the municipality. There are serious questions about how jobs are allocated in the area. In order for one to be employed in the municipality must either be related to the mayor or the manager of that portfolio.

In Osizweni, Newcastle, the ward 32 councillor Ms. Fikile Gama has threatened our members who are organizing there. She went to our organizer's house with her bodyguards and threatened our member and warned her to stop organising Abahlali in the area. She told our member that if she continues to organise Abahlali in 'her land' she will open a case against her. It is very strange that in this day and age there are still ward councillors who do not understand the Constitution of the country that allows the Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of Association. These rights are enshrined in the Constitution that the very ruling party claim to be custodians of. These rights were won in the struggles of the people and they will be defended by the struggles of the people.

This kind of intimidation is one of the reasons why we say that we are led by thugs who have no regard whatsoever for the people whom they lead. The very people who are supposed to allocate land and bring development in our communities are the ones that oppress us.

We have informed the police station of Osizweni regarding this matter and have encouraged our organiser in Newcastle to open a case against the councillor. We affirm that if anything happens today as we launch, or if anything happens to our organiser, we will hold councillor Gama and the ANC in the province accountable. It seems as though these thugs who are politicians by day have forgotten that the arm of the law is very long when it is backed by powerful and sustained organisation and mobilisation. It seems that we need to remind them about the two ward councillors who are serving life sentence for murdering our comrade in Durban.

We are aware that the struggle that we are in is dangerous and can lead to people losing their lives. We however are prepared to lay down our lives for the truth. We owe it to the next generation to fight for justice and against this disease called corruption which has impoverished many people in our country.

Nothing will deter us from the struggle to liberate our people from these thugs. No one will get away with threatening our members. Our movement is powerful and we stand our ground. We do not accept repression.

The struggle for land, dignity and freedom continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
George Bonono

29 MAY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Baby has Been Killed During a Brutal Police Attack in the Foreman Road Settlement

A two week old baby, Jayden Khoza, is dead after a brutal police attack on the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate, Durban, this morning. Abahlali baseMjondolo are now marching on the Sydenham police station with the body of the baby. Others have been injured and there was one arrest.

The comrades in the Foreman Road settlement organised a road blockade on Tuesday 23 May. They organised another blockade this morning, at 5:00 a.m. The police responded by attacking the settlement as a whole with fists, batons, rubber bullets and tear gas. Many shacks filled up with teargas. Children started crying, coughing and vomiting. Residents told the police that they were putting the children in grave danger. However the police continued the attack.

These road blockades, and this police attack, do not come out of nowhere. Comrades in Foreman Road have been organising and protesting for land and housing, and in defence of their human dignity since 2005. They have suffered a number of serious police attacks over the years.

The new administration that came to power after the local government elections in August 2016 promised to break with this history of repression and begin negotiations with our movement. The new mayor even made public apologies for the repression in the past, including assassinations. Meetings were held with us and several promises were also made in the media to commit the City to work and engage meaningfully with our movement. We knew we had no reason to trust her, or any politician, but we thought it was fair to give her a chance especially as our first woman mayor and as mayor who participated in shack dwellers' struggles in the 1980s.

All kinds of promises were made. She promised to give 10 000 elderly people blankets for winter. When no blankets given there was a protest and then only 250 were given. She promised to facilitate the healing of families who were

tortured, repressed, driven from their homes, evicted and even had family members killed during the previous administration. She also promised that her administration will come up with a clear and clean program of action that will see Abahlali baseMjondolo, and all organised impoverished communities, participating in the running of the city. The mayor has failed to fulfill all of her promises and now she does not even have time to answer calls. She has proven to be just another politician. We are back to the politic of lies and police. We are back to the demand for dignity being met with violence and death.

The Foreman Road Abahlali branch organised a road blockade on Tuesday, 23 May because their urgent demands had been ignored. They delivered a memorandum of demands. The City was given at least three days to respond. As usual the community was ignored. If you are black and impoverished you count for nothing in this country unless there is no election coming in which case people will lie to you and give you food to get your vote. This morning at around 5 a.m. another road blockade was conducted to force the city to engage meaningfully with peoples' demands. Instead the police were sent to create violence and enforce repression. Suddenly we do not have leaders who have been voted to run the city, we have police to protect the politicians and ensure that repression can be used to defend oppression.

We demand that the mayor and her administration must stop to run our city with lies. The mayor has lied to us for too far enough to be allowed to continue. It is our duty to help her stop lying to the eThekweni residents. Our country cannot be ruled by leaders of low morals who think that lies can be the order of the day.

The road blockade is the new legitimate language that the politicians have endorsed as new tool for oppressed people to be heard.

We refuse to accept that our oppression is normal, that it is something to be lived and suffered in silence. We demand that our lives must count that same as all other human lives. We demand that the life of Jayden Khoza must count the same as that of every other human being.

1. We demand to be treated and engaged with respect and dignity
2. We demand collective land title in all land occupations and decent democratically planned and developed housing for all.
3. We demand electricity as human beings

4. We demand jobs that are not only given to ANC volunteers while the rest of us left to rot.

5. We demand an end to repression and justice for Jayden Khoza.

Events are still unfolding. When we can call a community meeting we will be able to get more details about everything that happened this morning. This is an emergency statement and all media are encouraged to rush to the protest happening now in Clare Estate.

Jayden Khoza. Say his name. Jayden Khoza.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Siphelele Sivunga

31 MAY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Justice for Baby Jayden

On Monday the Foreman Road community in Clare Estate, Durban, came under serious police assault after a road blockade that had been organised earlier that morning. That protest was disruptive but it was also peaceful. Baby Jayden Khoza, two weeks old, lost his life during the brutal police assault on the community. The next day the headline on the front page of The Mercury said that baby Jayden had died during a protest. We wish to be clear: baby Jayden did not die during a protest. He was killed during a police assault on the Foreman Road community following a protest. In South Africa impoverished black people are treated like dirt. We can be killed like animals. It is taken as normal that we should live in the mud, raise our children in constant fires, be driven out of our homes and the cities with bulldozers and rubber bullets and beaten, tortured, slandered and murdered when we gather together and insist on the recognition of our human dignity.

Last night more than a thousand people gathered in an open assembly in the Foreman Road settlement. A decision to honour and respect Jayden Khoza with a memorial service was taken. Once again we have to honour the dignity of our dead, a dignity that we are denied by this society, and this government, in life.

We have, with the strong support of the family, decided to hold a memorial service at the Foreman Road settlement at 1pm tomorrow, Thursday 01 June 2017. Jayden will be laid to rest on Saturday the 03rd June. The Funeral Service will also be held at the Foreman Road settlement.

Jayden could have become a teacher, a doctor, a leader in his community or even a revolutionary President, an honest President who serves the people by taking direction from the people. Everyday the richness of the possibilities for our lives comes under assault from an oppressive society. It is not just the police that beat us into oppression. It is a whole system of oppression. Racism, capitalism and the gangster state combine to make this world where some of us live with teargas, fire, prisons, the destruction of our homes, torture and murder

while those who say that they represent us, and who demand that we accept our own oppression, are buying homes in Dubai.

Tomorrow is International Children's Day. Jayden died at the hands of the police on International Children's Week. This is the reality of our oppression.

Jayden's parents are traumatised. We are glad, though, that the community in Foreman Road has shown unity and support at this difficult time for the Khoza family. Our strength as oppressed people can only come from our togetherness. Our lives and our future depend on that togetherness.

The movement is working together with our legal team to ensure that justice is done in this matter. We will ensure that the post-mortem will be conducted by an independent doctor who will leave no stone unturned in this matter. We will sue the police. The police Minister will be made to answer in this matter. We do this because we feel the pain that this family is feeling. At anytime any of us could find ourselves in the same position as Jayden's parents. Every night we go to sleep knowing that the night, or the next day, could bring a fire, the land invasions unit, an assassin, armed party thugs, or the police.

But most importantly we will continue to organise and to mobilise for land, housing and dignity. We will continue to build the power of the oppressed and to struggle for a just society, a society in which every human life is counted as a human life and given the respect and dignity of a human life. We will continue to fight for, protect and advance the interests of the impoverished and marginalised. For as long as we continue to be denied land we will continue to occupy land. For as long as the politicians continue to refuse to engage us on a democratic basis we will continue to blockade roads in protest.

We are and will be with the Khoza family during these days of pain.

Jayden Khoza. Say his name. Jayden Khoza.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Siphelele Sivunga

2 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Baby Jayden will be laid to rest tomorrow

Baby Jayden, killed by police on Monday this week, will be laid to rest at eMolweni cemetery in Inanda. The service will be held at Foreman Road settlement. The service will start at 10am in the morning and proceed to the cemetery at 12:30 pm.

Abahlali baseMjondolo members will be having a night vigil (Umlindelo) today from 20h00 till the morning to give baby Jayden the respect and dignity he deserved, but which was denied to him in an oppressive society. It is the movement, our strength and togetherness, that has ensured that Baby Jayden will be laid to rest with the dignity denied to him in life. It is the movement that will seek justice for Baby Jayden.

Yesterday we gathered in the Foreman Road settlement for the memorial service. People shared the struggles that they face everyday.

Today the representatives from the mayor's office were in the Foreman Road settlement to see the conditions the people in the area live under. They said that they were 'devastated' and 'touched' to see the appalling conditions in which people live and raise their children. The electrification of the settlement has been promised.

In 2004 the then Mayor Obed Mlaba visited the settlement and promised houses. Many promises have been made since then. None of those promises have been kept. The people of Foreman remain without houses, without electricity and without concrete paths on the steep muddy banks.

What kind of government lies to its people election after election and crisis after crisis for more than twenty years? What kind of government only visits its people when its police have killed a baby? It is clear that we do not count to this government. For more than twenty years the politicians have used the people, our suffering and struggles, as ladders.

In 2005 we said 'Sekwanele!' (Enough!). We meant it. Enough is enough.

The struggle to build the power of impoverished and oppressed people from below continues. The struggle for land, housing and the recognition of our dignity continues.

Jayden Khoza. Say his name. Jayden Khoza.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Siphelele Sivunga

3 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Comrade Nompilo has Just Been Arrested

This morning Baby Jayden Khoza, killed during a police attack on the Foreman Road settlement, was buried in Inanda.

Now Comrade Nompilo has been arrested at a new land occupation in Mayville. The movement is currently mobilising to secure her safety and release.

The struggle goes on.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Comrade Zondi

13 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

One death and several injuries in Marianhill, three arrests in Kranskop

Today we came under serious attack from the Land Invasions Unit in eMansenseni in Marianhill. One person is confirmed dead, two are in a critical condition in hospital and a number of others are injured – all shot in the back. It was a war zone. The Land Invasions Unit didn't talk to anyone. They just fired live ammunition. The intention was clearly to kill, to teach a lesson.

There was also an eviction in Kranskop resulting in three arrests.

Brutal evictions are on the rise across Durban. Protest is also coming under serious repression. Just two weeks ago we lost baby Jayden Khosa to a police attack in Clare Estate.

Ten months ago Zandile Gumede became the new mayor. We were told that she was going to be a caring mayor. Now violent and illegal evictions, and violent repression of protest, have returned. Our members have suffered more than ten evictions. We are being killed.

We will issue a detailed statement tomorrow and announce a major protest action in central Durban.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
S'bu Zikode

14 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

We March on the Durban City Hall on 26 June 2017

When the new mayor, Zandile Gumede, took office last year we were promised a new era in the City's relationship with its impoverished residents. We asked for and were promised an end to evictions and repression. We asked for and were promised participatory democracy and participatory development. We asked for and were promised honesty and respect. We asked for and were promised justice for the repression that we had faced in the past, including the armed attacks by ANC supporters in 2009, and the assassinations in 2013 and 2014.

For some time repression and evictions stopped. But now all the mayor's promises have proven to be lies. Armed and violent evictions have returned. Armed and violent repression, sometimes fatal, has returned. The old dirty tricks, trying to divide the movement by offering development and tenders to some while excluding and repressing others, have returned. Now we face the politic of lies and the rule of the gun. We face a gangster state that only sees development as a way for politicians and their friends to get rich.

We are in full support of the need to build women's power in all parts of society. We are in full support of women's leadership in all parts of society. We are not opposed to Zandile Gumede because she is a woman. We are opposed to her because she has chosen the politic of lies and repression. She has chosen the rule of the gun. She has chosen the politic of oppression. She has betrayed all of us, including the thousands of women in our movement, and all other impoverished women in the city.

