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Executive Director

November 6, 2024**TO:**

Mr. Arthur Thamsanqa
Premier of KwaZulu-Natal

Mr. Mduduzi Zungu
Head of Department of Human Settlement

CC:

South African Human Rights Commission

Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)

**Subject: Urgent Call to End Violent Evictions
and Racist Attacks on Poor Communities****Dear Mayor and Esteemed Local Authorities,**

As a network of over 300 social movements, organizations and human rights defenders from across 80 countries, ESCR-Net - International Network for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, we are writing to express our profound concern regarding the ongoing violent evictions and racist attacks against poor Black communities in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly members of Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM). This movement, composed of more than 150,000 people living in informal settlements across South Africa, is a critical force lawfully advocating for land, housing, and dignity in communities long marginalized by systemic inequalities.

The approval of forced eviction orders in Ballito, Umhlali, and other areas along the North Coast, as described in AbM's [press statement](#) on 3 October 2024, are part of a disturbing trend of state-sanctioned violence and dispossession targeting these communities.¹ Wealthy elites, supported by militarized private security forces and complicit local authorities, are systematically displacing these communities under the guise of "development."

¹ Abahlali baseMjondolo. "A Declaration of War on the Poor." *Press Statement*, 3 Oct. 2024



This not only violates domestic laws enshrined in Section 26, as well as Section 12 (1) (C), of the South African Constitution² but also breaches international obligations, including those under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which South Africa ratified in 2015 and 1998 respectively.

A recent [report](#) by Amnesty International highlights the systematic targeting of AbM members through threats, killings, and criminalization. From its inception, AbM members have faced serious threats, intimidation, and violence, which have increased in frequency and intensity, particularly in the eKhenana settlement. This report notes that AbM activists have been assassinated for defending their communities, with 25 members killed over the last 18 years. Most [recently](#), three leaders from the eKhenana settlement were murdered in 2022, despite reports of threats made to the police.

This violence is a gross violation of the right to life and a breach of the state's obligation under Section 205 (3) of the Constitution of South Africa and Article 6 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), which mandates the protection of all individuals from unlawful killings, including by non-state actors.³ Moreover, the South African authorities' [failure to provide adequate protection and to investigate these attacks](#) has created an environment where impunity flourishes, and the lives of human rights defenders remain at risk.

We are particularly alarmed by the racist and anti-poor rhetoric disseminated by groups such as the Dolphin Coast Residents & Ratepayers' Association, which has openly dehumanized poor black communities through a [video](#) labeling them as criminals and health hazards. This rhetoric, steeped in colonial stereotypes about impoverished black people have long been used to justify violent evictions and the destruction of communities. Such discriminatory language, compounded by the ongoing criminalization and targeting of poor black residents, exacerbates social conflict, segregation, racial inequalities and directly violates South Africa's commitments under the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (ICERD)⁴ and the value of non-racialism upon which the Republic of South Africa is founded.

Despite these threats, AbM continues its work for dignity and justice, establishing grassroots projects like food sovereignty initiatives and community political schools, as seen in the [eKhenana](#) commune. This cooperative model demonstrates a powerful alternative to neoliberal land commodification by promoting communal living and economic self-sufficiency. However, these grassroots efforts are being met with violence and hostility rather than support. The South African government's failure to fulfill its obligations under Article 2 of the ICESCR, which requires using maximum available resources to improve living conditions and provide adequate housing, sanitation, and other services, is unacceptable.

² Republic of South Africa. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, Section 12, 26

³ United Nations. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*. 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

⁴ United Nations. *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)*. 1965, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial-discrimination>.



In solidarity with AbM and the communities it represents, we demand:

1. **An immediate cessation of all ongoing and planned evictions** and the provision of essential services like water, sanitation, and electricity to the affected communities.
2. **A thorough and independent investigation into the actions of the Dolphin Coast Residents & Ratepayers' Association** and other actors promoting violence against these communities, ensuring those responsible are held accountable.
3. **Full compliance with South Africa's Constitution and international human rights obligations**, including the ICESCR and ICERD, to protect the housing rights of marginalized communities.
4. **Engagement with Abahlali baseMjondolo and other affected communities** to ensure their participation in decisions impacting their lives, and the recognition of their right to defend their homes without fear of violence.

