

17 August 2012

Abahlali baseMjondolo Press statement

Solidarity with Mine Workers at Marikana Platinum

Abahlali baseMjondolo are deeply shocked by the murderous cruelty of the South African police, and those that give the police their orders, at the Marikana Platinum Mine in the North West. The killing of more than 40 mine workers yesterday by the SAPS is immoral and brings great disgrace on our country. There were other ways and much better ways to handle the situation. Yesterday will always be remembered as a dark day in the long history of oppression in South Africa.

We wish to express our solidarity to all the families of the workers that have been killed and injured. We share your sorrow. You are not alone. We carry our pain together. Your children may not grow knowing their fathers but they will not grow alone. We have to care for each other and stand together as we struggle for a world that puts human beings first and treats all human beings equally. We wish to express our solidarity to all struggling workers. We face the same system that makes some people rich and others poor. We face the same government that refuses to recognise our humanity, which tries to force us to the margins of society and which represses us when we resist.

The ANC have shown no regard for the people of this country. They are putting us in transit camps and trying to keep us in bantustans. They are leaving us to burn in our shacks every winter. They are beating us in the police stations. They are shooting us in the streets. Millions of us cannot find work. A government that kills its citizens is immoral and must be opposed by everyone. A government that kills its citizens has lost all moral right to govern. What happened yesterday is no different from the killings of the apartheid government. This is no different to the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 which claimed 69 lives. It is no different to the Boipotong massacre in 1992 which claimed 45 lives.

Millions of people have suffered in their shacks and millions have suffered with work and without work year after year. Some shack dwellers are also workers and sometimes shack dwellers are too poor to be workers. But we have all suffered enough at the hands of the police, at the hands of politicians and at the hands of the rich. It has always been our call that real freedom

and democracy are still a dream for the poor and the working class. All we see is politicians enriching themselves by stealing public funds that are meant to better people's lives. All we see is that the new government keeps on with many of the worst policies of the old government. All we see is that our struggles are criminalised and repressed. The progressive middle classes are struggling to defend the freedom and democracy that they received in 1994. We are still struggling for freedom and democracy to come.

More than twenty five people have been killed by the police during protests since 2000. Tebogo Mkhonza in Harrismith, Monica Ngcobo in Umlazi and Andries Tatane in Ficksburg are just three of the people that have been murdered in the streets by the police. Activists have been tortured and assassinated. Our movement, like the Landless People's Movement and the Unemployed People's Movement, has been attacked in the night by armed men representing the ruling party. For months after our movement was attacked in the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban in 2009 the homes of our leading members were openly destroyed every weekend while the police refused to intervene. Last year Nigel Gumede, the Head of Housing in eThekweni, publicly said that the ANC was at war with our movement and threatened to kill S'bu Zikode. Senior people in the ANC have set a clear tone for the rest to follow. Poor people have been encouraged to attack and kill each other in the name of ethnicity and nationality. It is time to say enough. It is time to say no more. It is high time that all progressive forces join hands to curb this carnage. It is high time that all progressive forces join hands in a struggle for real justice and real democracy.

We have to recognise that there is a war against the poor in this country. We did not want this war but it has come to us. Today no one can deny that a war is being fought against the poor. The red ants and the police are not here to serve the people. They are here to drive the poor out of the cities, contain us in the human dumping grounds and repress our struggles. We have to stop pretending that the politicians are our comrades when they have chosen to make themselves our enemies. We have to fight the war that has come to us. And we have to fight it in a way that puts human dignity and the equality of all people at the start of our struggle and at the heart of our struggle.

We are aware of the dangers of the South African politic when struggling citizens demand real freedom and democracy. Activists are living under serious threats all over the country. We are aware of the time bomb that the shack

dwellers in this country are sitting on. We have always warned, from the time when we first started to organise, that the anger of the poor can go in many directions. The dangers that we face can come from how people respond to oppression as well as from oppression itself.

There is more protest in South Africa than in anywhere in the world. But the government takes no notice of the people. It responds by militarising the police. It responds by talking about third forces. The local party structures send out armed men in the night. The government wants to make the anger of the people criminal and treasonous. It works behind the scenes to support the armed men that invade our homes and threaten us and our families. We have to accept that this government does not care about us. We do not count to it. When we ask to be heard we are treated as criminals and traitors.

Abahlali baseMjondolo of the Western Cape will march to the National parliament in Cape Town at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon together with comrades from other organisations. In Durban we will hold conversations with different structures of our movement and our comrades in other organisations, as well as the churches, to plan a way forward. Global Peace and Justice Auckland in New Zealand will be marching to the South African embassy in Auckland at 1 Kimberly Road at 2pm today. Our comrades in Cape Town and New Zealand march with our solidarity.

We all have to stand together. A war has come to us and we must fight it in a way that makes sure that we never turn into our enemies. We must fight this war in a way that puts humanity against brutality and never in a way that puts one brutality against another. Once your struggle starts to make you like your enemies everything is lost. A politic of war has come to us. We have no choice but to resist. But we must resist with our own politic which is a militant people's politic that starts and ends by honouring the dignity of all people.

Sekwanele!

No House! No Land! No Vote!

Everyone Counts

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