The new Mayor has lied to us for several times. She lied to the elderly, physical challenged and most vulnerable group of our society omkhulu no gogo. She promised them blankets but only to deliver lies, futhi akanamahloni nanembeza ngalokho. She went on to make promises to the victims of ANC attacks and assassinations. She promised to engage and commit her administration to work

with Abahlali on a clear program of action that will see lives of shack dwellers changing. But her administration failed even to produce a plan and status of each settlement. Instead all we have seen is some of her party councillors becoming monsters and gangsters again, just like how Nqola behaved before going to jail. We have seen Cllr Zulu threatening our comrades in Bhambayi resulting into shooting one person there. We have seen Cllr Khhekhe in eKuphumeleleni threatening Abahlali members. We have seen the returned of armed, violent and illegal evictions across the city. We have seen the killing of a two weeks old baby, Jayden Khoza. Yesterday we lost another comrade and neighbour, Samuel Hloele, in eMansenseni, in Marianhill, during a violent eviction. Others were seriously injured. All our efforts to engage the mayor on these matters are either falling into deaf ears or we are lied to.

Several communities have been subject to violent and illegal evictions in the last three months.

Marianridge (New City) in Marianhill has been evicted four times already. On 1 April 2017 they came at about 10am. They returned on 2 April. On 13 April they came at about 5pm, leaving about 105 families homeless. The Councillors from Ward 13 and Ward 15 were present with municipal security when the evictions took place. One woman who was 6 or 7 months pregnant when her shack was destroyed in her presence had a miscarriage and the baby passed on.

Cato Manor has also been evicted four times already. The first attack was on 8 May 2017 and there were further attacks on 1 June 2017, 3 June 2017 and on 4 June when 75 families were left homeless. The City did not only destroy people homes and confiscate their property but it also burnt the remains of their homes and belongings down to ashes. This is where Nompilo was arrested after she was found looking at the remains of her home and her property.

In Asiyindawo in Lamontville about 63 families have been evicted. Their homes were destroyed on 12 February 2017, 5 March 2017, 20 April 2017 and 17 May 2017.

In Nagina near Klaarwater at least 22 families have been evicted on the 19 May 2017. The residents took down this registration number of a municipal vehicle: NDM 7982

In Polokwane 4 families were evicted from the transit camps provided by municipality on 26 April 2017 and 6 families were evicted on 2 June 2017. The following registration numbers were noted: NDM 16077, NDM 13861, NDM

6789 and NDM 13504. These families have been staying here since 2014. They were relocated from their shacks into the transit camps to allow in-situ upgrade, but now the new councillor is evicting them from transit camps to allocate their spaces to other families.

In eMansenseni, which is also in Marianhill, 15 families were evicted on 30 May 2017 and on Tuesday 6th June 36 families were evicted. Yesterday there was another brutal attack resulting in the loss of one life and a number of serious injuries.

In eKuphumeleleni (Shallcross) 12 families were been evicted on 11 June 2017 at about 16:00pm In all of these evictions Abahlali have been rebuilding after each eviction. We will always try and rebuild after an eviction. But in some areas, like Marianridge, the City has hired a private security company to guard the land all day and night and prevent anyone from rebuilding.

All of these evictions have been unlawful and violent. We are in consultation with our legal team and we will not hesitate to go to court to interdict the City and defend our right to occupy land in our city. Every eviction is an outrageous attack on people who are already impoverished. But this new strategy in which the City also burns people's building material and belongings has escalated the levels of anger. The City is being run on a violent and criminal basis yet the police do not act against this criminality, or even open cases. It is a Mafia politic.

The Mayor and all corrupt and criminal politicians must go. There must be an end to the rule of the impoverished by the gun, and to evictions and repressions. There must be an end to the politic of lies.

We are willing to negotiate on land and housing but our dignity is not negotiable. We insist on democratic forms of engagement and will never accept rule by armed force.

We have then decided to organise a big protest on 26 June to put pressure on the City and help her Worship to stop lying to the impoverished, to stop evictions and to stop repression. We will meet at Curries Foundation and the march on the City Hall. Each branch of Abahlali will be discussing and drafting their own Memoranda to be delivered to the Mayor and the KZN MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. We believe that COGTA has a responsibility to ensure clean and proper governance in the province. We

cannot be murdered and evicted and have COGTA quite about this kind of governance. We cannot be denied access to information and subject to frauded IDPs without COGTA saying a word.

We stand for land. We stand for housing. We stand for dignity. We stand for a democratic resolution of the crisis of land and housing, a resolution that puts the social value of land before its commercial value. We will not accept the return to the rule of the gun. We refuse to continue to be made poor.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
Mqapheli Bonono

15 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League

Abahlali baseMjondolo Youth League to Commemorate Fallen Comrades on Youth Day

The movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo will hold Youth Day Rallies in Cato Crest on the 16th of June 2017 and in Siyanda the 18th of June 2017.

The struggle for land, the right to the city, and the insistence on the recognition of the dignity of impoverished people, has resulted in serious hardship in Cato Crest in the past five years. The Marikana Land Occupation has faced numerous illegal and violent evictions. In 2013 our chairperson of the branch, Nkululeko Gwala, was assassinated. Later in the same year Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by the police. She was 17 years old. We are still struggling for justice in the Nqobile Nzuza case.

The young people in the movement will be commemorating the lives of the comrades who have been killed in the struggle for human dignity. The Abahlali baseMjondolo Choir will be performing some of the struggle songs which they have composed. Their songs speak about their abuse by the Municipality and the need to organise and resist.

In Siyanda a new choir which comprises of young people will be launched on Sunday. The young people in our movement have always showcased their talent even though they live under such conditions. We have choirs, poets, singers, bands and dance groups in our movement.

In 2017 we remain oppressed. In 2017 the state continues to murder people who resist oppression. On Tuesday this week Samuel Hloele was brutally murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. His 'crime' was to occupy land and build his family a home.

Evictions and repression are worsening in Durban. The new mayor has turned out to be a new oppressor instead of a new hope.

We as the young lions in the movement vow to continue with the struggle even though this means facing the risk of death.

We would like to invite all our friends who are in solidarity with us and all media. The Youth League gathering on 16 June will be in the Cato Crest shack settlement between Bellair Road and Jan Smuts Road.

Sandile Nkebe (Youth League Chairperson)

Sam Hlophe (Siyanda Branch Chairperson)

Mawande Nongalo

21 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Memorial Service for Samuel Hloele Will be Held in eMansenseni on 22 June

On 13 June 2017 the Land Invasions Unit murdered Samuel Hloele during an armed eviction in eMasenseni, near Marianhill.

On 29 May 2017 Baby Jayden Khoza died during a police attack in the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate.

On 29 September 2014 Thuli Ndlovu was assassinated in KwaNdengezi on the order of two ANC councillors.

On 30 September 2013 Nqobile Nzuza, a teenage girl, was murdered by the police on a road blockade in Clare Estate.

On 26 June 2013 Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated in Cato Crest after then eThekweni Mayor James Nxumalo and ANC regional chairperson Sibongiseni Dhlomo publicly threatened him.

In South Africa in 2017 if you are black and impoverished your life counts for nothing.

Since the murder of Samuel Hloele illegal evictions have continued to be carried out at gunpoint across in Durban. Today comrades in Marianridge and Shallcross came under attack from the Land Invasions Unit.

We will continue to occupy land. We will continue to rebuild after evictions. We will continue to insist on our right to the cities. We will continue to organise and to build our power from below. We will continue to honour our dead and to insist that our human dignity is not negotiable. We will continue to resist all the forces of oppression that vandalise our human dignity.

On 26 June we will march on the Durban City Hall.

The memorial service for Samuel Hloele will be held in the Bhekizwe Hall in Ward 15 from 10am -1pm.

Bhekumuzi Nyende
Sifiso Ngcobo
George Bonono

24 JUNE 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to March in Durban and Bizana on Monday

Abahlali baseMjondolo will march to the Durban Mayor Cllr Zandile Gumede on Monday, 26 June 2017. The march will start from Curries Fountain Sports Grounds at 9:00am and finish at 12:00pm at the Durban City Hall. The Memoranda will be handed over to both the Mayor of eThekweni and to the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Each branch has carried out its own process to produce its own set of demands. We will be demanding the restoration of our dignity, an end to violent and brutal evictions and land, housing and dignity for all.

Our branch in Bizana in the Eastern Cape will also be marching on the same Monday, 26 June from 10:00am to 12:00pm. The march will start from the KwaMaqhopholo bus stop in KwaMzize and finish at the Redoubt Sport Ground where the Bizana Mayor will be expected to receive our Memorandum. Here Abahlali will be marching to highlight our opposition to violence against women and children. We will also be marching to put a stop to the sale of our land and to mining that does not benefit the local people. We will be marching to reclaim our right to work and against the politicisation of access to job opportunities. We have been neglected for too long in this community. We are not respected and we are not involved on matters that affect us.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Occupy. Resist. Develop

Mqapheli Bonono

Thapelo Mohapi – Abahlali General Secretary

Fano Mathumbu – Chairperson in Bizana

26 JUNE 2017

Memorandum · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Memorandum of Demands to the MEC For Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Honourable Nomusa Dube-Ncube, Monday, 26 June 2017, 12:00pm

We, Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA, are democrats committed to the flourishing of this city, our province and our country. We speak for ourselves and direct our own struggle.

We have been mobilized by our suffering and our hope for a better future. It is time to take seriously the fact that, land is a serious problem in our country and in our city and that land was stolen from our ancestors and that this has impoverished us. It is time to take seriously that our struggle for land, housing and dignity, which is a just and democratic struggle, is facing serious and often violent repression from the ruling party and the government. This repression has taken a number of lives.

1. For too long the eThekweni municipality has repressed Abahlali and marginalised our communities as a form of punishment for speaking against corruption, lies and injustices and COGTA says nothing about it.

2. For too long our leaders and members have been subjected to violent evictions and denied our Constitutional rights and COGTA says nothing.

3. For too long the commercial value of land has been put before its social value and impoverished black people have been forced to the rural peripheries.

4. For too long some municipalities in KZN have acted against the law and denied landless and homeless people the right to basic services.

5. For too long the eThekweni Municipality and the current mayor has lied to us and treated us with disrespect and indignity.

6. For too long the eThekweni municipality through its Anti Land Invasion Unit has been terrorizing our communities violently and illegally.

7. For too long certain Ward Councillors like Cllr Zulu in ward 52, Cllr Khekhe in ward 17, Cllr Musa Nyaba in ward 56 and Cllr Nada in ward 15 have

been attacking our members because they are threatened by our unity in action. Most of these councillors have been imposed on us.

8. For too long our members including Samuel Hloele and the two weeks old baby Jayden have been killed by the police and the Anti Land Invasion Unit without any accountability.

9. For too long we have been excluded from IDP discussions in shaping our own wards' needs and COGTA is not acting against this corrupt form of governance.

10. For too long we have been excluded from local job opportunities and these opportunities are only awarded to volunteers of the ruling party and those close to councillors.

11. Those of us who are living in Osizweni in Newcastle demand that there be a construction of a space for work and trade to generate job opportunities and libraries for our youth.

12. We demand that NYDA offices, programs and information must be made known and also benefit Abahlali baseMjondolo youth.

13. We demand electricity and all other basic services in shack settlements while waiting for decent housing.

14. We demand that planning and construction of all housing projects be undertaken in a transparent, participatory and democratic manner.

15. Those of our settlements located close to national roads, provincial roads and municipal roads have had enough of death. We demand the urgent construction of bridges or robot to save lives.

16. We demand to know the current status and future plans for all our shack settlements. We want to know when, where and how our housing are going to be built.

17. For too long the sale of RDP houses has been open to corruption with no prosecution. We demand credible investigation on all housing corruption.

18. For too long the issuing of Title Deeds has been delayed for no reason. We demand a speedily mechanism of ensuring secure tenure for all people in land occupations and in RDP housing.

19. We demand support for community run creches and gardens.

20. For too long councillors, BECs and ward committees have been used to control the people from the top down. We demand a bottom up system of participatory democracy.

We demand that COGTA act with justice on all these matters. We are prepared to fight for these rights in the streets and in courts.

Just like people around our country and the region we are concerned about violence against women. We demand justice and a safe environment for all women in our streets and in our homes. We continue to be concerned about the attacks on people born from other countries. And today we are equal concerned about discrimination on people born in other provinces.

Together with the fees must fall students around the country and the world we are concerned about expensive, low quality and colonised education. We demand free, decolonised and quality education for all.

If this Memorandum is received without conscious Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will consider engaging in non stop protests.

Handed over by S'bu Zikode, president of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA on the 26 June 2017 at 12:15pm.

