

Protests:

**Protea South, displacement, Abahlali/Rubin Phillip, xenophobia, NW
Province, Tarlton,
Khayelitsha toilets, Vavi v ANCorruption**

Von:

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Landless People's Movement Press Statement

The Attack on the Landless People's Movement Continues
Five More People have Been Arrested in Protea South

Last night the police went from door to door with an informer in the shacks of Protea South, Soweto. They arrested five members of the Landless People's Movement (LPM). Three of the people that they arrested are children of Maureen Mnisi, chairperson of the LPM in Gauteng. The other two are her neighbours.

Since the current wave of repression began when the LPM was attacked in Protea South by the Homeowners' Association on 23 May 2010 two people have been killed. One was shot dead by the Homeowners' Association in Protea South and one was shot dead by the police in eTwatwa. Other people have been beaten, shot, arrested and threatened with having their homes burnt down. Two people have had their homes burnt down in eTwatwa. There are now seven LPM members in jail in Protea South and three LPM members in jail in eTwatwa.

The police have promised that they will make more arrests soon. They said that the five people arrested last night will be charged with burning the electricity transformer in Protea South. The transformer was burnt down on 23 May. On that night the wealthier residents of Protea South living in private bonded houses armed themselves and went around beating shack dwellers who had connected themselves to electricity and forcibly disconnecting them from electricity. They shot two people and one person died. They also tried to burn down Maureen Mnisi's house. Her house was saved when LPM members defended it by erecting a burning barricade and throwing stones at the mob from the Homeowners' Association. Some members of the community burnt down the electricity box to show the wealthier residents of Protea South that if they want to deny electricity to the poor then it will be denied to everyone. This is tactic of disconnecting the rich if they disconnect the poor (or ask the state to do it) has been used in Siyanda, Pema Ridge and Motala Heights in Durban.

But the people that were arrested last night did not burn down the transformer in Protea South. They were busy defending Maureen Mnisi's home that night. They did burn tyres there but to keep warm as they protected Maureen's home. These arrests are clearly a strategy to make Maureen feel very strong pain so that her commitment to the struggle can be undermined. It is the most dirty tactic to punish a militant by arresting her children and her neighbours.

No one has been arrested for the attacks on LPM in Protea South. In eTwatwa the police stood by as the shacks of two LPM leaders were burnt down. Later they arrested one person but then they quickly released that person again. The police officer who shot dead the LPM militant in eTwatwa has not been arrested.

Liza Cossa, the chairperson of the LPM in Protea South, was told by the police that they are targeting Maureen Mnisi. She is now expecting that anything can happen. There is a long history of pressure on Maureen. In early 2009 the Homeowners' Association signed a petition against her saying that she must be removed from the area because she was defending people from outside the country. Of course it is true that the LPM defends all people from evictions - South Africa belongs to all who live in it and we make no apology for this. The LPM are well aware that the local ANC councillor, Mapule Khumalo, is behind this. She has put Maureen under pressure to stop shack dwellers from appropriating electricity but Maureen has refused. Khumalo was twice seen with the people from the Homeowners' Association after they tried to burn down Maureen's home.

It is the same in eTswatwa where the ANC councillor, Cllr Baleka, is behind the attacks there.

With the exception of the Daily Sun the media has ignored these attacks on the LPM. The Daily Sun did cover the electricity war in Protea South but they only interviewed the Homeowners' Association. They didn't even speak to the LPM. Maureen phoned them to complain and a journalist called Issac promised to get back to her but he never did. This newspaper did the same thing when they covered the attack on Abahlali baseMjondolo in the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban in September last year. This newspaper is treating shack dwellers as criminals and making propaganda for the rich and for the councillors.

As the LPM we want to send a clear message to the media that they have a duty to tell the truth about what is happening in our country. What is happening to us must not be swept under the carpet just so that the government can look good while the world is watching South Africa for the World Cup. The duty of the media to tell the truth remains while the World Cup is on. The media must come to Protea South and to eTswatwa and hear our story.

We are calling for urgent legal support. We need lawyers for the LPM members who are in jail. We need to take up cases against the Homeowners Association and the police to get justice for the two people who have been killed. We need money to pay bail.

