

Abahlali baseMjondolo

South Africa

Abahlali Base Mjondolo, the Zulu name for shack dwellers, is the largest group to emerge from South Africa's "informal settlements", the sprawling slums of wood, corrugated steel and cardboard shacks that have mushroomed near cities.

Abahlali Base Mjondolo is giving voice to millions of South Africans living in shacks and increasingly feeling forgotten by the post-apartheid government.

Declaration of the Unfreedom Day Rally
22 April 2018

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

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

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

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

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

We cannot lie to ourselves and say that we are free when those who are occupying land in order to live are tortured, harassed and murdered by the Anti-Land Invasion Unit, the Red Ants and Law Enforcement, as well as the ruling party. We must be honest. In 2018 we are still oppressed. We are still being murdered in the struggle for land and dignity. Our lives still count for nothing in the eyes of the state.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Freedom without dignity is meaningless. Freedom Without Land Means Nothing.
Revolutionary democracy will make the path that will take us forward.**

**Land. Housing. Dignity.
Occupy. Resist. Develop.**