Signature_____

Received by _____ whose position is _____ on 26 June 2017 at _____.(time)

Signature_____..

Thapelo Mohapi Abahlali General Secretary
Mqapheli Bonono

26 JUNE 2017

Memorandum of demands · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Memorandum of Demands to the Mayor of eThekweni, Her Worship Cllr Zandile Gumede, Monday, 26 June 2017, 12:00pm

We, Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA, are democrats committed to the flourishing of this city, our province and our country. We speak for ourselves and direct our own struggle. We have been mobilized by suffering and our hope for a better future. It is time to take seriously the fact that, land is a serious problem in our country and in our city and that, land was stolen from our ancestors and that, this has impoverished us.

1. For too long the eThekweni Municipality and the current mayor have lied to us and treated us with disrespect and indignity. We demand truth, honesty and respect from the mayor.

2. For too long the eThekweni municipality through its Anti Land Invasion Unit has been terrorizing our communities violently and illegally. We demand an end to evictions in our city and a recognition of the democratic value of grassroots urban planning.

3. For too long certain Ward Councillors like Cllr Zulu in ward 52, Cllr Khekhe in ward 17, Cllr Musa Nyaba in ward 56, Cllr Nada in ward 15 have been attacking our members because they are threatened by our unity in action. Most of these councillors have been imposed on us. We demand to be treated with respect and dignity by all councillors and that councillors must take direction from below rather than imposing it from above.

4. For too long our members including Samuel Hloele and the two week old baby Jayden have been killed by the police and the Anti Land Invasion Unit without any accountability. We demand an end to repression and justice for all our killed and injured comrades.

5. For too long we have been excluded from IDP discussions in shaping our own ward's needs. We are committed to participatory democracy and we demand to fully participate in all discussions about budget and the future of our communities.

6. For too long we have been excluded from local job opportunities and these opportunities are only awarded to volunteers and card carrying members of the ruling party and those close to councillors. We demand fair access to decent employment for all.

7. We demand electricity and all basic services in shack settlements while waiting for decent housing.

8. We demand to know the current status and future plans of all our shack settlements. We want to know when, where and how our housing going to be built.

9. For too long the sale of RDP has been open to corruption and no prosecution. We demand a credible investigation on all housing corruption.

10. For too long the issuing of Title Deeds has been delayed for no reason. We demand a speedily mechanism of ensuring secure tenure for all people in land occupations and in RDP housing.

We demand that you act with justice on all these matters. We are prepared to fight for these rights in the streets and in courts.

Just like people around our country and the region we are concerned about violence against women. We demand justice and a safe environment for all women in our streets and in our homes. We continue to be concerned about the attacks on people born from other countries. And today we are equally concerned about discrimination on people born in other provinces.

Together with the fees must fall students around the country and the world we are concerned about expensive, low quality and colonised education. We demand free, decolonised and quality education for all.

If this Memorandum is received without conscious Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA will consider engaging in non stop protests.

Handed over by S'bu Zikode, president of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA on the 26 June 2017 at 12:15pm.

Signature_____

Received by_____whose position is_____.....on 26 June 2017 at_____(time)

Signature_____..

Thapelo Mohapi Abahlali General Secretary
Mqapheli Bonono

6 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali are under armed attack from the eThekweni Mayor

On 26 June we marched, in our thousands, on the Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality and the KZN MEC for Cooperative Governance. The Mayor and the MEC refused to present themselves to the thousands of people who had marched on the City Hall.

The memoranda that we handed over gave them seven days to respond to our demands. We made it clear that if there was no response we would engage in further protest action.

More than seven days have passed and there has been no response to our demands. This is the politics of contempt. As a result we have taken to the streets, across the city, in defence of our dignity, our land, our homes, our right to the city and our future.

The response has been brutal. Fourteen activists have been seriously injured by the police and are currently in King Dinizulu Hospital. At least four activists from George Hill, in Sydenham, have been arrested and are currently being detained at the Sydenham police station. One of the arrested comrades is also seriously injured.

We presented ourselves, in our thousands, to the political leadership in the city and the province to demand that they engage us democratically. They have refused to engage us democratically and have instead chosen to send out the police to repress us. They have sent out the police to shoot. We are under serious attack.

Media may rush to Dassenhoek (eKuthuleni) or Sydenham (Randles Rd) for witnessing.

This is an urgent statement and resistance and repression are ongoing. We will be able to make further details available in due course.

Blessing Nyuswa
Bheki Simelane
Phumlani Magali
Thapelo Mohapi

7 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Brutal Evictions and Road Blockades are Continuing

As we explained in our statement yesterday we marched, in our thousands, on the Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality and the KZN MEC for Cooperative Governance on 26 June. However the Mayor and the MEC refused to present themselves to the thousands of people who marched on the City Hall.

The memoranda that we handed over gave them seven days to respond to our demands. We made it clear that if there was no response we would engage in further protest action. The seven days passed with no response. This the politic of contempt.

Yesterday, in response to this contempt, our members blockaded roads across the city. These blockades were organised in defence of our dignity, our land, our homes, our right to the city and our future. Comrades from iTshelinyama, eKukhanyeni (Dassenhoek), Matlock, Bhambayi and George Hill took the lead. The response from the police was violent and brutal. Fourteen activists were hospitalized and four were arrested.

At the same time the Municipality, under the leadership of the Mayor of Lies, Zandile Gumede, resumed its illegal and violent attacks on our settlements. There were vicious evictions in Wiggins Road and in Mayville in Cato Manor from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm. At 10:00 pm the Land Invasions Unit burnt shacks. Around 72 families were left homeless by this criminal attack. This use of fire to attack our land occupations and communities is now new – the Metro Police have been burning people's belongings during evictions for some time now.

Today the protests, in the form of road blockades, continued. The N2 and the Mangosuthu Highway were both blockaded along with a number of smaller roads. Comrades in Wiggins Road, Mayville, Cato Crest, Shallcross, eNsimbini and Bhambayi were in the forefront of the protest action.

A bus was burnt in Cato Crest. There were no injuries. It is not yet clear to us how the bus was burnt as all roads leading to what the police call the 'protest

zones' were closed and the Metro Police were present in the area when the bus was burnt. Some comrades think that the police burnt the bus themselves to justify further repression against us.

If the Mayor of Lies refuses to engage with us the protests will continue. If the Mayor of Lies continues to send out armed men to wage illegal, brutal and sometimes fatal attacks on our communities with the aim of dispossessing us of the land that we have occupied the protests will continue. If the Mayor of Lies continues to send out armed men to attack our protests, sometimes at the cost of our lives, instead of coming to talk to us, the protests will continue.

We wish to make it clear to the world that these attacks on our land occupations are illegal and that we are dealing with a criminal and violent municipality that has gone rogue. We are committed to peaceful protest and all our members will be held to that commitment. We condemn violence from all quarters – including the police, the Land Invasions Unit, Municipal security guards, and the thugs and assassins working for the ruling party.

Our dignity is not negotiable.

Blessing Nyuswa
Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

14 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Justice for Nqobile Nzuza: Police Officer Convicted of Murder

On 30 September, 2013 Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by the South African police in Cato Crest. She was shot from behind while participating in a protest organised around a road blockade. She was seventeen years old when she was murdered. The protest that she was participating in had been organised by residents of the Marikana Land Occupation after repeated evictions, always illegal and often violent. Nqobile was the third person to lose her life in the struggle for land and against repression from the ruling party and the state in Cato Crest in 2013. Thembinkosi Qumbela was assassinated on 15 March 2013 and Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated on 26 June 2013.

As usual the police told incredible lies immediately after the murder of Nqobile. As usual many newspapers published those lies without making an effort to discover the truth or even print the testimony of eyewitnesses. The police claimed that they had fired in self-defence as they feared for their lives when confronted by a violent crowd.

As usual the police also lied in court. The police claimed that the bullets were fired into the ground, and then ricocheted into Nzuza's body. Ballistics evidence presented in court, however, did not support this claim. The court found that the cause of Nzuza's death was traceable to the gun belonging to the accused officer. That bullet did not have signs of ricocheting off the ground. In other words, as participants in the protest attested back in 2013, live ammunition was fired directly into the crowd.

The judgement also makes a mockery of the claim that the police had acted in "self-defence." Nzuza was unarmed when she was shot. She was shot in the back which shows that she was running away from the police, rather than presenting a clear and present danger to police. The judgment notes further that the protesters, prior to the shooting, diverted their protest route away from the

police to avoid confrontation. The departure of two police inyalas – large military vehicles – on the scene not long before the murder offers further evidence that there was no violence from the protestors. The inyalas would not have left the scene if there was a violent protest underway.

The police officer's bail was set at R5000. His sentencing will begin on 7 October, 2017.

As with the conviction of two ANC councillors for the assassination of Thuli Ndlovu, who was murdered in KwaNdengezi on 29 September 2014, this conviction was won as a result of sustained protest and engagement from below by an organised movement. It is clear to us that the only way that we will have any chance of defeating the politic of violence, and the gangster state that drives this politic, is by sustained organisation and mobilisation. As people who are impoverished and black our lives count for nothing to the police, the ruling party and the elites in this society. We can only stop these murders by insisting that our lives count, and putting the full force of our struggle behind this demand. Our struggle is for land, housing and dignity but it is also for life.

Abahlali welcomes the judgement. The judgement sends a message to all police officers who act on the instructions of the politicians. We call it “political policing,” when the police act on the directions of politicians, instead of doing their jobs to protect the safety of ordinary people. We know, as a movement, that the family will find some closure for their pain, although they are still waiting for sentencing. We appreciate that the judiciary has shown that it is still acting within its mandate despite ongoing pressures and intimidation.

But we have lost a lot of comrades. We have only won justice for Nqobile Nzuza and Thuli Ndlovu. Many comrades who have fallen in the struggle have not found justice. We are aware of the global trend of police violence. Our comrades in countries like Brazil and America are also struggling for their lives against police violence. In South Africa police violence, as well as the violence of the land invasion units, municipal security, the red ants and party thugs and assassins is on the rise.

We still believe that it is society that has to work tirelessly for justice to be done. Amandla must be restored to the people which is the only place where it rightfully belongs. We have the power to make the kind of society we want to see, and the kind of institutions we want to have. The power is with the people and we will build it and use it to insist that our lives must count the same as

all other lives. Our movement is growing in size and power and we will do everything that we can to ensure that there will be no impunity for repression.

We salute the courage of the residents of the Marikana Land Occupation who, after five years of struggle, continue to hold the land first occupied in March 2013.

We thank Abahlali members for attending the trial and for being back in court today. Nqobile's family also wishes to express their thanks to Abahlali for their support.

S'bu Zikode
Blessing Nyuswa
Sbonelo Mpeku

16 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Umlazi Ward 88 Councillor arrested for death threats and an unlicensed firearm

Ward 88 Councillor S’bu Maphumulo has been threatening the Abahlali leadership in our Silver City branch in Umlazi. When he was appointed the councillor was not known in the area and after he became a councillor he never visited the residents there. The first time that he was seen in the area was after our recent protests in support of the restoration of our human dignity. On Sunday, 9 July 2017, while Abahlali were holding their local community meeting, Cllr Maphumulo stormed the meeting with seven armed men, three hitmen and four police officers, in full police uniform, from GG Umlazi. He pointed to the local Abahlali chairperson, Lungelo Hlongwane, and said “here is the man”. The armed men who had stormed the meeting then asked what the meeting was all about, was it about road blockades, or what. Lungelo said this was one of the regular community meetings that they hold about their lives and their future.

On Friday, 7 July at 4am Lungelo received a call from Cllr Maphumulo accusing him of organising a road blockade. Lungelo told him that he was at work and was not aware of the road blockade. On Sunday, 9 July at about 8pm Cllr Maphumulo called Lungelo alleging that Abahlali were going to blockade the road. He threatened Lungelo saying that “ngiyinsizwa mina ngizokukhombisa ukuthi mina ngingubani” Lungelo said he could not understand what the Cllr meant. Cllr Maphumulo then sent Lungelo a text message saying that “we must learn to respect each other”. He went on to say that he did not like the manner in which Lungelo responded to the call of Cllr. He said that there is no need for Lungelo to speak to him like how he has. He said Lungelo “must grow up”. Immediately after that Lungelo received a call from someone calling himself a police officer from Marianhill. The alleged police officer said that he got Lungelo’s number from Cllr Maphumulo who had informed him that Silver City were blocking the road. The alleged police officer advised the community to rather approach the Mayor’s office. In five minutes time Lungelo received another call

from an unknown male voice. The following number was used to call Lungelo. The man said “ngiyeza ngizoshaya ikhanda” meaning (I am here to kill you). Five minutes after that Lungelo received another call of a man who introduced himself as the Station Commissioner, Ntuli. The Station Commissioner said to Lungelo that Abahlali must not burn the road. He went on to suggest that we must nominate five representatives to negotiate with the police. Lungelo told him that the community will discuss things and decide what to do. The alleged Station Commander asked Lungelo to report back to him. A community meeting was called and it was decided that everyone would go to the police station together. Lungelo called this man and told him that the community was coming in their number into police station but he refused to meet with them.