We respectfully request that local authorities take immediate action to address these violations and work towards creating a safe and supportive environment for these communities. The ongoing failure to protect these communities, and the criminalization and targeting of their leaders, is a stain on South Africa's human rights record.

We look forward to your timely response and to seeing tangible steps taken to protect the rights and dignity of all residents, regardless of their economic or social status.

Respectfully,

Chris Grove

Executive Director, on behalf of ESCR-Net's Members (listed below)

Above Ground - Canada

Accountability Counsel - United States

Action Contre l'Impunité pour les Droits Humains - Democratic Republic of the Congo

Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel - Israel



Advocates for International Development - United Kingdom

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies - Gambia

African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA) - South Africa

African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development - Nigeria

African Resources Watch (AfreWatch) - Democratic Republic of the Congo

Al-Haq - Palestine

Alliance for Rural Democracy - Liberia

Al Marsad - Golan Heights - Syria

Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights - Palestine

Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN Burma) - Thailand

Amnesty International - United Kingdom

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) - Lebanon

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) - Thailand

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) - Thailand

Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) - Philippines

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) - Thailand

Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ) - Argentina

ASOCIACIÓN DE MUJERES MERETRICES DE ARGENTINA (AMMAR) - Argentina

Asociación La Ruta del Clima (LRC) - Costa Rica

Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Veraces, Maya Achi (ADIVIMA) - Guatemala



Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH) - Peru

Asociación Q'ukumatz - Guatemala

Association des Amoureux du Livre pour le Développement Local (ASSOAL) - Cameroon

Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE) - North Macedonia

Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists (ALAPA) - Tanzania

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) - Canada

Association Nigérienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ANDDH) - Niger

Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia (Green Advocates) - Liberia

Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates (ATFD) - Tunisia

Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) - Belgium

AWAJ Foundation - Bangladesh

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) - Bangladesh

Baobab for Women's Human Rights - Nigeria

Bisan Center - Palestine

Botswana Khwedom Council - Botswana

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation - Bulgaria

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) - Egypt

Center for Constitutional Rights - United States

Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) - United States

Center for Human Rights and Development - Rwanda - Rwanda

Center for Human Rights and Environment (CHRE) - United States



Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) - United States

Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) - United States

Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, Inc (CTUHR) - Philippines

Center for Transnational Environmental Accountability (CTEA) - China

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) | Rutgers University - United States

Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (CREDDHO)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo

Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) - South Africa

Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) - Montenegro

Centre for Economic Social Cultural Rights in Africa (CESCRA) - Uganda

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) - Canada

Centre for Human Rights and Development - Mongolia - Mongolia

Centre for Peace Studies - Croatia

Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR) - India

Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información Pública (CAinfo) - Uruguay

Centro de Derechos Económicos y Sociales - Ecuador

Centro de Derechos Humanos | Universidad Diego Portales - Chile

Centro de Derechos y Desarrollo (CEDAL) - Peru

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) - Argentina

Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA) - Mexico

Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL) - United States



Charter Committee on Poverty Issues - Canada

Chiadzwa Community Development Trust (CCDT) - Zimbabwe

Child Rights International Network (CRIN) - United Kingdom

Citizen News Service (CNS) - India

Clínica de litigio estratégico de derechos humanos (Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales, de la Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo) (CLEDH) - Mexico

Colectiva Feminista - Puerto Rico

Collectif des Femmes du Mali (COFEM) - Mali

Collective for Research & Training on Development - Action (CRTD.A) - Lebanon

Comisión Colombiana de Juristas - Colombia

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH) - Mexico

Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida - Colombia

Conectas Direitos Humanos - Brazil

Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP) - Peru

Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH) - Honduras

Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj - Guatemala

Construisons Ensemble le Monde (ONG CEM) - Democratic Republic of the Congo

Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (CAOI) - Peru

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR) - Colombia

Corporate Accountability - United States

Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE) - United Kingdom



Defend Job Philippines - Philippines

Dejusticia – Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad - Colombia

Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine (DWRC) - Palestine

Democracy Center (The) - United States

Desarrollo, Educación y Cultura Autogestionarios Equipo Pueblo A.C. - Mexico

Dibeen Association for Environmental Development - Jordan

Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF) - United States

Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights (University of the Western Cape, South Africa) - South Africa