This statement and its call for urgent solidarity with the LPM is supported by the Poor People's Alliance which is made up of Abahlali baseMjondolo, the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Landless People's Movement and the Rural Network. It is clear to all the organisations in the alliance that there is no democracy in South Africa. Every time that there is an election the poor are promised land, housing, water, electricity, toilets, education and jobs. After the elections we are denied these things. If we ask for the promises that have been made to us to be kept we are beaten, arrested and jailed. If we occupy land and appropriate water and electricity we are beaten, arrested and jailed. Sometimes we are tortured. Sometimes we are even killed.

We are calling on everyone who is visiting South Africa for the World Cup to visit us and to see how we have to live and to hear how we are oppressed. Visit us in the shacks, on the farms, in the transit camps and in the jails of this country.

For more information and comment please contact:

Maureen Mnisi, Chairperson of the LPM in Gauteng: 082 337 4514
David Mathontsi, Chairperson of the LPM in eTswatwa 073 914 9868.

For information and comment on the wider assault on the organised poor

in South Africa please contact:

S'bu Zikode, Abahlali baseMjondolo (Durban): 083 547 0474
Mzonke Poni, Abahlali baseMjondolo (Cape Town): 073 25 62036
Rev. Mavuso, Rural Network (KwaZulu-Natal): 072 279 2634
Ashraf Cassiem, Anti-Eviction Campaign (Cape Town): 076 186 1408

(Mzonke Poni has spent the last few days with the LPM in Protea South and can give also give a first hand account of recent events there.)

<http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/06/03/am-world-cup-pushes-out-south-africas-poor/>

Thursday, June 3, 2010

Listen to the show
World Cup pushes out South Africa's poor

by Gretchen Wilson

In Protea South, an informal settlement near Johannesburg, Maureen Mnisi walks through the mud of her neighborhood to show how locals get electricity. She points to a slack wire dangling over a tree and leading into a shack. "It's a illegal connection. And its not safe," she says.

Mnisi lived here since 1988, when apartheid was in full swing. The long-awaited shift to democracy has brought her few concrete benefits. "We've been left out. We don't have water, we don't have toilets, you know, and all these things."

Mnisi lives just a few miles from Soccer City, a brand-new stadium built for the World Cup. Last year, the city of Johannesburg wanted the 6,000 households here to move to another slum with better services, but a lot further from the city. "We were facing forced relocation, up until we take our matter to court," Mnisi says.

Locals won the case, but Mnisi and human rights activists say cities here are pushing out the poor, including settlement dwellers and street vendors, before the tourists arrive. They say city clean-up campaigns put public image before the rights of citizens.

City officials say they're just following tight regulations always required by Fifa, the powerful international group that runs the World Cup. Those regulations affect informal traders like people who run food stalls or sell goods on the street. They won't be allowed to trade during June and July, because Fifa requires that cities limit such businesses to protect their sponsors, who spend millions to get those rights.

At a meeting in Johannesburg, street vendors are meeting to challenge city bylaws that limit public space during the World Cup. Nkosinathi Jikeka with StreetNet International, a global network of informal traders, says "everybody's told that this is our World Cup and that all of us are going to benefit. But an ordinary person on the street, the layman, the poor South African, he's not going to benefit."

Jikeka says that unless they get access to the huge market of World Cup tourists, only big business will come away the winners.

Christian Today

A bishop's pursuit of justice for South Africa's shack dwellers

The Bishop of Natal in South Africa, Rubin Phillip, speaks here about the struggle for justice for the nation's shack dwellers and his commitment to seeing those in suffering take charge of their own destiny.

by Emma Pomfret, Christian Aid Thursday, June 3, 2010

The first black South African to hold the position of Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Natal, and chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC), Rubin Phillip is currently in the UK to raise awareness about the plight of the Durban-based shack-dweller movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo.

Abahlali have insisted on speaking for themselves about the realities of the poor, and on the right of the poor themselves to shape their own lives. For this, they have won support in many shack settlements, and have also incurred the wrath of the political establishment.

In September 2009 Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) leaders were attacked in the Durban-based Kennedy Road settlement by an armed mob chanting ethnic slogans. The police refused to come to the aid of AbM and only stepped in to disable spontaneous resistance to the mob. Two lives were lost during the attempt to mount a defence against the mob, and the homes of more than 30 AbM leaders were destroyed and looted following which local leaders of the ruling party seized control of the settlement.

