

AFRA



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What are we asking for?

A stay on evictions of labour tenants and farm dwellers!



THE National Land Committee has called for a moratorium on all evictions of labour tenants and farm dwellers. A memorandum, on behalf of labour tenant communities in Natal and Transvaal, the Legal Resources Centre and Lawyers For Human Rights calling for this stay on evictions, was sent in March this year to the state president, the Minister of Regional and Land Affairs and CODESA.

"The current conflict on farms needs to be dealt with now," says the memorandum. "At the centre of the conflict is, on the one hand, lack of secure tenure for labour tenants and their desire to be rural producers. On the other hand, there is the apparent uncertainty and insecurity of present landowners whose ownership of the land has been founded and protected by unjust racial laws and practices."

The memorandum calls for:

- an end to all labour tenant and farm dweller evictions as an interim measure
- a stay on all intended or pending criminal proceedings which will result in eviction of labour tenants and residents of former proclaimed mining land. This can be reviewed when fair and legal process to address their position is in place.
- government protection for these communities from harassment and intimidation by police, uncooperative farmers and the right wing
- the Department of Regional and Land Affairs, other state departments and interested parties to monitor the situation and register breaches of the moratorium on evictions.

Even the Farmer's Weekly has cautioned farmers against evictions. Its editorial of February

14 1992 said: "Whatever the reasons, real or perceived, a growing number of farmers are either evicting tenants or thinking about doing so. Farmer's Weekly urges them to think again. If farmers feel they may be victimised by political change, how much are tenants the victims if they're forced to move? Most have at least a moral right to be allowed to stay and also to be given security of tenure."

At present labour tenants are not acknowledged in land laws. The government's White Paper excluded any mention of land tenure provisions for labour tenants. But they are a reality that cannot simply be wished away. Their land use rights need to be recognised. Along with the issue of restoration of land, the position of labour tenants is another area which must be addressed in a future land policy.