

AFRA

NATAL CONFERENCE AGAINST RELOCATIONS, 1985

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On the 24th of August 1985, AFRA called a regional meeting in Pietermaritzburg of representatives from communities threatened with removal around Natal. This was so that people could come together to share their experiences in organizing against removal as well as their experience of the removals themselves.

Threatened communities also wanted to draw up a memorandum stating their objections to being moved as well as drawing up certain demands. This was specifically in response to Dr Viljoen's statement on the first of February, 1985, that forced removals had been suspended pending a revision of government policy.

It is important to note that this suspension applied specifically to only one category of removal ie the removal of the so-called 'black spots' or black free-hold land. This moratorium did not include the eviction of farmworkers or the removal of people termed 'squatters' by the government. Dr Viljoen also stated that if leaders agreed to move, their communities would be moved.

According to the Black Administration Act of 1927 the government can appoint whoever it wishes to be chief over a black tribe. Thus if a community refuses to agree to move, the government has the power to appoint somebody as chief who will agree. Such a removal can then go ahead as an 'unofficially negotiated' removal, according to the government's jargon.

People attended the AFRA regional meeting in Pietermaritzburg from the following black free-hold areas: Balderskraal, Beersheba, Cornfields, Driefontein, Hopewell, Groutville, Prospect farm, Lusitania, Steencoalspruit, Stoffelton & Mbulwane. Representatives also came from Reserve 4, the traditional home of the Sokhulu and Mbonambi people, from Doornkop, a white owned farm, from the Inanda Dam area., and from the resettled areas of Nondweni, Waaihoek, Ntambanana and eZakheni.

A number of speakers were invited to address the meeting. They included Laurine Platzky from the National Committee Against Removals; Mrs Beauty Mkhize, the wife of Mr Saul Mkhize, the slain leader of Driefontein in the Transvaal; Mr Khoza the chairman of the Lower Tugela Committee; and Mr Mthiyane from the resettlement area of Ntambanana in the Empangeni District.

One of the issues which the speakers repeatedly raised was the way in which government-appointed leaders in communities threatened with removal often agreed to negotiate with the government and accepted the removals.

So although the government said there would be no more forced removals they exercised all kinds of pressures on communities in an attempt to get people to move.

KWANGEMA, DRIEFONTEIN: BEAUTY MKHIZE

Beauty Mkhize from Driefontein spoke eloquently on the struggle of the KwaNgema and Driefontein people against removals. (The people's determination and bravery in both areas resulted in a government assurance that they would no longer be moved. This assurance was given Monday the 26th of August, just after the AFRA regional Meeting.)

On the issue of corrupt leadership, Mrs Mkhize firstly described how the chief at KwaNgema, appointed by the government because of the firm resistance of the people to removal, had been co-opted by the government:

If the government wants to create misunderstanding it talks to certain individuals. If you do not agree with what the government says government people will go around until they find someone in the community who will agree to what they say. The government promises money to people. Money creates a lot of trouble in the communities ...

This is what happened at KwaNgema. The government spoke to the present chief whom they had appointed. The community heard that the chief had agreed to move without their knowledge. The people called the chief and asked him whether it was true that he had agreed to move. He said there was nothing he could do because the government cannot be opposed. The community asked him why he had not informed them. He said there was nothing he could tell them because there was going to be a meeting where it was going to be announced that the government wanted to take the land. The community asked the chief why he had spoken to the government alone. They asked him why he had not told them that the land was not his alone but the land of the Ngema people. The chief did not give clear answers because he knew he had been given money by the government. The first chief the government negotiated with, died. The people thought he would be succeeded by a better chief but the government tried to replace the dead chief by another person who was the same. The present chief is the same as the previous chief because he doesn't do things with the Ngema people but alone. The people have fought the removals by electing a Committee lead by Moses Ngema. Moses is trying by all means to fight the removal of the KwaNgema people.

