

Tuesday, 26 July 2011  
Abahlali Press Statement

The Kennedy Road Development Committee and all Displacees Return to the Kennedy Road Settlement

Our acquittal in court without freedom to return to resetting our feet in Kennedy Road would be pointless.

After two and half year the Kennedy Road Development Committee, members of the Kennedy 12 and their relatives, as well as some members of AbM, went to Kennedy Road on Sunday to check on their homes and sites that they were residing on when our movement was attacked. We were about a hundred people.

The ululation of women during our arrival was a clear indication that our enemies are not the residents of Kennedy. Our enemies wear suits and ties and many of them occupy high positions in the City Council and the KwaZulu-Natal legislature.

The first stop was at the community hall. When we arrived in the hall the local ANC members had called the community to a meeting to try and boycott our return which did not work out. There were only twelve people there. In fact the community had organized a counter meeting to stop the ANC's employment of their comrades only. Fortunately the community of Kennedy refused to be fooled again by the thuggery people who are hiding under the ANC to hide their criminal act. We then proceeded to check on the premises that used to be the AbM headquarters. We found the place very filthy and it looked like there was no one responsible for keeping the area clean. After that we started with visiting Mbiko's house. Mbiko is a member of KRDC. His house was built with bricks. What we found there was only the walls. The roof, the doors as well as the window frames had been taken. The walls were about to be falling and someone had tied them with the strong rope to prevent them from falling. We fear that this may hurt neighbours.

We then proceeded to Zamisa's place. He is also a member of KRDC. His site is still available but what is left now is only one part of the wall. The other three walls had been destroyed and its was looking like it was recently destroyed. After that we then proceeded to Lembede's shack where we had found out that there is someone that had occupied his entire four room shack. We then proceeded to Simelane's shack where we found that the site is now smaller in a way that you can't even build a tiny shack there as the neighbors had taken some of his side of the site. We then went to Mdu's shack where he used to stay. There we found that the person who had occupied his shack has built a Spaza shop with a shebeen on the other side. When we entered there we were welcomed by a big and loud sound of music from a duke box and two pool tables outside. In other places where we had visited, especially those that used to be for Kennedy 12, people had built in their sites. There were only a few people for whom their places were still vacant.

What was very interesting was that in other places we had found that the occupiers had fled the shacks as soon as they saw us coming and left the shacks either locked or unlocked. We don't want to evict anyone. What we want is to be given an alternative accommodation in order that everyone displaced in the attack on our movement by the ANC can return to Kennedy Road without our return rendering anyone one homeless.

We have already written to the Mayor Mr. James Nxumalo and we are also speaking with the Local councillor of ward 25, Mr. Bhekisisa Ngcobo, to indicate that we want to negotiate a solution that allows all the evictees to return without anyone being evicted. We are still waiting for their reply to this urgent need for places of accommodation. As we speak displacees are still staying with friends and relatives and some of them are paying huge rental money which they are struggling to pay as most of them are not working or temporarily employed.

It was very sad to see the way the garbage has been piling up in every corner of the settlement with no one to pick it up where as there are people that are being given a tender to clean the settlement and paid. We wonder what they are doing? We were very disappointed to see some families having to sleep in the toilets while no one cares. We were disgusted by seeing our offices having been turned into toilets. This situation will cause people to suffer from TB and other unhygienic related diseases. No one should really be allowed to live such a deadly life. Last night (25 July 2011) the garbage that is being piled up has killed a person, it alleged that the pile fell onto a child causing death. This dirt was behind his house and as yesterday there was a heavy rain, this dirt fell to the shack while he was inside and push the shack and he was found death inside. The negligence of the eThekweni municipality has again claimed another life. How long shall people die in shacks without being given houses and services while they are waiting for the houses that Nigel Gumede promised to the people of Kennedy in 2009 and again a year back?

Abahlali wish to extend its sincere gratitude to the station commissioner Colonel De Villiers for deploying the police officer in Kennedy on Sunday 24 July 2011, during the visit. This is an evidence that AbM are committed to work with any government authority and law enforcing agencies that is there in the area for as long as it is for the betterment of the community.

We are now in the long process of rebuilding our lives from scratch. We would be happy for any support ranging from spiritual support, building materials, furnitures etc. We ask all responsible leaders and progressive forces to help us build this community, unite it and upgrade it. Abahlali want to see everyone being treated with respect and dignity, as people who count in our society.

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