Leaders of the ruling political party in the city and the province attacked the movement in extremely strong language in the days following the attack, accusing the movement of being criminals and 'anti-development'. Twelve supporters of AbM were arrested in relation to the attack on the movement, and eight months later they are still waiting for the presentation of evidence from the state.

The Kennedy Road attacks were explicitly directed at Abahlali baseMjondolo as a movement, and its activists and supporters.

Three weeks after the attacks AbM succeeded in having the Slums Act declared unconstitutional in the Constitutional Court. It was a remarkable victory. This Act gave the provincial Minister of Housing the powers to make it mandatory for landowners and municipalities to institute eviction proceedings against shack dwellers. The Act undermined tenure security for all shack dwellers in the province.

Despite this victory at the Constitutional Court, supporters of the ruling party were simultaneously openly issuing public death threats against the movement's leadership in the context of intense hostility to the movement from local party leaders and police officers.

The church believes it is imperative to establish, publicly and with confidence, the truth of what has happened and to help ensure that those who are found to be responsible are held accountable. This call has found wide support in South Africa and around the world.

As the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Natal (KZN), with the support of the KZN Church Leaders' Group, Bishop Rubin Phillip will accordingly appoint a properly independent Commission. This is the first time the ANC will have been challenged at a national level since their ascent to power in 1994.

He speaks to us more here:

What initially inspired you to get involved with Abahlali?

RP: I got involved because of my long-standing participation in peace and justice issues. As a young priest I was involved in the Black Consciousness Movement with Steve Biko and deputy president of the South African Students' Organisation (Saso) in 1969, and my participation in the struggle for justice has continued, I have never stopped, even when I became a Bishop. So when I was invited to meet with the leaders of Abahlali a few years ago to hear about their struggles and problems I knew that, as a church leader, there were important issues of justice and democracy at stake and I could throw my lot in with them.

I have attended meetings, memorials, mass ecumenical prayers, marches and even Abahlali's UnFreedom Day to show that the freedom poor South African's were promised in 1994 has not been a reality for a large majority of poor, oppressed people.

The fact that Abahlali was - and still is - so full of initiative and dedication, is a huge inspiration. When I first met the group leaders they were in control of their situation and they weren't asking anybody to come into direct them or to speak on their behalf or anything like that, rather they simply wanted people to come to stand in solidarity with them. I think it's fantastic that people who are suffering and living in desperate situations on a daily basis are able to take charge of their destiny and future.

But it wasn't just words - they were already involved in practical projects in the community such as an HIV programme and a feeding scheme, despite having very few resources. There is real hope for change among these people, and it is blossoming out of very little, which always inspires me.

What of Abahlali's on-going struggle for land, housing and dignity?

RP: So often people think of those informal settlements or slums as hopeless places, but they are thriving communities where people feel a real sense of pride in belonging to that particular land. These people don't want to be told where to live, in isolated areas away from the city, which is why I was so happy to support the group in challenging the constitutionality of the KZN Slums Act.

I demanded the political leadership of KZN to acknowledge the legitimacy of Abahlali base Mjondolo as a democratically elected, non-aligned movement of the people and work with them and not against them. This government in particular should know that when you suppress the voices and political aspirations you never win. This is the tale of a small, under-resourced organisation taking on the terrifying might of the government and I applaud them wholeheartedly.

We really cannot underestimate the importance of this victory, not only for Abahlali but any individual or group in South Africa fighting for their fundamental human rights. This legal precedent set by Abahlali could quite literally change the tenure rights lives and therefore lives of millions of people across South Africa, so if I can use my position as a Bishop to help alleviate people's suffering and bring about change then that's what I will do. That is my duty and my prerogative.

The movement has imprisoned leaders and the political paradox between Abahlali and the political establishment...

Because of the political nature of the case five of Abahlali's leaders remain in prison and seven are on bail as the case keeps getting remanded. We think that is because the local government is bent on keeping them inside to show people that they're tough, they mean business, and that they won't be challenged. Abahlali has a strong voice

and opinions and it appears that the government see them as a threat to their rule and authority.

The ANC as a liberation movement, knew how to protest, how to challenge the government of the day. But maybe now that they are in government they have become institutionalised and do not hear the voices of the poor. . They become frightened of change. This is a very sad thing and something the church is very concerned about. The church has stood on the side of the poor and oppressed, and played a significant role in the quest for the liberation of South Africa, so we feel deeply aggrieved that this is happening to this group.

