

## **Victory for Abahlali baseMjondolo - Defeat of our detractors!**

We celebrate the victory that the shack-dwellers movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo, has won in court today where ALL of the 'Kennedy 12' have finally been acquitted of ALL charges against them.

For three years, since the violent attacks on Kennedy Road in 2009, we have stood side-by-side with the accused and with Abahlali while this politically-motivated and unjust process has dragged on. We are humbled by the perseverance of Abahlali, who have remained united, remained strong, and remained steadfast throughout. Theirs is the moral strength of those who know who are they, who know what they stand for, and who steadfastly know and speak the truth. Abahlali's victory today is a victory for all who speak the truth; it is a victory that should give courage to the poor of eThekweni, of South Africa, and the world who organise and mobilise together, and who speak and act for themselves. That is never an easy path and it seems always to provoke slander and violence from the powerful and the rich, and from those who would rather speak FOR the poor than listen. But it is the path of truth and justice, and we would all do well to listen respectfully and offer our solidarity to their struggles.

In granting the application to acquit the accused, the Magistrate noted that the testimonies and 'evidence' brought to sustain the charges was not just 'unsatisfactory' and 'contradictory' - but suspicious too. Indeed, during the coming months we must face the uncomfortable questions this case has raised. In particular, we must face questions concerning the role of political parties in condoning - perhaps even actively and covertly engineering - the violent suppression of independent movements of the poor; questions about the complicity of middle-class professional 'activists', academics, and 'researchers' who have systematically amplified the lies of the state against Abahlali, added their own lies, and launched slanderous attacks against the movement and it's supporters, myself included.

But today, we celebrate and give thanks that justice has been done.

Bishop Rubin Phillip,  
Diocese of Natal of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.  
18 July 2011.