

The National Land Restoration Campaign: An Overview

COMMUNITIES who were victims of the forced removal policy of apartheid have launched a National Land Restoration Campaign in an effort to get back their land. Here, we look at what has been happening with the campaign.

March 1991

13 communities from Natal, the Transvaal and the Border Region meet to discuss their response to the government's White Paper on Land Reform and related land bills. They decide to reject the proposed laws and to send a delegation to parliament to appeal for land restoration to be included in any new land laws. They also decide to hold a national day of protest focussing on land issues. Placard demonstrations are held in some major cities. Communities give the government a deadline to respond to their proposals satisfactorily. There is no response by the deadline.

April, May 1991

Communities reoccupy their land - in the Transvaal, Goedgevonden is reoccupied; in Natal, Crimen and Charlestown; in the Border Region, Macleantown.

June 1991

Government responds to various representations made about its White Paper and land bills by



A Charlestown committee member arrested by police during the reoccupation of Charlestown in 1991

introducing the Abolition Of Racially Based Land Measures Act. This Act provides for the setting up of the Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (ACLA). ACLA is to look at reallocating undeveloped state owned land or land which the state could acquire for settlement.

August 1991

Natal communities (AmaHlubi, Crimen, Charlestown and Roosboom) meet to discuss the government's new measures regarding the land. They decide joint national action is needed.

September 1991

A second national meeting of land claiming communities is held. 19 communities from the Western Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Border Region meet and decide to reject ACLA in its present form. The main reason for rejection is because of ACLA's limited

terms of reference. The communities also decide to draw up a programme of action, elect a coordinating committee and to write an open letter to de Klerk.

On September 30, community representatives prepare to meet the government. They plan to put to government:

- their position on ACLA
- conditions upon which they will cooperate with ACLA

The say that ACLA must be constituted by representatives of the communities, be open to all affected communities, act speedily and make its recommendations and findings public. They also say the government must withdraw all charges against communities who tried to reclaim their land.

October 1991

Community representatives meet with the Minister of Public Works and Land Affairs and of Development. He



Reoccupation at Crimen in April 1991

agrees that communities should put forward the names of those they want to have serving on ACLA.

At a follow up meeting with the minister, community representatives give the government 5 names. The government approaches 2 of the 5. These 2 decline to serve on ACLA. The remaining 3 people are never approached.

Community representatives hold a second preparatory meeting before meeting the government. They decide to start a programme of action while negotiating with the government.

A second meeting held with the minister on October 30 breaks down over ACLA's composition.

The minister tells the community representatives that cases against communities have been stopped. He says that other issues raised by the representatives will be decided by ACLA itself.

November 1991

The NLC is told who the government appointed ACLA members are. The names are made public 3 days later.

Community representatives meet to work out a response to ACLA's composition. They decide to:

- reject ACLA in its present form
- call for a change in ACLA membership and terms of reference
- approach the government and ACLA about these problems
- rally support from other organisations
- go ahead with their planned programme of action.

A third meeting is held with the government on November 30.

Community representatives hope to change the government's position, but this does not happen. The government remains set on ACLA remaining as it is. They also tell community representatives that submissions

have already been sent to ACLA by other communities.

Communities decide to stand firm regarding their decision about ACLA. They decide there will be no submissions until another national meeting of communities is held in February 1992. This meeting will review the situation. Before the meeting in February, regional meetings are held to prepare.

February 1992

Thirty communities from the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Border Region, Northern Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State meet.

After long discussion the meeting decides to work with ACLA, since it is the only available body through which they can submit claims. But they resolve to continue to use other avenues to secure their land rights. They resolve to work with ACLA on condition that:

- it accepts communities being assisted by their lawyers, land affairs experts and service structures
- all government files and information on people's claims be available to communities and their advisors
- ACLA make all its findings and hearings open to the public
- land restoration is not subject to any conditions except justice and redressing past wrongs
- if ACLA delays, communities will take other steps to get back their land.