Cllr Maphumulo arrived at the community meeting with five armed hitmen who suddenly out guns and said ‘voetsak’. What was noted was that all these men, including Cllr Maphumulo, were drunk. While addressing the community meeting Cllr Maphumulo confessed that he is the one that gave Lungelo’s number to all the unknown men that called to threaten him, including the man that pretended to be the police officer. The gunmen continued to threaten the community while the Councillor was addressing the community.

On Monday, 10 July at about 6pm the community gathered for a meeting. Nyawose, one of the Councillor’s notorious thugs came to ask what they were doing. We said that we were preparing for our meeting. Cllr Maphumulo arrived in his car, he pointed out, Mabo, an activist. The Councillor then got out of his car. He was with his five hitmen and two of his ward committee members. He drew his gun in full view of the community and made several shots with the aim to intimidate and maybe also to disperse the community and break up the meeting. At about 9pm on the same Monday, two of his hitmen arrived at the house of Nhlanhlo, a ward committee member. Another ward committee member asked for Lungelo’s house and said that they want to kill Lungelo. They looked for Lungelo’s house without success.

On Tuesday, 11 July at about 3am about twenty police vans arrived at Mabo Phungula’s house and arrested Mabo. The police said they also wanted Mabo’s sister Ncamsile who was not found. Mabo was charged with Public Violence and his bail was set at R500. The community had a report back meeting at about 7:30pm at that meeting. The Cllr came with the police and one of his hitmen. The community asked who was the man with the gun. The Cllr said he was

his bodyguard. The community asked for a proof and a firearm licence, the guy only produced his student card from Coastal College where he studies. The police never said a word about the unlicensed firearm. Immediately the Cllr and hitman left while the police were still addressing the community. The community tried to open a case of intimidation by the Cllr and his hitmen but police refused to open charges against them.

On Wednesday, 12 July at 21:51pm Lungelo received a call from Cllr who then apologised for his behaviour. But later on Ncamsile, Mabo's sister and another activist received banging knocks from the door and a voice saying "your days are numbered".

On 14 July, after constant organisation and pressure from the community, we were relieved to hear that this gangster Councillor has been arrested and charged with possession of unlicensed fire arm at Umlazi GG police station. However we were immediately disappointed to hear that the Cllr was released on police bail on the following day on Saturday, 15 July, without any arrangements being made to ensure that he will not take any action against those who resisted his intimidation and pushed for his arrest.

Before becoming a Councillor Maphumulo was arrested and jailed. We remember the ANC debating whether convicted members should stand for election as candidates or not. Abahlali takes death threats very seriously. We hope the ANC will investigate whether a gangster like Maphumulo should really be a leader that can be trusted by our community and our country.

We are facing a gangster state in KwaZulu-Natal, a state that uses threats, violence, torture and murder to oppress us. In the twelve years of our struggle we have shown that we will not be broken by thuggery and intimidation. We would like to remind the gangster politicians, and the police officers, security guards, land invasions unit members and hitmen that associate themselves with this politic of blood, that since last year, through ongoing struggle, we have been able to win the conviction of two councillors, one hitman and one police officer on murder charges. We will do everything in our power to ensure that there is no impunity for repression.

S'bu Zikode
Bheki Simelane

26 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to seek a court interdict against the eThekweni Municipality

On Sunday the elected leaders of seven new Abahlali baseMjondolo branches were inducted into ubuhlali. The new branches are in Nagina (Phase 2), Metlock, eTafuleni, uMkomaas, Cato Crest and KwaNdengezi.

Tomorrow, on Thursday, 27th July, we will proceed to the Durban High Court to seek a court interdict against the evictions that are being carried by the eThekweni's notorious Anti-Land Invasion Unit.

The eThekweni Municipality, under the leadership of Zandile Gumede, has been perpetrating organised and armed attacks on impoverished people across the city. These attacks are illegal and criminal attacks. Armed men are sent out to demolish people's homes and burn their building material and possessions. Samuel Hloele lost his life during one of the evictions and the many others have been seriously injured. Today some of our comrades are living with bullets as a result of these violent evictions. Today many of our comrades are homeless as a result of these brutal evictions.

Our legal team is very confident that we will get this interdict that will issue an order preventing the municipality from demolishing people's homes, and will also insist that they rebuild all the homes that have been destroyed.

While the ruling party talks about radical land reform they are attacking land occupations and destroying people's homes and property with the aim of driving impoverished people off their land. As usual when we stand for our land and our dignity we face slander and serious violence, including murder. We will stand for the poor. We will stand for the land that we have occupied. We will stand for our right to the city.

We will continue the struggle for land and dignity in the streets, in the land occupations and in the courts. We will continue to name those who benefit from our oppression.

We invite the media and progressive movements who are in the same struggle to come and join us at the Durban High Court as we seek to get this interdict.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Sbu Zikode

27 JULY 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Breaking News: The eThekweni Municipality has been interdicted from evicting Abahlali baseMjondolo

The Durban High Court has this morning granted Abahlali an interim interdict following ongoing vicious and illegal evictions by the eThekweni municipality.

The City is interdicted and restrained from demolishing, burning, removing or otherwise destroying and disposing of Abahlali housing structures or threatening to do so. Those whose homes have been destroyed have been given the right to rebuild them. The Anti Land Invasion Unit, which is the City's armed force, has been terrorising at least seven communities at a gun-point and in brazen violation of the law. At least 241 families were unlawfully and often violently made homeless between February and July this year. Evictions have been continuing even after Abahlali have been rebuilding. What has been most shocking with these evictions is that the municipality has been burning people's property into ashes. This conduct is not just unlawful but criminal.

We wish to thank our legal team from the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) for acting for Abahlali with such humility. We thank Abahlali members who have continuously and consistently stood firm for their right to the city, their right to the land and their right to dignity.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

8 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League

Building Women's Power in Struggle

The Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League will be joining the women of South Africa to honour and celebrate our heroes who fought against racism and pass laws in 1956. They did so for all of us today, and they did so courageously and exceptionally. We will be celebrating this day by reclaiming and asserting our right to this land. We will be celebrating this day by building the power of women from below. We will be celebrating this day by building awareness, political and economic consciousness, unity and solidarity. And yes, we will be celebrating the Interim Court Interdict we have just been granted by the Durban High Court last week.

The struggle continues. Today the women in Abahlali face new forms of oppression, new forms of exclusion, new form of tribalism and black on black hatred. Today many of the old forms of oppression remain and the new oppressor is as black as us. The new oppressor is one who has been oppressed with all of us but who has become the "better oppressor" as Steve Biko warned. Today we suffer exclusion from the very hard won democracy. Today we suffer impoverishment. Today we suffer unemployment. Today we suffer inequalities. Today we suffer violent repression, including torture and murder. And yes, today we suffer landlessness and homelessness and indignity. We continue to suffer in the name of democracy and a "better life for all that serves the interest of the few while the majority of us still live in abject poverty in shacks and transit camps.

We are still told that the place of a women remains in the kitchen. When we raise our voice in resistance of corruption and oppression we are shot and killed. Today impoverished women also suffer from the rich, sometimes middle class women and women in powerful positions of power, including women in the ruling party, women in some NGOs and women who are also bosses.

Women's power is at the heart of our movement and its strength and it has been at the heart of the struggles for urban land and housing for more than a hundred years. Our movement stands for the full equality of women in the struggle and in society. We stand against all forms of discrimination and abuse.

We stand for a world in which women are safe and respected in their homes, in the streets, in their struggles and at work.

Our movement does all it can to build women's power. Our theme for this day is "Women Can Do It". On Saturday and Sunday this week we will hold two days of training with around fifty women focussing on livelihoods. This will also be an opportunity to share skills and experience on gender issues, housing rights, movement building and emancipatory politics. On Wednesday, 9 August, we will hold our Women's League AGM at the Surat Hindu Hall in Prince Edward Street, starting at 10:00 a.m. We have invited women from Safety Regulator, the Right to Know Campaign and other progressive organised women's groups. The day will be full of celebration by the Abahlali Women's Choir, Stars of Tomorrow, dance and other powerful poets and music. Entertainment plays a very important part of our struggle as it helps us deal with emotions of oppression of our time.

Wa tint' abafazi, wa tint' imbokodo.

A woman's place is in the struggle.

Zandile Nsibande
Thabile Makhoba
Blessing Nyuswa

11 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Launch a Branch in eMasenseni, Marianhill

On Sunday 11th August 2017 Abahlali baseMjondolo will be launching a branch in eMasenseni in Marianhill in the hostile ward 15. This is the very same area that became a war zone in June this year when the Anti-Land Invasion Unit killed 29 year old Samuel Hloele during an illegal and violent eviction.

The months of June and July were very harsh for our movement. The municipality returned to evicting people at gun point. We lost the life of two weeks old baby Jayden Khoza who inhaled a teargas when police attacked people in their houses in Foreman Road. We have also lost the life of Samuel Hloele, who was shot from the back by the eThekweni Municipality's Anti Land Invasion Unit. According to members of Abahlali who witnessed the killing of Samuel the security guard shot Samuel even when he was lying on the floor.

This led to a mass protest against the Municipality and the Mayor and, when the Mayor did not respond to the memorandum, road blockades across the city. The Durban High Court has now interdicted the eThekweni Municipality from evicting or destroying people's property in seven branches of Abahlali.

The eMasenseni community has decided to have a traditional celebration ceremony where two cows will be slaughtered in celebrating the victory that they have achieved in court. On Monday the 7th August 2017 the leadership of the movement, together with eThekweni Municipality officials were allocating land for those who were illegally and violently evicted by the Municipality so that they can rebuild their houses, as required by the court interdict. The community has started reconstructing the homes that were destroyed by the municipality.

Even though the struggle in eMasenseni was very hard and led to the death of a young man and to two people suffering injuries the community is very grateful that they finally have won the right to the land.

In appreciation of the struggle and the victory that this community has gone through, the community has decided to rename the branch; it is now called eKukhanyeni which means The Light. The community has been facing evictions since 2015 but they now see the light since they are settled in their community.

We would also like to warn the eThekweni Municipality to refrain from demolishing people's houses in Cato Manor. This is defying the court interdict. More than 13 houses were destroyed in Cato Manor yesterday. Two people were injured. Our legal team is currently working on this matter and our movement will also use all other available strategies to stop and reverse these evictions. Our members remain on the land and are currently rebuilding.

The movement is committed more than ever to fight for, promote, protect and advance the interests of the impoverished and marginalised people of this country. We are committed to see dignity and justice being realised for the poor. We are committed to fight for the inclusion of the impoverished in all policies and laws of this country. We are committed to fight for Umhlaba, Izindlu nesithunzi.

OCCUPY, RESIST, DEVELOP.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Blessing Nyoni
Zandile Nsibande

19 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Cato Manor: Violent Evictions in Total Disregard for the Law

On 27 July 2017 the eThekweni Municipality was interdicted against demolishing, burning, removing or otherwise destroying and disposing of housing structures or threatening to do so in seven communities affiliated to Abahlali baseMjondolo, including Cato Manor. Those whose homes had been destroyed were given the right to rebuild them.

However the eThekweni municipality has continued with its violent and unlawful eviction in Cato Manor. Yesterday at about 10:30 am municipal security guards arrived at the Cato Manor settlement and forcefully grabbed Mlungisi Mokoena, an 18 year old activist. Mokoena was resting in his shack when the guards forcefully pulled him out of his shack and simply shot him on his leg without any provocation or argument. Near him was Sthembale Qwabe who was also severely assaulted by these security guards. They went on to destroy the homes of around 75 families.

While our members were being attacked in Cato Manor we were served with an urgent application to the High Court to have 75 families removed from the interdict. At 14:30 yesterday the High Court dismissed this application with costs.

Today at around 14:00 the Metro Police and the Land Invasions Unit stormed Cato Manor and destroyed every shack. They said that: 'The City is in charge and not the court'.

