

The idea of 'land invasions' taking place in South Africa - as they do in Latin America - caused great consternation for landowners, developers and state structures. In this joint memorandum, the ANC and UDF outline the factors which influenced the emergence of the strategy in South Africa, and detail the response required to meet the needs of the homeless.

**Memorandum from the UDF and the ANC on Urban Land Policies, presented to the Minister of Planning and Provincial Affairs, Mr. Hernus Kriel.
August 16th, 1990.**

Introduction

The United Democratic Front recently issued a call for those who are landless and without proper homes to settle on unused land. This has been referred to more generally as 'land invasions', and has been greeted with dismay by *inter alia*, private landowners, white municipalities and the central government.

This call by the UDF merely reflects a response that has already been happening in communities through South Africa, where tens of thousands of landless people have taken their own initiatives to find shelter on whatever land they can find.

The UDF and the ANC are aware that there is a need to develop a proper policy of urbanisation and urban settlement, and that the construction of residential areas needs careful planning. The UDF and the ANC, together with community-based organisations, shackdweller committees and the democratic trade union

movement, are willing to participate in the formulation of policies that begin to address the urgent shortage of land, services and houses.

In the interim, the UDF and the ANC call on the government to adopt the following measures:

1. Stop the demolition of shacks with immediate effect.

The existence of millions of shacks in the urban areas of South Africa is a consequence of the policies of apartheid applied to black people over many decades.

Apartheid policies destroyed people's houses and uprooted existing communities. Apartheid policies created the housing backlog by prohibiting the construction of houses for black people in 'white' urban areas for nearly thirty years. Apartheid policies confined black people to townships on a small percentage of urban land, causing widespread overcrowding and

unhealthy living conditions.

The UDF and the ANC believe that all human beings have a basic right to shelter. It is inhumane to destroy a person's shelter without providing suitable alternative accommodation. Until government land and housing policies are in a position to provide land, and decent and affordable housing for all, no shack could be demolished.

2. The UDF and the ANC call for the urgent and immediate release of more land for low-income housing throughout South Africa, based on the following criteria:

2.1. Community Participation

To date there has been no proper and meaningful consultation with representative organisations over the release of urban land for low-income housing. Neither have communities in need of land been able to participate in the land allocation process. The UDF and the ANC call for the establishment of a permanent national land commission, with powers to begin drafting new land policies for the cities and towns of South Africa, and that bodies such as the ANC, UDF, community-based organisations, shackdweller committees and the democratic trade union movement have full representation on such a commission.

2.2. Release of information

The central government and the provincial administrations have a large amount of information on urban land, including research on the availability of land for low income settlement, geological conditions and ownership patterns. (For example, a private sector consortium drew up a report on behalf of the government on the availability of land in the PWV area some years ago, which has never been made public). The UDF and the ANC request that all information on urban land be made available as soon as possible.

2.3. Affordable land

The UDF and the ANC believe that land is released for low-income housing should be affordable. The existing urban land market in South Africa is highly imbalanced, because of the high demand for, and the short supply of urban land. There is therefore a need for special solutions to ensure that the land released for low-income housing is affordable. However, the experience to date has been just the opposite. The release of land to private developers has led to widespread land speculation and land holding, which in turn has pushed up the prices of urban land, making low-income development almost impossible. The UDF and the ANC call for large amounts of urban land to be transferred to non-profit Community Land Trusts to avoid land speculation, and to ensure the construction of housing and basic services at affordable levels. (A recent proposal by the Alexandra Civic Organisation to the Transvaal Provincial Administration for the development of land near Alexandra known as the far East Bank gives a

clearer indication of the possible functions of a Community Land Trust.)

2.4. Proper planning and location of land for low-income housing.

In recent years, the UDF and the ANC recognise that more land has been made available for low-income housing. However, virtually all this land is located in places totally unsuitable for the integration of low-income communities into cities and towns. Existing new low-income areas, e.g. Orange Farm and Rietfontein, are far from work, economic opportunities, shops, schools and community facilities. The poor are being burdened once again with high transport costs. In terms of proper urban planning principles, the UDF and the ANC call for land to be released near places of work and economic opportunity, rather than on the extreme margins of urban areas.

2.5. Sustainable development

The UDF and the ANC are opposed to the creation of large areas of low-income housing (usually site and service), which have very little chance of becoming self-sustaining and viable residential communities. The UDF and the ANC call for a land-release policy that ensures the creation of a large number of smaller urban areas of low-income development within the existing urban areas. Low-income housing should be in the vicinity of financially-viable municipalities, that can participate in the provision and maintenance of bulk services, and contribute to the development of

the area. (A recent example of this is the planned creation of Tamboville settlement next to Wattville, a black township, on land and with funds belonging to Benoni, a white municipality).

2.6. Non-racial urban government

The UDF and the ANC call for the phasing out of racial forms of urban government, in particular of the black local authorities (BLAs). Because of their weak financial position, the BLAs have only been interested in the development of middle and upper-income housing, in an attempt to increase their small tax base. The UDF and the ANC regard negotiations on the release of urban land as part of the negotiations towards the creation of non-racial and democratic forms of urban government, based on integrated financial systems.

2.7. Rezoning of land for low-income housing

In principle, the UDF and the ANC call for an end to racial land zoning policies. As an interim measure, the UDF and the ANC call for a policy of rezoning within existing white municipalities. At the moment, the black townships are the only areas of the cities and towns where land for low-income housing is made available. This has led to situations of extremely high density in black townships, alongside white areas of very low density. (For example, Alexandra township has a density of 100 people per hectare, while adjacent Sandton has a density of 8 per hectare.) Existing white municipalities should be required

HISTORY in the MAKING

to take active responsibility for low-income development within their boundaries, to take the pressure off existing high-density black townships.

2.8. The role of the state

The UDF and the ANC reject the current government policies of privatisation of housing, which fail to cater for 80% of the housing needs of the black population in South Africa. The UDF and the ANC are also opposed to the provision of third-class housing in the form of site and service schemes. The UDF and the ANC believe strongly that the state has an important role to play in the provision of land, services and houses for all South Africans.

2.9. Negotiations

The UDF and the ANC call on the government to commit itself to the provision of land, services housing and community facilities, and the abolition of the Land Acts, the Group Areas Act, the Black Community Development Act, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, the Slums Act and the Trespass Act. In addition, the UDF and the ANC call on the government to commit itself to a land policy that begins to challenge the existing racial patterns of land ownership, that have been shaped by years of racist legislation. In turn, the UDF and the ANC commit themselves to a process of serious negotiations towards the establishment of new land and housing policies that can begin to solve the problems of landlessness and homelessness.

If the issues that are outlined in the above memorandum are not dealt with seriously by the government, then the UDF and the ANC have no choice but to persist with policy the policy of orderly land invasions throughout the country, on unused private land, municipal land and provincial land.

There can be no justification for the continuation of landlessness and homelessness, for the lack of clean water, electricity, water-borne sewerage and other basic facilities, and the government must move rapidly to rectify the situation. Constitutional negotiations and a political settlement in South Africa will be rendered useless if urban areas continue to be inaccessible to the poor and the homeless.

JO'BURG CITY *Whose city?*

AN ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT
AND PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION



30 October — 9 December 1990

Johannesburg

Art Gallery

JOUBERT PARK

Tel. 725-3130

Convened by IDASA, ACTSTOP, SAHA and AFRAPIX