EarthRights International - United States

East African Centre for Human Rights - Kenya

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Asia - Philippines

Economic and Social Rights Academic Network — UK-Ireland - United Kingdom

Economic and Social Rights Centre — Hakijamii - Kenya

Economic Justice for Women Projec - Zimbabwe

Egyptian Association for Collective Rights - Egypt

Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform - Egypt

Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights - Egypt

Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms - Egypt

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights - Egypt

Ekta Parishad - India



Endorois Indigenous Women Network - Kenya

Endorois Welfare Council - Kenya

End Water Poverty - United Kingdom

Environmental Defender Law Center - United States

Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres - Mexico

Equitable Cambodia - Cambodia

Escuela Nacional Sindical - Colombia

Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer - Peru

European Anti Poverty Network - Belgium

European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights - Germany

European Roma Rights Centre - Hungary

Federação dos Orgãos de Assistencia Social e Educacional - Brazil

Fédération internationale des droits de l'Homme (FIDH) - France

Federation of Women Lawyers – Kenya - Kenya

Femmes Côte d'Ivoire Expérience - Ivory Coast

FIAN International - Food First Information and Action Network Organization - Germany

Forest Peoples' Programme - United Kingdom

Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos - Argentina

Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Économiques et Sociaux - Tunisia

Foundation for the Conservation of the Earth - Nigeria

Foundation of Medical Law and Bioethics - Serbia



Franciscans International - Switzerland

Front Line Defenders - The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights
Defenders - Ireland

Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho – FESPAD - El Salvador

Fundación Etnica Integral - Bolivia

Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables (FUNDEPS) - Argentina

Fundacion Promocion Humana - Argentina

Fundar - Centro de Análisis e Investigación - Mexico

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association - Georgia

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) - United States

GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation - South Korea

Habitat International Coalition - Egypt

Harvard Law School Project on Disability - United States

Housing and Land Rights Network - India

Human Dignity - Switzerland

Human Rights Action - Montenegro

Human Rights Awareness Center (HRAC) - Nepal

Human Rights Law Centre - Australia

Human Rights Law Network - India

Inclusive Development International - United States

Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) - Philippines



Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (IM-Defensoras) - Mexico

Initiative A 11 - Serbia

Initiative for Social and Economic Rights - Uganda

Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa - The Gambia

Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti - United States

Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay - Uruguay

Instituto de Formación Femenina Integral - Bolivia

Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir - Mexico

Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos - Colombia

Instituto Pólis - Brazil

Institut Prometheus pour la Démocratie et les Droits Humains - Morocco

Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense - United States

International Accountability Project - United States

International Center for Ethnic Studies - Sri Lanka

International Commission of Jurists - Switzerland

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific - Malaysia

Jus Semper Global Alliance - United States

Just Associates - United States

Just Fair - United Kingdom

Justiça Global - Brazil



Justice Pour Tous - Democratic Republic of the Congo

Justicia Nos Trilhos - Brazil

Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice - United States

Karapatan - Philippines

Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre - Nigeria

Kenya Human Rights Commission - Kenya

Kenya Land Alliance - Kenya

Kituo Cha Sheria - Legal Advice Centre - Kenya

Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Center - Nigeria

Law and Society Trust - Sri Lanka

Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights - Serbia

Legal Resources Centre (LRC) - South Africa - South Africa

Legal Resources Centre - Ghana - Ghana

Le Réseau Marocain de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (REMESS) - Morocco