After our movement obtained the interdict against the Municipality the local ANC and the Municipality have been mobilizing ANC supporters to occupy the same land in Cato Manor that is occupied by our members. This is the same strategy that was used in New City where the local ANC councilor encouraged ANC members to build. One of the aims of this tactic is to create tensions between different groups of impoverished people with the aim of making it impossible for our members to rebuild. The ruling party and the local state is trying

to outsource violence and to reward the people that are willing to engage in violence for them with access to land. They are using local gangsters to sell and allocate land.

Qwabe and Mokoena have both been admitted to King Edward hospital. As always our members will continue the struggle to hold the land in the face of a violent and criminal state.

In Durban in 2017 we are ruled by violence from the state and the ruling party. We do not live in a democracy.

We will continue this struggle in defence of our dignity and this land on the land, in the streets and in the court. When we return to court we will hold the mayor and the city manager personally responsible for this illegal and violent attack on our members.

Contact: S'bu Zikode

19 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali baseMjondolo to Launch Two Branches in Gauteng this Weekend

This weekend Abahlali baseMjondolo will launch two branches in the province of Gauteng, both in Germiston, Ekurhuleni Municipality. The launch today in Daveyton is today at 10:00 am and the re-launch in Good Hope will be tomorrow at 10:00 am.

Our movement continues to grow under these difficult circumstances. There is a great support for the struggle for land, housing and dignity, and great demand for the movement to expand to other provinces. A struggle that started against exclusion and for dignity in the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban in 2005 has now grown throughout the city of Durban, and is also growing elsewhere in the province and the country. Today the movement has branches in good standing in four provinces that is the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng.

Even though the struggles for land, housing and dignity are the same throughout the country the movement understands that the political dynamics are different in different parts of the country. We will continue to enforce engagements between the state and the oppressed to ensure that the impoverished can fully participate in their own development. We will continue to educate ourselves about oppression and resistance, about how to build popular power from below to take the struggle for justice forward.

We will continue to encourage ourselves to fight against this corrupt and authoritarian state. We will continue to build democratic power from below. We will continue to force the government to take direction from the people. We will continue to struggle for our right to the cities.

Our dignity is not negotiable. For this reason the struggle continues and it continues to expand. The launches this weekend show that the movement continues to grow in its reach and power.

Thapelo Mohapi
Nomnikelo

25 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Evictions at gun point continue in Cato Manor: Province fails in court

Residents in a new land occupation in Cato Manor have come under sustained and violent attack from the state and members of the ANC. On Tuesday Smiso Maphumulo was shot in the eye. Yesterday Noluthando Masikiza was shot in the eye.

Their ‘crime’ is that they have been impoverished by a system of oppression and have occupied land in order to have a place to live. The government of this country has no regard for the poor. It treats our legitimate and urgent aspirations for justice as criminal and rules us with violence.

The Municipality has been interdicted by the High Court in Durban to refrain from demolishing, destroying and burning people’s property in seven land occupations, including the new land occupation in Cato Manor. The court interdict further states that people whose homes were demolished are allowed to reconstruct. But because the ANC in the Province considers itself as law unto themselves they have continued with the evictions in violation of the court interdict.

Yesterday the Anti-Land Invasion Unit continued to demolish people’s homes in Cato Manor. When the shacks were destroyed the materials were burnt. This was an unlawful and violent attack undertaken by a criminal state.

In Women’s Month the government of the ANC keeps emphasising their role in the fight for the rights of women. We ask which women are these when armed agents of the state can shoot at women who are poor and living under shameful conditions? The situation in Cato Manor is getting out of hand because the ANC does not want to respect the processes of the law and because it holds impoverished black people in such contempt that it does not recognise our humanity.

Today we had to go back to the High Court after being served with an application by the Province to continue to evict people in Cato Manor. They want

to evict first and then get permission from the court later. That is how the brutal and criminal government in KwaZulu-Natal operates. The Province failed to win an interdict in court and both parties will have to return to court on 1 September. Until then the interdict protecting the occupiers continues to be in force.

We will continue to ensure that those who protected by the interim order are safe and have a shelter. Those who consider us as the third force must realise that we are fighting for justice for the poor and the oppressed. If fighting for the poor means that we are identified as the third force then so be it. We cannot stop fighting for the poor, for ourselves, because we are called the third force.

The struggle for land, housing and dignity continues.

Thapelo Mohapi
S'bu Zikode

29 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Judgment on the Legality of a 2013 Shooting by the Anti-Land Invasions Unit to be Handed Down Tomorrow

On Sunday 22 September 2013 Nkosinathi Mngomezulu was shot, multiple times, with live ammunition during an illegal and violent eviction carried out against the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest by the Anti-Land Invasions Unit, acting for the eThekweni Municipality. The eviction was carried out despite court interdicts prohibiting evictions. After he was shot Mngomezulu spent months in the ICU division at King Edward hospital. He was chained to the bed and always accompanied by a police officer during visiting hours.

Mngomezulu was not the only comrade to be subject to armed attack during the struggle for this land. On 30 September 2013 Nqobile Nzuza, who was 17 years old at the time, was murdered by a police officer with a shot from the back. Prior to the shooting of Mngomezulu there had been two assassinations. Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated on 26 June. Another activist, Thembinkosi Qumbela, had been assassinated just over three months earlier.

Justice has not yet been secured for the assassinations of Gwala and Qumbela. At the time of the assassination of Gwala it was widely reported that the then chairperson of the eThekweni ANC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo had issued a public threat to Gwala hours before he was murdered. We do not believe that only local actors are responsible for the repression and violence, some of it fatal, that was experienced in Cato Crest. However after a long struggle justice was secured for Nzuza when a police officer was found guilty of her murder on 14 July this year.

Our movement has sued the Anti-Land Invasions Unit for the multiple shooting of Mngomezulu. Before we could continue to seek damages the court needed to determine whether or not the shooting of Mngomezulu was lawful. Judgment on this matter will be handed down in the Durban High Court tomorrow. If, as we expect, the court finds that the shooting was unlawful we will continue to seek damages from the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. We will also

continue to do all that we can to build popular political opposition to this Unit, which was set up to subject impoverished people to rule by violence rather than democratic engagement.

In recent days and weeks the Anti-Land Invasions Unit has continued to engage in unlawful and violent evictions in Cato Manor, which is very close to Cato Crest. These evictions have left people with serious and permanent injuries. Smiso Maphumulo and Noluthando Masikiza have both been shot in the eye.

Our struggle for land is just but it is being met with violent criminality by the state and the ruling party.

We call on all progressive forces to support the popular struggle for land, and to oppose its repression, with all the force at their disposal. We have been encouraged by the recent meeting of various organisations engaged in the struggle for urban land in Cape Town and will continue to work to build the largest and most powerful popular force possible to take the struggle for land and the right to the cities forward.

S'bu Zikode
Ndabo Mzimela

31 AUGUST 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Tomorrow We Return to the Durban High Court as State Criminality Continues to Escalate

On 27 July 2017 the eThekweni Municipality was interdicted against demolishing, burning, removing or otherwise destroying and disposing of housing structures or threatening to do so in seven land occupations where residents are affiliated to Abahlali baseMjondolo. Those whose homes had been destroyed were given the right to rebuild them.

Since then there have been repeated violent evictions by the Municipality in brazen violation of the court interdict. People have suffered serious and permanent injuries at the hands of the Municipality during these evictions. Today there were particularly brutal evictions in Cato Manor and Marianridge. Both of these evictions were in violation of the interdict and were therefore, in terms of the law, illegal and criminal acts.

Tomorrow we return to the Durban High Court. The Municipality, together with the Province, will be filing replying papers and arguing that the interdict should not be made permanent. We are wondering why we are going back to court in light of the plain fact that we are confronting a state that considers impoverished black people to be beneath the law.

The state is encouraging residents living in formal houses to organise themselves against land occupations. This attempt to divide the working class and the poor, to isolate the poor and to legitimate state criminality and repression is a worrying development. We will continue to work to build the broadest possible alliances in support of the democratisation of our cities.

We continue to take the position that the social value of land must be placed before its commercial value. We continue to take the position that democratically organised land occupations must be recognised as a form of legitimate urban planning from below.

Land. Housing. Dignity.

Ndabo Mzimela
Sihle Cele

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Repression and State Criminality in uMlazi and Cato Manor

Yesterday two members of Abahlali were attacked by unknown people in our Silver City branch in uMlazi. The two men, who are serving in the local Abahlali structure were abducted by a group of men and forced into a car with no registration number. They were then taken to the house of the local ward councillor. They were beaten and tortured for two hours at the home of the ward councillor by the same men that had abducted them. After this they were taken to the police station by these men.

These men claimed that they beat and tortured our members them because they were 'stealing electricity'. Our movement supports Operation Khanyisa, safely made and maintained people's connections to electricity. We also support people's connections to water and, where possible the sewerage system.

We are aware that the state considers self organised connections to electricity to be in violation of the law but we are willing to engage in organised civil disobedience on this matter. But if these men suspected our members of 'stealing' electricity why they did not report them to the police instead of abducting and then torturing them? The police did not do any justice for our members. They refused to open a case of kidnapping and assault. When our members rushed to the police station to put pressure so that the case is opened they were teargassed by the police.

These police have become politicised to the extent that it is clear that they are there to act as an armed force in support of the councillor and not to enforce the law. In fact they are willing to support serious criminal actions by the councillor and his thugs. This is not the first time that this councillor has been involved in criminal conduct against members of Abahlali.

Yesterday the men made it very clear that they are looking for the chairperson of our Silver City branch, Lungelo Hlongwane, who has been receiving death threats from the ward councillor.

The conduct of the councillor, his thugs and the police is criminal and fundamentally authoritarian. This particularly councillor has been reported in the Mayor's office and he still continues to intimidate our members. This means that the Mayor is also complicit.

This kind of abuse is not only happening in Silver City. In Cato Manor the Anti-Land Invasion Unit continued with their illegal evictions today. One of the homes that they destroyed belonged to Mlungisi Mokoena, who was previously shot in the both legs by the same unit. Today they abused him, threatened him and even broke his crushes and removed his bandages.

This kind of cruelty shows the complete lack of moral value in the government. When people are afraid of the government it is a crisis. It is the government that should be afraid of the people instead. When a government disregard the Constitution, especially the one they have created we are in a crisis. When activists face murder and torture it is a crisis.

A democratic government would rule by obeying the democratic mandates of the people. This government is a criminal, violent and oppressive force.

We would like to appeal to all progressive forces to be in solidarity with our movement in these trying times. We fear that we are now returning to a situation in which we will again have to face death as happened in the 2013 – 2014 period when our leaders were killed.

Contact persons:

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Thina Khanyile

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

Statement · Gabon Branch, Daveyton

Illegal Eviction in the Gabon Settlement, Daveyton, East Rand, Ekurhuleni

On 4 October last year a large number of people were evicted by the Red Ants from a section of the Gabon settlement, in Daveyton. For three months they stayed with friends and families in the area, or moved to rural areas. In January they started occupying vacant land adjacent to the settlement. There were 211 people that participated in this new occupation.

On Thursday last week we were called to a meeting by the Municipality. We were told that the land that has been occupied belongs to Spoornet. The Municipal officials and councillors said that they will arrest the people who have opened the new land. They said that they want to build a case against the leadership. However the ANC aligned Ward Committee is also putting people on the very same land, as well as another piece of land nearby. No threats were made to the Ward Committee.

On Friday the Ekurhuleni Municipal Police (EMP) arrived and carried out the eviction. They were armed. They destroyed 103 shacks at gunpoint. During the eviction people's building materials, and property, including furniture, were stolen. But not all the shacks on this land were destroyed – 123 shacks were left standing. The shacks that were left standing are those belonging to people who were put on the land by the ANC aligned Ward Committee.

No notice was given before the eviction and there was no court order. This was an illegal eviction. Our comrades began to rebuild immediately after the eviction and are continuing to rebuild. We have been warned that the EMP will return on Tuesday, which is tomorrow, to evict us again.

We will continue to struggle for this land and to rebuild when we are evicted. We are also seeking legal support. If the Municipality continue to say that the occupied land belongs to Spoornet they must give us the free land, which is nearby, that belongs to the Municipality. The ERF number is 3721.

We need land. The social value of land must be placed before its commercial land. Land occupations must be understood as urban planning from below.

Vusi
Nature

23 SEPTEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to hold the Annual Thuli Ndlovu lecture on Heritage Day

Abahlali baseMjondolo will once again use Heritage Day to honour all our heroes who have paid the ultimate price in the fight against new forms of oppression. While the rest of the country celebrates heritage through diverse cultural activities, our movement will take time to honour all our fallen heroes. Struggle brought us to where we are today and it is only struggle, from the left and from below, that can take us forward. The unity and power forged in struggle is our heritage.