Of Driefontein Mrs Mkhize said:

Even if you refuse to move if your leaders agree to removal you will be moved. So our leaders sell us out. Those who have chiefs who support them are happy. Chiefs and other community leaders can work against people sometimes. We are fortunate at Driefontein because we do not have a chief. Each person is a chief on his own plot. Everybody says whatever they like on their own plot. The government tried to choose a chief for us but we rejected him.

Mrs Mkhize went on to describe the Driefontein people's most recent resistance to removals:

The government has been trying by all means to move us. The first thing we were told was that we were living on a black spot. We told the government that when we bought the land we were not told that we would be moved. Our title deeds do not mention anything about removal...

The government has many ways of defeating people. For a while it seemed that the removal of Driefontein had been dropped. Then a big dam was planned. We were told that the dam would affect KwaNgema, Driefontein and Daggakraal. We were not against the construction of the dam because we need water. We suggested that we be left at Driefontein and that we get a share of the water from the dam. The government said the water would be piped to Sasol. We insisted that we also get piped water because the dam was on our land. The government then said no one was allowed near the dam site. It was clear to us that the dam was built as an excuse to move us.

We then said that if they did not want us to remain at Driefontein they should take their dam away and leave us without water. We asked what would happen to the people affected by the dam and we were told they would be moved to Babanango in Natal (about 600 kilometres away away). We said the government

should rather buy a farm next to Driefontein for the resettlement of these people. We did not want them to go to Babanango. We were told that the government cannot move a white man from his farm.

We replied saying, "If you are not prepared to look for alternative land for the families affected by the flood then release the water from the dam so that we all die. Then you will be able to take Driefontein without paying a cent for it. We do not want to sell the land because money is a useless thing but land is very important. You stay on it forever."

Subsequently the people of Driefontein found land adjoining Driefontein for these people. This land was made available to the community by big business concerns.

LOWER TUGELA: MR KHOZA

Mr Khoza is the Chairman of the Lower Tugela Committee which represents many areas threatened with removal around Stanger. This committee has been successfully fighting the demolition of so-called 'squatter' homes in these areas. Mr Khoza described how the Natalia Development Board had knocked down people's houses while they were not at home and then informed the householders that they had to move to Bulwer Farm which is already overcrowded. This had resulted in hundreds of people from the affected areas electing the Lower Tugela Committee to represent them. The Committee had met with the Natalia Development Board and this had resulted in an agreement that the houses would no longer be knocked down.

Mr Khoza described how people had resisted removal in one of the areas represented by the Committee, Groutville:

At Groutville we were once threatened with removal. After putting up a big fight against removal, Groutville was eventually saved. When people are moved they are not moved to land of equal value. They are always moved to poorer land. At Groutville we have sugar-cane fields. It is near the sea and near the highway and near town. The Umvoti River flows through Groutville. The government wanted to move us to Bulwer Farm. It is a place where you cannot grow anything. It is barren. Bulwer farm was owned by a white man who wanted to keep his cattle there - but they all died and he decided to sell the farm. No-one bought it. The government bought it in the end. People are expected to survive even where cattle are unable to survive.

In the removal of people against their will, the government uses many tactics. They start by approaching members of the community and these people are given money. In this way people are moved. Even at Groutville certain members of the community were approached. Some people started saying that there would be double-storey houses after the removal to Bulwer Farm. I request all of you here that when you go home you fight against being bribed because through bribery we are made weak. To fight against this we have to talk to those people we know are easily bribed. Let us talk to them and try and win them to our side. Try to explain to them the ugliness of removal.

Apologizing to sympathetic chiefs, Mr Khoza said that the sellers of the people were mainly chiefs and indunas. He said they should be persuaded to work with the people, not against them. "They must be poor and hungry with us, not rich and powerful against us."

NTAMBANANA: MR MTHIYANE

The people who currently live at Ntambanana were moved from Reserve 6 and a small portion of Reserve 4 near Richards Bay in 1976. They were moved from one of the most fertile regions of Natal to arid thornveld. So although they were supposedly compensated on a land-for-land basis, the land on which they now live is in no way comparable to the land from which they came. At Mandlazini or Reserve 6 people grew gum plantations and a wide variety of vegetables and fruit. Although most people did

not want to move from Mandlazini to Ntambanana they were forced to do so since their chief agreed to move "because he was told he would be accommodated in a 'white man's' house."