Lok Shakti Abhiyan - India

Maison des Droits de l'Homme du Cameroun - Cameroon

Manushya Foundation - Thailand

MENAFEM - Morocco

MINBYUN—Lawyers for a Democratic Society - South Korea

Mines, Minerals & People - India

MiningWatch Canada - Canada



Minority Rights Group International - United Kingdom

Movement Alliance Project - United States

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People - Nigeria

Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens - Brazil

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) - Brazil

Movimiento Nacional CIMARRÓN - Colombia

Movimiento Unificado Francisco Sánchez 1932 - El Salvador

Muongano Wa Wanavijiji - Kenya

Mwatana for Human Rights - Yemen

Nairobi Peoples Settlements Network - Kenya

Narasha Community Development Group - Kenya

National Center for Advocacy Studies - India

National Fisheries Solidarity Organization - Sri Lanka

National Union of Domestic Employees - Trinidad and Tobago

Natural Justice - South Africa

Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya - Kenya

Natural Resource Women Platform - Liberia

Nazdeek - India

Network Movement for Justice and Development - Sierra Leone

New Woman Foundation - Egypt

Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť (Citizen, Democracy and Accountability) - Slovakia



Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme - Republic of the Congo

Observatoire de la Societe Civile Congolaise pour les Minerais de Paix - Democratic Republic of the Congo

Observatori DESC - Spain

Observatorio Ciudadano - Chile

Observatorio de Política Social y Derechos Humanos - Mexico

Observatory for Marine and Coastal Governance – Center for Social and Environmental Studies - Uruguay

Ogiek Peoples Development Program - Kenya

Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT) - Switzerland

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH) - Honduras

Otros Mundos Chiapas - Mexico

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum - Pakistan

Pamoja Trust - Kenya

Participation and the Practice of Rights - United Kingdom

Partners for Dignity and Rights - United States

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre - Ireland

Peace Track Initiative - Yemen

People's Health Movement - India

Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies - Jordan

Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (la PAH) - Spain



Plataforma DESC España - Spain

Plataforma Dhesca Brasil - Brazil

Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti - India

Programa de Justicia Global y Derechos Humanos - Universidad de los Andes - Colombia

Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos - Venezuela

Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - India

Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy - United States

Project on Organizing, Development, Education and Research (PODER) - Mexico

Pro Public – Forum for the Protection of Public Interest - Nepal

Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales - Mexico

Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku - Ecuador

Red Chimpu Warmi - Bolivia

Red Defensoras/es Indigenas - Nicaragua

Red Intercontinental de Promoción para la Economía Social y Solidaria en Latinoamérica y el Caribe (RIPESS LAC) - Latin America and Caribbean

Red Internacional de Derechos Humanos - Switzerland

Rencontre Pour La Paix Et Les Droits De L'Homme - Republic of the Congo

Reyna Trust - India

Rights and Accountability in Development - United Kingdom

Right to Education Initiative - United Kingdom

Right to Water Forum in the Arab Region - Lebanon



Sahmakum Teang Tnaut - Cambodia

Samahan Ng Manggagawang Kaagapy Sa Pag-Unlad - Philippines

Samata - India

SAPCONE – Turkanapeople Organization - Kenya

Section 27 - South Africa

Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food - Sierra Leone

Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar (SINACTRAHO) - Mexico

Sindicato Obreros Curtidores de la República Argentina (SOCRA) - Argentina

Social Rights Advocacy Centre - Canada

Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa - South Africa

Spaces for Youth Development and Social Change (Spaces For Change) - Nigeria

STAR Kampuchea - Cambodia

Sustainable Development Foundation - Thailand

Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique - Algeria

Syrian Legal Development Program - United Kingdom

Tamkeen Fields for Aid - Jordan

Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) - Philippines

Terra de Direitos - Brazil

Terra Justa - Bolivia

The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) - Malaysia



The Blue Club - India

The Border Consortium - Thailand

The Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) - Netherlands

The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA) - Uganda

Tierraviva a los Pueblos Indígenas del Chaco - Paraguay

Tlachinollan - Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña - Mexico

Unión de Trabajadoras Afrocolombianas del Servicio Doméstico (UTRASD) - Colombia

United Sisterhood Alliance - Cambodia

VILUTHU - Sri Lanka

Why Me Women's Rights Organization - Bangladesh

Witness - United States

Women's Economic Agenda Project - United States

Women's Legal Center - South Africa

Women's Rehabilitation Center - Nepal

Women Action Towards Economic Development - Ghana

World Forum of Fisher People - South Africa

Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association - Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe People's Land Rights Movement - Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association - Zimbabwe