The Thuli Ndlovu lecture is one of our annual events. It is aimed at honouring our fallen heroes and educating our members about the history of our movement and selflessness and sacrifice in struggle. Thuli Ndlovu, like other fallen cadres such as Nkululeko Gwala, Nqobile Nzuza, and Samuel Hloele, were committed to the struggle for the emancipation of the impoverished and the landless. Thuli Ndlovu and Gwala were assassinated in Durban. The City seems to be enjoying to use blood to govern. Nqobile Nzuza was shot dead by the police and Hloele was shot dead by the eThekweni municipal security guards of the Land Invasion Unit. Both the police and security guards were acting on the instruction of the black politicians who pretend to be our leaders when they have turned to be our oppressors and our killers.

Abahlali members have a lot to learn about our society from state brutality, and even more to learn from our fallen heroes. We thought to honour their contribution to our struggle, to celebrate their lives and keep their spirits alive and to inspire us in this annual lecture. Our members, especially the new ones and the young ones, will have an opportunity to engage with the dead from whom we draw our strength.

All these leaders and activists were fearless. They did not fear the monster of greed for money and oppressive power, nor its representatives in our real world

at ward and community level. Former ANC gangster councillors and now convicts Nqola Ngcobo and Luvelile Lutyeku can best give evidence of Thuli's fearlessness in confronting corruption. Both of them today serve their life sentence in Kokstad prison. We shall continue to use the truth to destroy representatives of the corrupt system with the ultimate goal of destroying the corrupt system, opposing capitalism, building democracy from below and restoring land and dignity to the people.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our condolences to the families of the housing activists who were allegedly killed by the Red Ants in Lenasia, in the city of Johannesburg yesterday. We stand in solidarity with the whole community that has braved the forces of the regressive regime that enjoys seeing impoverished black people without land. Their struggle is our struggle. Their pain is our pain. The land will be restored to the people. We will destroy the rule of the gun and build a genuine democracy.

The lecture will start at 10:00am on Sunday at the Surat Hindu Hall in Durban. It will be followed by discussions as members will be engaged on what can be learnt from the fearless and dedicated cadres of our movement.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Blessing Izile Nyuswa

29 SEPTEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to Launch a Branch in Marianridge

We will launch a new branch in New City, Marianridge, tomorrow, 30 September 2017, at 10:00 a.m. We currently have 45 branches in good standing. New City will become our 46th branch in good standing with around 350 new members. We are currently undertaking a membership audit. Members in good standing have now been counted in 18 branches and the number of members in good standing countered so far is 28 470.

Our members have faced a lot of repression from the Anti-Land Invasions Unit in the New City occupation. It is one of the occupations where the eThekweni Municipality continued to demolish people's homes even though when there was an interim interdict which prevents them from evicting people illegally.

Tomorrow, the community will be celebrating the fact that they have won the land despite a long oppression from the municipality. Today the families are united and happy that they have settled and the municipality will no longer bother them. Land is won by occupation and resistance. Inkani is the route to the land.

When ever we launch a new branch we begin with political education and discussion. The political education emphasises on what we call 'Living Politics' also known as Ubuhlalism which is our ideology. Our politic is a simply one which an ordinary person can understand. It speak about the fact that people are poor and are living in shameful condition where they do not have electricity water and they do not even have water. It is a politic that speaks about the fact the we do not have land. It speaks about the fact that we remain poor when there is so much wealth. It speaks about the fact that we do not have land and that our struggles are repressed even though we have a black government in a so-called democracy.

Our political education and discussion also focuses on the politics of the left and what that means in South Africa and globally. It speaks about the need to

build the democratic power of the oppressed from the left and from below. It speaks about the need to overcome capitalism.

We remain committed in the fight for the right to city. We remain committed to fight for land for the poor. The social value of land must come before its commercial value. We remain committed to build democratic force from below by the self-organisation of the oppressed.

We remain committed to internationalism and we are, therefore, also in solidarity with the people of Rohingya people who are under brutal attack in Myanmar. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Blessing Izile Nyuswa

2 OCTOBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Brutal Attacks on the new Cato Manor Land Occupation

The new land occupation in Cato Manor has been subject to repeated violent attack by the eThekweni Municipality in violation of both the law and a court interdict. Until recently these attacks were aimed at destroying people's homes.

But the Municipality is now using the Anti-Land Invasion Unit to attack the occupiers directly. On Saturday and Sunday, and again this morning, the occupiers were attacked by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. They have set their dogs on people, beaten them with the butts of their guns and attacked them with their fists. Money and phones have been stolen. When the Anti-Land Invasion Unit left after the attack this morning Nhlanhla Mtshali had been beaten so badly that people first thought that he was dead. He is still alive though and has been rushed to hospital.

We are dealing with a violent and criminal municipality that has no regard for the law or for the dignity and lives of the poor. The ANC tells us that we must support them as they will bring land to the people. Yet when we occupy land they repress us with violent criminality. We are confronting a gangster state.

The struggle for land and dignity continues. We will continue to occupy land and to hold the land that we have occupied.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Blessing Izile Nyuswa

3 OCTOBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Repression in Durban

The Movement of Abahlali baseMjondolo continues to face serious and unlawful repression by the ANC led municipality in Durban. Right now the community in Cato Manor right now are trying to collect all the pieces and rebuild what is left of their lives after repeated violent attacks by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. During these attacks people have been seriously assaulted, beaten with the butts of guns and shot, often multiple times, with rubber bullets.

Cato Manor has now become a war zone. People's homes are on the ground. People have serious injuries. The very government that claims to be democratic and carry the mandate of the people is organising these brutal attacks to suppress the struggle for land. We will hold this land just as we have held the land in all the other occupations that have faced serious repression.

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.

It seems as though that the ANC councillors in the eThekweni municipality have not learnt from the two ward councillor who are currently serving a life sentence in Kokstad for murdering our comrade Thuli Ndlovu in KwaNdengezi. Our movement does not accept repression. We always stand with our comrades.

We will not sit and watch as people are being abused and democracy is being vandalised. We will not sit and keep quiet as corruption is unfolding in front of our eyes. We will not sit and keep quiet just because we are threatened by mafias who are councillors by day. We are aware that the politics in KwaZulu-Natal is dirty. We are aware that councillors have hit men. We are aware that many police officers take instructions from politicians and disregard the law.

We will not be deterred by threats of deaths from people who are directionless. We will continue to fight for land and democracy. We are willing to face the barrel of the gun for justice.

Our struggle is rooted in the occupations and the streets but we also work to occupy other sites of struggle too. We will be sending a strong delegation to the Habitat International Coalition meeting in Nairobi and we will use the platform to exert maximum international pressure against the repression that we are facing in Durban.

Thapelo Mohapi
George Bonono

6 OCTOBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali Women's Choral Society to Launch its First Album

Women's power is the foundation of our movement. Abahlali women have always been in the for-front of our struggle for land, decent housing and dignity. Women have always been in forefront of defending our struggle and facing serious attacks from the state. They have been beaten, tortured, arrested and some have been killed in the hands of the police, gangster politicians and izinkabi. Our movement is committed to building women's power in struggle.

The history of the Abahlali Women's Choral Society begins with the Marikana Land Occupation in Cato Crest. In 2013 Abahlali resisted serious repression from the eThekweni Municipality and the ANC in the Marikana Land Occupation. Several comrades were arrested, several comrades were injured and several comrades were murdered. Thembinkosi Qumbela was first assassinated in March 2013. Nkululeko Gwala was assassinated in June 2013. It was the same year and same community where Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by a police officer during a road blockade in September 2013.

Despite all this repression the community held the occupied land. They rebuilt again and again and refused to give up. Many women were courageous and stood firm in defence of the occupied land.

In the Marikana Land Occupation the settlement was destroyed by the state and rebuilt by the occupiers 12 times. In Sisonke Village, where women's power was also the foundation of a brave struggle, the comrades rebuilt 24 times. This is what it takes to win land in South Africa in 2017.

The struggle in the Marikana Land Occupation was very hard. One of the ways in which women in the occupation expressed their sorrow and how they transformed it into power was by forming a choir. The choir enabled them to draw strength from each other and to share that strength with the movement as a whole. The choir was used to build inkani. The members of the choir say that the movement became a warm home for them and that the choir became

a way to express their gratitude to Abahlali for being a home in a time of great repression.

Their songs are mainly about the struggle, and praising Abahlali and ubuhlali. They promote ubuhlali and salute Abahlali. Today Cato Crest is one of the most organised and strongest branches of Abahlali.

Their struggle was waged in on the land, in the streets and in the courts. A high price was paid. Along with the three deaths some comrades remain permanently disabled. But they have held the land.

Today the City has recognised the settlement. The ward councillor who was a warlord has changed and he cooperates with Abahlali. There are no more evictions. Water and sanitation has been installed and today there is peace and stability.

On Sunday the first album of the Abahlali Women's Choral Society will be launched at the Cato Crest sports ground. Abahlali will once again use this opportunity to demonstrate that shack dwellers can think, that we can be creative, innovative and reasonable. We will show that we are able to use arts and music to build our strength and communicate our politic.

Our message is that it is time we reclaim ubuhlali. We hope to promote ubuhlalism as an idea that is grounded in deepen human values that informs the society we are struggling to build. Our message seeks to promote our living politic' which is a politic that is grounded in real day to day lives of ordinary people of our society.

Music and creativity have been vital to how we have sustained our struggle even in times of state repression. We hope that the choir could get some support so that we can take this choir on National Tour.

The songs on the album dedicated to all shack dwellers, and all impoverished and marginalised people. We hope that all struggling communities throughout the globe can draw strength from our experience. We hope that the can use that strength courageously and wisely to destroy all forms of oppression to any human being anywhere in the world.

We have invited all progressive people's movements, comrades, activists, church leaders, friends, families and individuals to join us on Sunday. We are very pleased that Bishop Rubin Phillip will be with us on Sunday. We have

also invited artists, poets and other talented people from among the impoverished and oppressed. We hope to use this launch also to build solidarity between movements and within movements.

While we celebrate the launch of this album we note that we will meet during another time of repression. The eThekweni Municipality is waging a brutal, illegal and violent war, day after day, against the new land occupation in Cato Manor.

We stand firm in the struggle for land and dignity. We will defend every occupation. Women's power is the foundation of our politic and we affirm to the world that we respect women's power and that we are committed to build women's power in every occupation, in the movement and in society.

Date: Sunday, 8 October

Time: 10:00am

Venue: Cato Crest Sports Ground

Contact persons:

Mqapheli Bonono

Thandi Ngcobo

27 OCTOBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Two Year Old Child Electrocuted in Silver City, uMlazi

On Wednesday, at 3 p.m., a two year old child was electrified Silver City, uMlazi, in ward 88. A young life lost so early in a society in which the lives of the poor are not counted as human lives.

The leadership of Abahlali in this branch has been trying in vain to engage the ward councillor about putting in essential services such as water, sanitation and electricity. Instead of responding to the essential needs of the community the ward councilor, S'busiso Maphumulo, continues to threaten our leadership in Silver City.

He has on a number of occasions been threatening our chairperson Lungelo Hlongwane. The very same ANC that claims to protect the interest of the poor continues to suppress and threatens the very people it claims to protect.

Electricity is life and people who are living in shacks also have the right to electricity. But this government does not realise this. They leave us to burn and to be electrocuted when people make unsafe connections. They leave children to do their homework with candles and women to be unsafe in the dark.

This is a young life. This child could have become a doctor or even a President of the country. But today he is no more. This is because of a councillor who thinks that he is boss and that the people who have voted for him are his servants. It is because of a ruling party that holds the poor in contempt. It is because of a society in which the This is the same story as in Cato Manor where the lives and dignity of the poor have been constantly vandalized by the government. The Secretary General of our movement is currently in Banjul in an African Human Rights Commission Conference to report on the gross violation of human rights by a brutal and oppressive government that claims to be democratic.

We will continue to encourage our people to connect themselves to essential services, and to do so in a well organised and safe manner, because the government is busy putting these services to the rich and elite. They have forgotten about us the poor. But when there are elections they remember that we exist.

George Bonono
Lungelo Ngwane
Thuso Mohapi

27 OCTOBER 2017

Emergency press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Brutal Attack in Cato Manor – Comrades are Currently Being Assaulted in Police Custody

This morning the Anti-Land Invasion Unit launched another brutal and illegal attack on the new land occupation in Cato Manor. Once again they destroyed and burnt people's homes and possessions and engaged in serious assault.

