



RURALNETWORK

UMHLABA - UBULUNGISWA - ISITHUNZI
LAND - JUSTICE - DIGNITY

C/O RURAL NETWORK, Post net 23, Private Bag X 9500, PIETERMARITZBURG

22 October 2012

Rural Network Press Statement

Rural Network Protest in Pietermaritzburg on 23 October 2012

We, the Rural Network, together with our comrades in Abahlali baseMjondolo and other poor people's organisations, will be having a public protest march on the 23rd of October, 2012, in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal. In light of the government's failure to address the unlawful arrest of school children, illegal cattle impoundment, forced evictions and land distribution issues, we have been emboldened to march in order to keep the Department of Land Affairs (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform), and the Department of Justice accountable for their responsibilities. Moreover, violent actions by private farm security companies directed at farm tenants, dishonest officials changing their identities and equality violations continue as the government fails to arrest, question, and prosecute the initiators of illicit behaviour.

Indeed every other customary method to seek justice has been fruitlessly sought time and time again. However, we can no longer watch as children are forcefully evicted from their homes on unjust grounds, unwarranted violence and abuse pervades our communities, counsellors are at best apathetic and at worst hostile, and our basic rights, including that of clean water, are not being met. Furthermore, we are marching in order to reaffirm the dignity of black people living in rural and farming communities. The government and the justice system are in fact not just, but rather blinded by selfish ambitions. We have reached a point where we can no longer passively object to the actions of our government and we are demanding that our voices be heard.

Our public outcry, including about 2000 people, will commence at Dale's Park on Berg Street, Pietermaritzburg, at 9:00am and conclude at the Department of Land Affairs. We would really appreciate if you would join us in support of the struggle for land, justice and dignity.

Where: Beginning at Dale's Park on Berg Street, Pietermaritzburg

When: 9am to 1pm on October 23, 2012

Who: Contact people- Rev. S.S. Mthethwa 0782428568
Miss B. Ngema 0723496765
Mr. M. R. Dlamini 0723496765

ARTICLE FROM THE WITNESS:

[http://witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global\[_id\]=89934](http://witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global[_id]=89934)

Landless frustrated with Land Reform

24 Oct 2012

Thamsanqa Magubane

THE Department of Rural Development and Land Reform came under heavy criticism yesterday as frustrated landless people laid the blame for their plight on its inability to settle land disputes.

A large group of members of the Abahlali Basemjondolo, the Landless People's Movement and the Rural Network marched to the department's offices to hand over a memorandum of their grievances.

Many travelled from as far as Durban, Eshowe, and Utrecht.

They said the office had failed on its mandate to deliver land to communities and needed a complete overhaul.

"This office is useless. It never does anything for the community, and it should undergo what is called renewal or renovations," said Sthembisio Mahlaba of the Landless People's Movement.

"We filed land claims years ago and those have been ignored by the officials. In the event that we do get that one farm from the many that we have claimed, the officials also keep saying they will lease it to us. The farm dwellers are never a concern for them," said Mahlaba.

Pastor Sibusiso Mthethwa, a leader of the march, lambasted the department employees for their lack of compassion.

This after a small group of employees had abandoned their workstations and stood on the stairway and balcony to gawk and laugh at the protesters.

"These people are standing here behind us, laughing. They view what we are doing here as a big joke; they do not realise that we are here trying to express the pain that we are feeling."

Mthethwa said it was shocking that after years of democracy, black people still found themselves marching to have their concerns addressed. "These [marchers] are the same people that vote. They are responsible for the local, provincial and the national governments, yet they find themselves neglected by that same government."

He said the failure to address land issues had left communities, especially in rural areas, vulnerable to abuse.

"On the farms, people are still being evicted arbitrarily. They are not allowed to bury their people there, and children older than two are forced to move out of the farms."

"In cities, those who lived in shacks were condemned to live in those conditions or in one-room houses that were not ideal for family habitation."

Khetha Nzimande, the Acting Director at Land Reform, said the concerns raised would receive "the necessary attention".