Abahlali have made demands on the state as citizens which they have a right to do, simply by asking for basic human rights such as clean water, housing, electricity and health care. These demands are not only for physical improvements but for the political space to live in a dignified and respectful way, and that poses a serious threat to those in power now.

The point is that we're willing to stand up, the church is prepared to be a prophetic ministry, and there will be victories, the people will win. In one sense we shouldn't be surprised that the government is behaving in almost illegal and shabby way towards the poor, because they know the effect of protesting and advocacy as they used similar actions themselves during the apartheid years.

... and Mandela?

RP: My favourite memory of Mandela is when he came to Durban to spend a few days in the Presidential guest house. He invited some of the church leaders to meet with him so about five of us arrived at the house.

He was very down to earth and the security at the guest house was rather relaxed - he laughed and said that if he can't feel safe with church leaders he can't feel safe with anyone, and he thanked the church and the South African people for standing by him while he was in prison. He spoke quite movingly about the role of the church although he was also critical and said that the church should always get its facts right before speaking out. I challenged him on this and told him that was not the role of the church - if you're going to prophetic you are going to speak from what you know and see, and if you need to check out your facts with those in charge then it is no longer prophetic. He smiled and said 'Well I can't argue with a Bishop!' That was a memorable meeting.

I think Mandela would express a real sadness about what is happening in the country today because he has always been someone with integrity and justice and liberation for the poor is all that's motivated him in life. He must feel deeply aggrieved when he hears about some of the events that are happening.

The bottom line is that the problem is enormous. We've been left with a legacy from the days of apartheid which is not going to disappear overnight - it may take a few generations - which is all the more reason why the government needs to work in tandem with local communities and help develop them. The state needs to actually welcome the critique that comes from people like Abahlali and hear their voices when they speak and protest, rather than seeing that as being disloyal or an affront to the government.

I think the ANC feel that they have the moral high ground when it comes to liberation but it has to accept that fact that they are not - they are a government and they have become institutionalised. It's a worrying sign that people in government are losing touch with their roots.

Where do you see the future of the Commission of Enquiry?

RP: We don't have a date yet but we have consulted lawyers in the country as well as other academics. We have recruiting a professor of history who is now retired - he's passionate about the very first Anglican Bishop of Natal John Colenso - made famous in the 1964 Zulu film. The principle aim of the Commission is to establish the truth of what happened on that night in Kennedy Road.

This Commission is extremely important because it has wider implications for South Africa as a whole in terms of the role and scope of the state, their definition of democracy, and the political space the government allow the poor to occupy. It will begin to bring under the microscope the behaviour of the state vis-à-vis the poor and those who want to stand up and be counted and make their voices heard. Abahlali are a significant part of the new struggle for a truly democratic South Africa and they will be heard sooner or later.

Govt to re-establish xenophobic attacks committee June 03 2010 , 2:22:00

The SA government will re-establish a committee to deal with threats against foreigners following warnings of xenophobic attacks after the 2010 World Cup.

"Following reports of possible attacks on foreign nationals after the World Cup, Cabinet decided to re-establish the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to focus and deal with incidents and threats of attacks on foreign nationals," government spokesperson Themba Maseko told a post-Cabinet briefing today.

On Monday, a group of eminent global leaders called the "Elders" said xenophobia may erupt in South Africa after the soccer tournament as jobs start becoming more scarce. Maseko stressed that government has had no independent verification of threats of attacks, but said it felt a "need to start gathering information and interact with various players" and believes that re-establishing the committee as a "pro-active step".

"We are confident that if government begins to put its act together around these attacks, chances are that we will be able to deal with any eventuality that could arise after the World Cup. No exceptions."

Maseko confirmed that government feared renewed service delivery protests could be accompanied by xenophobic violence. But he warned that law enforcement agencies would not tolerate any attacks against foreigners, vandalism or violent service delivery protests during the June 11-July 11 soccer tournament.

The IMC would be convened by Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa, and include the ministers of home affairs, social development, state security, basic education, co-operative governance and traditional affairs, arts and culture and international relations and co-operation. It would liaise with civil society structures to ensure that a country-wide approach was adopted to prevent violence against anyone.