Once again people resisted. Four comrades were arrested and taken to the Cato Manor police station where they are currently being subject to serious assault. Two other comrades have also been arrested and are currently in a police van.

The land will be held. The resistance will continue.

This is an emergency statement. We will be able to give more details on the unfolding events later on.

George Bonono

6 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Repression & Intimidation in Lindelani

Yesterday in Lindelani, Ward 43, Sibusiso Cele and Xolani Msomi called a community assembly to prepare for the launch of a new AbM branch in the area.

There is a housing development in the area but people who are not members of the ANC and the IFP have not been given the numbers on their shacks that signify that they have been placed on the list to get houses. This is the usual corruption that happens all the time in Durban. Many of the people in the area that have joined our movement are among those who have been excluded from the housing project.

Knowing very well that there is a strong tendency to repression Cele and Msomi went to the police station, and met the Commissioner, whose name is Canal Madonsela to inform him that the assembly had been planned and to ask for protection against repression. The Commissioner signed that they had a right to hold a meeting and promised to come and protect them should they have any attempt to close the meeting down.

Before the assembly could start two men tried to assault Cele. He had to flee. He called the police for protection, as agreed. However the ANC CLO for the housing project, Mabutho, arrived with the local IFP chairperson, Mhlongo and a group of men armed with guns. These men threatened the people who had gathered for the assembly and people had to escape. The assembly was not able to go ahead.

Right now Cele and Msomi are in hiding. Since your movement was first formed in 2005 attempts to hold meetings in new areas, and especially attempts to launch branches, have often resulted in serious threats and intimidation from local party gangsters. This is the first time, though, that the ANC and IFP have united in the same area to try and suppress our movement.

Everyone must know that in Lindelani our members are being threatened. If any harm comes to Cele, Msomi, or anyone else, we will hold Mabutho, Mhlongo and the local structures of the ANC and the IFP responsible.

The matter has been reported to the local police and we will continue to organise in Lindelani and to occupy political space, as well as land, in the area. We will not give in to this kind of political thuggery by political parties intent on protecting their corruption.

Sibusiso Cele
Mqapheli Bonono

12 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Foreman Road Settlement Devastated by Fire – a Child has Died

Today at around 1:30 am in the morning a fire broke out in the Foreman Road Settlement in Clare Estate, Durban. The fire started when a candle fell and ended up burning the Xulu family home. We have just heard that a two year old child in the Xulu family has died in hospital. Other members of the family are in a critical condition at King Dinizulu Hospital. Around eight hundred families have been affected by the fire.

Our movement has been struggling to politicise shack fires for more than ten years, and to organise, mobilise and build alliances against the oppressive conditions that cause shack fires. Shack fires are a result of the unequal distribution of urban land, the failure to provide basic services like water and electricity to people and the inhuman conditions in which people are forced to live, including structures built very close together and made of highly flammable materials.

Comrades in the Foreman Road settlement have been part of the struggle to politicise shack fires and to oppose the oppressive conditions that lead to shack fires for more than ten years. This community, like others, has suffered numerous fires in that time. This is also the very same community where a 2 week old baby Jayden Khoza was killed as a result of inhaling the teargas from the police in May this year. On that day the community was protesting for electricity. If free and safe electricity had been provided this fire, caused by a candle, would not have happened.

We are left to burn because our lives count for nothing in this society. A society that does not recognise our lives as human lives, as lives that must count the same as all other lives, is an oppressive society that must be replaced.

We struggle for radical land reform, including in the cities, that puts the social value of land before its commercial value. We struggle for services and decent housing for all. We struggle for a society in which every human life counts as a human life.

We are very saddened by the fact that during the panic of the fire some young men assaulted a member of the fire department while trying to control a fire hose to ensure that their homes were protected. This was a disgraceful act and our movement takes a clear position against it. We need to work together when fighting fires and to work closely with the fire department.

We continue to advance and protect the interests of the impoverished and oppressed, especially those who live in shacks like the Xulus. The struggle continues.

Mqapheli Bonono
Thapelo Mohapi

14 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

A Second Life has been Lost to the Foreman Road Shack Fire

On Monday we reported that Sisipho Xulu, a two year old boy, had died in hospital after sustaining terrible injuries in the shack fire that devastated the Foreman Road settlement in the early hours of Sunday morning. Yesterday, at around 2 in the afternoon, the community got the sad news that Eric Mpanza, Sisipho's father, had also died in hospital.

The news came during a tense meeting between the community and Municipality. The Municipality has promised to take care of the costs of the funeral. We hope that this is not more of the usual lies that have been the order of the day for so many years. The Municipality has lied to us, the poor, so many times before that people have lost trust in the officials.

Our movement will stand with the family and the community during this very difficult time. Eric was from Mozambique and we will do what we can to ensure that his body is returned home with dignity. We will work to rebuild the community, and to organise to fight future fires together and to work with the fire department, and to struggle against the oppressive conditions that leave some of us to die in shack fires while others sleep safely at night.

These fires will stop when there is a fair distribution of urban land, based on social need and not profit, and access to services and decent housing for all. These fires continue to happen because our lives do not count as human lives to this society. We remain disposable.

Mqapheli Bonono
Thapelo Mohapi

16 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eThekweni Municipality Breaks Promises Once Again – Protest Currently Underway

Three lives have now been lost to the fire that devastated the Foreman Road settlement in the early hours of Sunday morning leaving more than a thousand people homeless. On Monday the Municipality promised to provide the people who had been left homeless after with fire with building materials. They promised that the building materials would be provided on Thursday, which is today. The building materials have not be provided and the Mayor has decided not to come and address the people.

Once again all we have received from the government is lies and contempt. The people have decided to take to the streets. A protest is currently underway.

The government needs to answer to the people. Proper emergency support must be provided to all those who lost their homes and possessions in the fire. Immediate steps must be taken to address the oppressive conditions that result in shack fires including the unequal distribution of urban land and unequal access to services and housing.

Our dignity is not negotiable. The struggle continues.

Mqapheli Bonono
Thapelo Mohapi

21 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Three Murders in Sisonke Village

Three people were murdered in Sisonke Village, in Lamontville, on Sunday, including our chairperson in the area Sibonela Mpeku.

Our members gave Sisonke Village its new name on 13 July 2014 and our branch was launched there on 9 November 2014. During that year we issued statements noting that the local ANC had tried to prevent us from holding meetings and had made serious threats against our members. Since then there has been a long struggle in this area with serious intimidation from the local ANC, including death threats, and at least twenty four armed and illegal evictions. The comrades in the area have rebuilt their homes again and again. They have remained on the land despite regular violence and intimidation. They have organised road blockades and other protests and taken their struggle to court.

On 28 March this year we issued a statement noting that death threats had been made against our members in the area by the local ANC.

On 3 November 2015 we issued a statement noting the violence and intimidation against our members by the local ANC and the police, the blatant discrimination against people from the Eastern Cape and that our attempts to meet with the ward councillor, and our letters to her asking her to intervene in the situation, had gone unanswered.

In 2014 and 2015 we repeatedly went to court to stop the violent and unlawful evictions in the area. We won victories in the Durban High Court and in the Constitutional Court protecting our members against these evictions.

Our chairperson, Sibonela Mpeku, has lived under constant death threats and intimidation from local ANC structures since 2014. These threats were reported to the structures in our movement and, in writing, to the councillor of the area, the ward committee, the Branch Executive Committee of the ANC, the ANC Regional Secretary as well as to the Lamontville Police Station. We received no responses to these letters and reports.

Our movement has also held meetings in the community to denounce these threats, to oppose the politic of blood and death, and to argue for democracy

to be built and defended from below, and for unity in the struggle for land and dignity.

However despite our protests, our letters, our attempts to meet with various people in the ANC and our numerous actions in court no attempt has been made to address the political gangsterism in the area. This failure has now had tragic consequences including the loss of three lives in one day.

On Sunday, 19 November at about 11am the Abahlali Youth League had a meeting in Sisonke Village. Our local chairperson, Mpeku, was there at the invitation of our youth structure. The meeting went well without any threats or intimidation.

On the same afternoon at about 15pm, Fiza Madlala called a community meeting. Madlala used to claim to own the land in the area and he used to sell land to people. He was with the ANC and had been hostile to our movement in the name of the ANC, and with the support of the police. However when he realised that he had lost support he started moving away from the ANC. This resulted in some tensions between him and the ANC. He had apologised to us for his conduct. As a result we were building a working relationship with him. Some of our members, including Mpeku, attended the meeting called by Madlala.

The meeting was chaired by Madlala and our comrades engaged well in that meeting. But while Madlala was on the podium addressing the meeting an unknown young man walked into the meeting. He was carrying a knife and he went straight to Madlala and stabbed him in full view of the community. That man was then chased by community members. He was quickly caught and stoned to death. Madlala was rushed to hospital but he passed away.

At about 11pm Mpeku was kidnapped by unknown men while he was sleeping in his shack. He was dragged outside his shack and stabbed. He was screaming for help as he was dragged away. While Mpeku's brother was searching for his brother he saw someone known in the community, a man who owns two she-beens, running away. When Mpeku's brother tried to ask him why he was running he chopped his hand with a bush knife. Mpeku's brother sustained serious injuries and had to be rushed to hospital as well. An hour after he was kidnapped Mpeku's body was found. He was covered with blood and had terrible wounds.

We do not yet know the identity of the young man who murdered Madlala, what his motive for the murder was or who he is associated with. We do not yet

know why Mpeku was murdered, or who murdered him. All kinds of rumours are flying around. Some of these rumours are highly contradictory. But at the moment we do not have clear evidence as to why Madlala and Mpeku were murdered.

Comrade Mpeku was 32 years of age. He was the elected chairperson of our movement in our Sisonke Village branch and an elected member of our KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Council. He was a very kind cadre and a quiet and thoughtful man held in high respect in his community and in the movement. Mpeku was one of our cadres whose lived experience best demonstrated the kind of society we are struggling to build every day. In October this year Mpeku was one of the six delegates of Abahlali who represented our movement in a solidarity exchange visit and learning in Kenya.

As impoverished black people in South Africa our lives count for nothing. We can be evicted, tortured, slandered, beaten, threatened and murdered with impunity. We struggle every day, year after year, against this vandalization of our humanity and to insist that all lives must count as human lives.

We have won many victories. We have occupied and held land. We have won services. We have driven repression back. We have occupied all kinds of spaces that oppression has denied to us. But still, after more than ten years of struggle, a struggle that has mobilised tens of thousands of people and cost the lives of a number of our comrades, we continue to be treated as disposable, as rubbish, as animals.

All our efforts to call on the government, the ruling party and police to put an end to the politic of blood and political gangsterism have failed. We are not safe. We do not live in a democracy. We live every day knowing that the struggle for land and dignity will continue to cost the lives of our comrades. None of us is safe.

We call upon all progressive forces and people to work with us to name and expose the monster politic of blood that has characterised the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Every murder must be fully and fairly investigated and all perpetrators, no matter their political affiliations and connections, must be prosecuted, convicted and sentenced. Impunity must end.

No arrest has yet been made in this matter. We call on the police to ensure a speedy, fair and credible investigation into the murder of all three of the people

who died in Sisonke Village on Sunday. Justice must be served. The perpetrators must be brought to book.

Our thoughts and sympathies are with the families of the three men who were murdered on Sunday.

We also wish to note that many of our branches are facing a new wave of intimidation and threats. Local ANC structures are saying that it is now time to put an end to the 'red shirts' (Abahlali baseMjondolo) and threatening to drive our comrades out of their homes or kill them. Right now comrades are in hiding in Lindelani, Asiyindawo and Clare Estate.

S'bu Zikode (President)

Thapelo Mohapi (General Secretary)

22 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to hold a Memorial Service in Memory of Sibonelo Mpeku Tomorrow (Thursday)

Tomorrow Abahlali will hold a memorial service to respect and honour the life of our late comrade Sibonelo Mpeku. We will be celebrating his life and his contribution to building the power of the impoverished in struggle. Mpeku was one of our great cadres who knew he needed to be humble and respect others in order to demonstrate the kind of leadership that we want. But at the same time Mpeku knew that he needed to be firm and brave to realise land, housing and dignity.

There is no other way that we think we can best respect him, and the other comrades who have lost their lives in our struggle, than by making sure that what our fallen comrades fought for lives forever. Mpeku, like many of our comrades was denied the right to dignity in life. We will bury him with dignity. We have to do all we can to make sure that his spirit inspires us all to insist on our dignity, and a world that respects the dignity of all people.