Mr Mthiyane spoke of the struggle which they have had to get clean water at Ntambanana. This has been going on for almost 10 years. Mr Mthiyane produced a bottle of brown water from his pocket saying this was the water which people were forced to drink at Ntambanana.

We people of Ntambanana have died in numbers because of the water we drink. To make an example of one family, Mr Mhlongo's mother died immediately after our arrival at Ntambanana. Mr Mhlongo was a farmer at Mandlazini growing gum trees but today his children do not attend school because of lack of employment. Last Tuesday I spoke to the commissioner about the scarcity of water at Ntambanana. I asked him how many times I had been to the office and had asked for clean water and how many times they had promised?

I realized a long time ago that when I go to the commissioner I had to have everything written down - one copy for the commissioner - and one for myself. I wrote a letter one day to the commissioner and I sent a copy to Pietermaritzburg. After that an official from the Water Board came to see me and said "Do you want my children to starve?" I asked him "Why?" He said "What are you saying about me in the letter you sent to Pietermaritzburg?" I said "I have been to your office 3 times and you have not spoken to me so I decided to write a letter to head office because people are dying at Ntambanana without water. Today you have arrived - here are our children who are starving because there is no water."

This man requested me not to write letters but to come to his office. I told him "As long as water does not come to Ntambanana I will write letters." The official promised to do his best. He has visited me with a list of everything he has ordered for piping water. I would like to warn all of you to keep records of whatever you are doing especially with officials. That is all I wanted to say.

DISCUSSION GROUPS AND PLENARY SESSION

After the speeches and general discussion the meeting broke up into small groups to discuss problems in specific areas and demands to be made to the government. In the plenary session which followed, report backs were made and the attached memorandum drawn up and unanimously approved. (This was subsequently sent to both Dr Viljoen, Minister of Education and Development Aid and Mr Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning.)

RESOLUTION ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY AT A MEETING ON 24TH AUGUST 1985 BY REPRESENTATIVES OF AREAS BOTH THREATENED WITH REMOVAL AND REMOVED

This meeting

1. Rejects all removals, and states that "We do not want to move".
2. Rejects the so-called "consultation" that the South African Government engages in with communities threatened with removal, and the way it attempts to use some chiefs and indunas to divide the people.
3. Rejects the term "squatter" as an attempt by the government to justify the removal of long-standing tenants, lease-holders, and farmworkers.
4. Calls on the Government to stop all removals and to demonstrate this by:
 - a) Permanently removing the whole policy of removals and not just 'suspending' it.
 - b) Withdrawing, by notice in the Government Gazette, all categories of removal areas.
 - c) Withdrawing all expropriation notices of areas threatened with removal.
 - d) Withdrawing all excisions of areas threatened with removal.
 - e) Withdrawing the very category "blackspot".
5. Affirms that there is one South Africa.
6. Calls on the government to devote the money that it would have spent on removals, and the money that should rightfully have been devoted to the following purposes, to providing in threatened areas (either directly by subsidy or by other means) such facilities as:
 - housing
 - clean water
 - transport
 - roads
 - clinics
 - schools
 - electricityand generally to ensure that the wealth of this country is shared equally, and that there be no taxation without representation.
7. Further calls on the Government to provide real compensation to all who have suffered from removals and that such people be free to settle wherever they choose.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

BALDESKRAAL

BEERSHEEBA

BEKUMTHETHO

CORNFIELDS

DOORKOP

DRIEFONTEIN, KLIP RIVER

DRIEFONTEIN, TRANSVAAL

EZAKHANI

HOPEWELL

INANDA DAM

COMMITTEES OF NUMEROUS AREAS IN THE LOWER TUGELA AREA

LUSITANIA

NONDWENI

NTHAMBANANA

RESERVE 4

STEENKOOLSPRUIT

STOFFELTON

UMBULWANE

WAAIHOEK