

AFRA



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Representatives from Natal land claiming communities at the national community meeting.

ACLA's last chance

Thirty-eight land claiming communities, at their fourth national meeting, issued an ultimatum to FW de Klerk to act on land restoration or face a renewed reoccupation campaign.

"Will we now have to wait another 30 years to get back our land? Would it not be better if we elected people from our own communities to see De Klerk and to tell him we are taking back our

land?" asked a community representative at the meeting on November 14 and 15 1992.

When representatives at the meeting looked back on what had happened over the past year around land restoration, they found that not a single community who had notified the Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (ACLA) had yet heard anything from ACLA or the government

about what would happen to their claim.

At their last national meeting in February 1992, communities decided to cooperate with ACLA, on certain conditions, despite its limitations. Cooperation with ACLA was seen as a way to test how serious the government was about land restoration.

In reviewing their experiences with ACLA almost one year later,

representatives said there had to be a change in emphasis in the strategy to get back their land. They said they had little confidence in ACLA as a mechanism to speedily restore land. In addition, the government was selling and transferring state land under ACLA's nose and ACLA did not seem to be able to do anything.

The government was also still removing people, such as the Khosis community of the northern Cape, at the very time when such communities were making land claims.

In discussion, community representatives came up with several suggestions, among others, the need to:

- address the government's transfer of state land to homeland governments
- give ACLA a definite time in which to respond to claims already brought to its attention. The meeting said that if the state president does not reach a final decision about submissions he has received from ACLA by January 30 1993, then communities will have no choice but to embark on other strategies by March 1 1993.
- look at another mechanism to get back land, such as, a democratically elected People's Land Claims Commission
- involve other groups in communities' struggle to get back their land

Out of these discussions, the representatives present at the meeting drew up resolutions and also decided to send a letter of demand to FW de Klerk. (see side box)

Statement To The Honourable State President Re: The Advisory Commission On Land Allocation (ACLA) From The Fourth National Meeting Of Communities Claiming Land

We, the undersigned 38 communities met at our fourth National Community Workshop on Land Restoration on the 14th and 15th November 1992.

This meeting comes nine months after we decided to engage with the Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (ACLA). At the time, we expressed our reservations about ACLA, as it is only an advisory body and has no power to make decisions, its recommendations are secret and it consists of appointees of the state president, none of whom were selected by us. Nonetheless, ACLA encouraged us to try and use the Commission and we have done so.

We have been sorely disappointed. Twenty-five communities known to us have written to ACLA, informing them that they have land claims that need to be addressed. Seventeen of these communities are present at this meeting. Ten communities have submitted detailed submissions to ACLA. Only three of these communities have had hearings, and none have received their land back. Instead, the government is transferring land to the corrupt bantustans.

In the light of this situation, we have very little patience left with ACLA. If the state president does not reach a final decision on the submissions that have been received by his Commission by the 30th January 1993, we will have no choice but to embark on other strategies by the 1st March 1993.

One option is to reoccupy the land from which we were forcibly removed by the apartheid government. Another option we are considering is to appoint a People's Land Claims Commission, which will be elected through a democratic process.

We also feel it is our duty to inform and warn the government that if it proceeds with unilateral transfers of state land to the corrupt bantustans, it is inevitable that people like ourselves will feel that we have no choice but to also take unilateral action. In this case, reoccupations will be inevitable.

Signed by the communities of:

Roosboom, Charlestown, Crimen, Alcockspruit, Camden, Vaalkop, Compensation, Baynesfield, AmaHlubi, Majeng, Kono, Metsi-Matale, Khosis, Bojelakgomo, Gathlose, Dithakwaneng, Schmitsdrift, Mogopa, Moletele, Barolong, Magokgoane, Bakubung, Tsetse, Mampuru, Doornkop, Masha, Drakensberg Farmers/Mogane, Blesbokfontein, Herschel, Hankey, Tsitsikamma, Mcleantown, Thornhill, Zweledinga, Stutterheim (Kwasidenge), Potsdam, Elandskloof, Riemvasmaak.