The memorial service will also help us build unity and solidarity amongst the community and the movement in these trying times. We note with great concern the threats and fear that continues to tear apart the hope and the inspiration of our communities. Along with the crisis in Sisonke Village in Lamontville our comrades are also facing serious intimidation and threats in Asiyindawo, also in Lamontville, Silver City in uMlazi, Cato Manor, Bhambayi in Inanda, Clare Estate and Newcastle in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. In Lindelani ANC and IFP local structures have colluded against Abahlali and two of our leaders are in hiding.

We will do our best to ensure that all the families who lost their love ones are accommodated in this memorial service. We will do all we can to rise above the politic of division, fear and bloodshed and to unite the oppressed around a democratic politics and an emancipatory vision.

We would like to invite all progressive movements, church leaders and struggling communities to be with us in Sisonke Village. The Memorial Service will be held at Sisonke near sport ground at 14:00pm tomorrow Thursday, 23 November 2017.

S'bu Zikode: (President)

Mqapheli Bonono: (Provincial Chairperson)

26 NOVEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Abahlali to launch a branch in Cato Manor

Abahlali baseMjondolo will be launching a branch in Cato Manor in Umkhumbane today. We have had many members in the area for some time and they are now ready to constitute and elect a council and officially become part of the organised structures of our movement.

The comrades in Umkhumbane have faced serious repression and regular attacks in the struggle for land and dignity. There are comrades who have lost their eyes and ears and some are not walking properly. Mlungisi Mokoena, an 18 year old pupil, was shot in both legs by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit for refusing to let them demolish his home. Women have been severely beaten by these armed men.

Cato Manor has become a war zone. If you are impoverished, black and not a member of the ruling party you are treated as if you are beneath the law, as if you can be attacked and evicted with impunity, as if you do not count as a person. The Mayor of eThekweni has refused to recognise that people occupying land in Cato Manor should have the same rights as all other people.

We will continue to resist repression, and to take the struggle for land and dignity forward, by building the democratic power of the impoverished and oppressed from below. We have recently reported the unlawful and brutal repression in Cato Manor and other matters, including the murder of our comrade and leader Sbonelo Mpeku last Sunday, to the UN Special Rapporteur for Africa.

The struggle continues despite the constant risk of violence and death.

The branch launch will start at 10:00 am today at Cato manor.

Land & Dignity!

Occupy! Resist! Develop!

Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande
Thapelo Mohapi
Simoll

1 DECEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Sibonelo Mpeku to be Laid to Rest in Bizana

Tomorrow, 2 December, we will be laying our friend and comrade Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku, former chairperson of our branch in Sisonke Village in Lamontville, to rest. This has been a difficult time for his family, his community and the movement at large. Comrade Mpeku was a leader that we all looked up too and respected. He was a man of God who wanted justice, land and dignity for the poor.

He will be laid to rest in his home village of eMangweni in Bizana in the Eastern Cape. He will be buried with dignity and we will celebrate his life with his family. Our members will come out in their numbers from our branches in Bizana and in Durban.

We want to send a clear message to those who continue to undermine and oppress us by giving comrade Mpeku a funeral that shows the world the respect in which he was held in life and the respect in which he is held in death. We have lost six comrades in the struggle for land and dignity.

We are working with the police to ensure that no stone is left unturned in the investigation into the murder of Mpeku.

We will place the full weight of our movement behind the struggle to ensure that his killers are brought to justice.

Repression has not stopped our struggle against oppression. We continue to build the democratic power of the impoverished from below. We continue to occupy and to hold land. We continue to struggle for access to decent housing, services and education. We continue to occupy all kinds of spaces in which oppression excludes us. We continue to insist that wealth and power must be shared and that South Africa must belong to all who live in it.

We will continue with the struggle that Comrade Mpeku fought for until his last his last days. We will honour him by singing the struggle songs which he enjoyed while he was still with us.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande

11 DECEMBER 2017

Statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Building Democratic Popular Power in the Struggle for Land & Dignity – 2017 Year End Statement

Our movement continues to grow. We currently have 46 branches in good standing. Our branch by branch audit of members in good standing has now counted the members in 32 branches and we currently have over 42 000 members on our spreadsheet. We have successfully expanded into Gauteng and the Eastern Cape.

However we continue to face lies, evictions, life threatening living conditions and serious repression.

This year has seen the Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality making empty promises as her predecessor has done. The politicians continue to treat us with contempt and to take us for fools. With every election new promises are made and yet every year more people are living in shacks. No politician or political party has taken the urban crisis seriously or taken real steps to allocate urban land on the basis of social need, address the life threatening conditions in the settlements with urgency and begin a program of real action to ensure decent housing for all.

When impoverished people have occupied land, which is a form of urban planning from below that can help to democratise our cities, we continue to face armed evictions, which are often illegal. The ruling party talk about the land question while taking violent and often criminal action against people who are actually occupying land. In Durban people's homes have continued to be demolished with brutal impunity even though we have obtained an interdict that prevented the Municipality from demolishing, destroying, burning of people's homes or threatening to do so. Cato Manor became a war zone this year. Innocent people were shot at with live ammunition and were repeatedly physically attacked by the Anti Land Invasion Unit, a violent and criminal organisation. In Ekukhanyeni, in one of our new branches, Samuel Hloele (29) was shot dead by

the Anti Land Invasion Unit. His 'crime' was trying to build a shelter for himself and his family on his ancestors' land. We can be proud that the community in Ekukhanyeni is today settled and is not bothered by the Anti Land Invasion Unit.

In the shack settlements we continue to face life threatening conditions due to the refusal to provide basic services such as electricity and adequate sanitation and water. When we organise to make own arrangements to provide electricity the state responds with violence. When we organise to demand the urgent provision of services the state also often responds with violence. This year has seen a young life taken away from us in an undignified way. A two week old baby Jayden Khoza was killed after inhaling tear gas after police chased people who were protesting for electricity in the Foreman Road settlement. Later on this year there was a devastating fire in the same settlement that left three people dead. Our lives count for nothing in this society.

We recently lost our friend, Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku, the chairperson of our Sisonke Village branch, who was kidnapped and murdered. Mpeku has now joined comrades like Nkululeko Gwala, Nqobile Nzuza and Thuli Ndlovu as a martyr of our movement, and the longer and wider struggle for land and dignity in our cities. We buried him with dignity and power in a red funeral in Bizana. This murder of Mpeku has emotionally affected many of our members. We are doing all that we can to ensure that the police investigate this matter urgently, fairly and effectively.

However in the midst of all this oppression we continue to build the democratic power of the oppressed. We continue to occupy and hold land. We continue to build our cultural power and a highlight of the year was the launch of the album by the choir that was formed in the Cato Crest land occupation. We continue to struggle on the occupied land, in the streets, in the courts and in various places to which oppression has tried to exclude us. We have made major advances in terms of building solidarity with comrades elsewhere in the country and on the continent.

We continue to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below with the aim of ensuring that power, land and wealth are shared fairly. We continue to place women's power at the centre of our struggle. Regular violence from the police, the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, Municipal Security and party

gangsters has not and will not deter us. We have accepted that to join the struggle is to accept the risk of death.

As we to the festive season know very well that the majority of the people are unemployed and living in abject impoverishment and therefore we cannot say that we wish them a Merry Christmas. Our lives still do not matter in society. This government that claims to represent us continues to oppress us. We are still living in the mud like pigs. Therefore we have no choice but to stand up for our humanity.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the solidarity from our comrades from around South Africa and the world. All messages of solidarity received after the murder of Mpeku have been communicated to the movement, and to Mpeku's family.

Occupy. Resist. Develop.

Thapelo Mohapi
Zandile Nsibande
Mqapheli Bonono

19 DECEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

Another Cadre has Fallen in a Land Occupation

On Sunday 19 November our chairperson in the Sisonke Village land occupation in Lamontville, Sibonelo Mpeku, was kidnapped and murdered. On Sunday 17 December 2017, at around 4 p.m., two of our members, 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.

Comrade Soyiso was the branch Youth League organiser in eNkanini. He was a very active militant who played a key role in the early stages of the occupation. He was from the village of Thombo, near to Port St. Johns in the Eastern Cape.

We do not know who the men who attacked our Comrades are, or who sent them. We will make our own investigations and we will bring the full power of our movement to push for a credible investigation by the police. However Cato Manor police have continually refused to open charges against the Land Invasions Unit after illegal and violent attacks against occupiers. It has been made clear that the occupiers are being treated as if they are beneath the law and the Land Invasions Unit are being treated as if they have impunity. We are also fully aware that there has been huge hostility to the occupation from both the so called ‘rate payers’ and the ANC in the area.

Land occupations are regularly repressed with violence, including murder. The nearby Marikana land occupation in Cato Crest cost three lives. Them-binkosi Qumbela and Nkululeko Gwala were both assassinated by the izinkabi in 2013. Nqobile Nzuza was murdered by the police in the same year. Many people have also been seriously injured in the eNkanini occupation, including Mlungisi Mokoena who was shot in the legs by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit earlier this year.

There have been a number of public threats against activists in this occupation from local ANC leaders. The party leaders in the local ward have made it clear that the people in the occupation will not live in peace since, they say, the land “belongs to their children”. There have also been various threats from the middle class residents in the area. It is a matter of record that one of these residents has fired shots into the occupation.

The movement has on a number of occasions tried to engage with the leadership of the municipality to try and curb this situation. We have also engaged with the Deputy Mayor Fawzia Peer as a representative of the middle class residents.

Due to relentless violent and illegal evictions our movement obtained a court order which prevented the municipality from burning, destroying and evicting people illegally from the area. We know very well that after failing in court the ANC will try other means, including killing our members. We know what they are capable of. This occupation has angered a lot of people in the ANC, including at provincial level.

The politicians talk endlessly about the land question. Our crime is that we occupy and hold land. Our crime is that we act to realise access to land and the right to the city for the impoverished and the oppressed. This is why we are being killed.

Along with violent and illegal evictions, torture and random violence, murder is a way to terrorise those who are in the occupations so that they do not continue. Murder is used to teach us to obey our oppressors.

It seems highly likely that this shooting was political. At the time of the shooting one of the members of the local ANC was overheard by a resident of the occupation saying “Angeke nikuthole ukuphumula” (you will never live in peace) referring to the occupation in Cato Manor. Our members are attacked because they have defied those who tried and failed to crush this occupation. We are well aware that there were meetings that were held at closed doors discussing on how to deal with those in this occupation. At the time when the situation was tense the ANC were very sure that the occupation will not be a success. Now that it has become a success our members are attacked.

Our movement has held the Mayor and City Manager personally responsible for defying the order of court. The matter will be heard in court on 24 January.

Today, our people do not feel safe as they are not aware who their enemy is. We don't yet know exactly who sent the men that attacked our comrades. This occupation has once again become a war zone.

We will continue to occupy and hold land.

Thapelo Mohapi
T.J Ngongoma
Mqapheli Bonono
Mlungisi Mokoena

22 DECEMBER 2017

Press statement · Abahlali baseMjondolo

eNkanini to honour Comrade Soyiso Nkqayini

The murder of Comrade Soyiso Nkqayini, one of the leading militants in the eNkanini land occupation in Cato Manor, and the organiser of our Youth League, has come as a shock at the time when our movement is still fresh from mourning the death of Sbonelo Mpeku who was abducted and killed in the Sisonke Village land occupation in November.

Tomorrow we will gather in eNkanini to honour and respect a cadre who was in the forefront of the struggle for land. Soyiso Nkqayini was a fearless militant who was always courageous and vocal during the tense times when the eNkanini land occupation came under violent attack for the Anti-Land Invasion Unit. He endured a lot in the struggle for the dignity of the impoverished and oppressed. He was a young leader with a lot of potential to become the kind of honourable and brave leader that our country so lacks.

Our movement is encouraged by the bravery the community that has been formed via this land occupation. They have vowed not to stop the occupation. In fact they are now fuelled to be even stronger than before in the struggle for land and dignity.

Those who have thought that they have killed the spirit of the movement have to think again because this movement will continue to grow even under these difficult conditions. We will not be deterred. We will continue to build the democratic power of the oppressed from below.

On the 4th of January we will be going to court to witness justice as the police officer who has been found guilty of the murder of Nqobile Nzuza will be sentenced. On the 24th of January we will be going to court to hold the eThekweni mayor and municipal manager personally liable for continuing to violate the court order that prevented the municipality from evicting and demolishing people's structures in eNkanini.

The memorial service will be held in eNkanini, Cato Manor tomorrow, Saturday the 23rd of December 2017 at 12:00.

Thapelo Mohapi
Mqapheli Bonono
Zandile Nsibande