Maseko said government respected people's right to protest, but conceded it could embarrass authorities as the world's eyes turned to South Africa during the tournament. -Sapa

Service delivery protests rock North West June 03 2010 , 7:15:00

There has been a resurgence of service delivery protests in the North West. In the last 48 hours, three separate protests took place in the province, the latest two occurring last night at Braklaagte village just outside Zeerust and the other at Majemantsho village, just outside Mafikeng.

On Tuesday night, more than 30 people were arrested at Tlaakgameng village just outside Vryburg after causing huge damages to public buildings, following a protest action. The Braaklagte community says protests are the only way to attract the attention of the Ramotshere-Moiloa Local Municipality whose administrative seat is at Zeerust.

Locals claim that they have had irregular water supply for the past three years. The local municipality is accused of giving preferential treatment to municipal officials and traditional authorities. One of the examples cited by protesters is the erection of water tanks, within walking distance of the residences of the officials and traditional authorities at the expense of ordinary members of the community.

Angry protesters tried to destroy some of the water tanks, saying they do not serve the general interests of the community. However, the Braklaagte community leadership says it will meet with the local municipality later today in an effort to find solutions to the area's water challenges.

The community also claims that they have been drinking unhealthy water from tanks provided to them. They say that used condoms have often been found in the tanks. In Mafikeng, police were forced to use rubber bullets to disperse a mob of youth who had barricaded the road with burning tyres in protest against poor service delivery at Majemantsho village.

Protesters burn down multipurpose centre in Tarlton
Sapa
Published: 2010/06/04 04:43:01 PM

Health MEC Qedani Mahlangu. Photo: Sowetan

A multipurpose centre was burnt down in a service delivery protest in Tarlton, west of Johannesburg today, the Gauteng health department said.

Health MEC Qedani Mahlangu said a clinic, which was part of the building, was destroyed along with medication and baby formula stored there.

She said while communities had a right to protest, the destruction of public property was unacceptable.

“Destruction of state property such as clinics and multipurpose centres cannot be regarded as a form of protest, but an act of criminality as this has the potential to deny residents their right to access health services and other essential needs,” she said in a statement.

The health department would provide a mobile clinic in the area as an interim measure to ensure health services continued.

The department said hundreds of residents in Tarlton were protesting about service delivery related issues when they burnt down the centre.

Toilets 'violet right to dignity'
June 04 2010 at 03:35PM Get IOL on your
mobile at m.iol.co.za

The City of Cape Town had violated Khayelitsha residents' right to dignity by not enclosing toilets it installed for them, the SA Human Rights Commission said on Friday.

Commissioner Pregs Govender was releasing the findings of the commission's probe into the toilet saga, prompted by a complaint it received from the ANC Youth League in January.

She told a media briefing in Cape Town that the commission recommended that the city reinstall the 51 toilets, which were removed this week, and enclose them with immediate effect.

The enclosures should be brick and mortar, not corrugated iron, she said.

She said the full report on the commission's investigation would be released next week.

The findings come after several days of violent protests in Khayelitsha over the toilets, in which 32 people were arrested.

The council said it erected the toilets on the understanding that they would be enclosed by the members of the community they were intended for.

When the council erected iron and wood enclosures around them last week, members of the league took the lead in breaking these down. - Sapa

Friday, June 4, 2010

Zille: ANCYL leader was part of open toilet programme

ANC Youth League (ANCYL) regional secretary, Andile Lili who called for the destruction of toilets in Makhaza, Western Cape was in fact part of the Cape Town City's service delivery programme - which include the open air toilets - as a "community liaison officer", Democratic Alliance leader Hele Zille says in her weekly newsletter titled The truth behind the so-called "toilet wars".

Zille accepted that "open toilets are a serious affront to human dignity and cannot be condoned", but argued that it was due to budget constraints.

"The issue had its genesis under my watch as Mayor of Cape Town when the City began an ambitious programme to deliver services (such as water, sewerage, roads, storm water and electricity) to 223 informal settlements (home to around 650,000 shack dwellers) across the metropolitan area. Most of these settlements are the consequence of land invasions. Densities, and lack of planning, make "retrofitting" services in these areas a technically complex task," says Zille.

She says technical difficulties pale into insignificance compared to the social complexities of upgrading a densely populated informal settlement. "Inevitably, upgrading results in intense community conflict, as some people have to move to make way for service installation, and people vie for access to the jobs that upgrading offers. Usually, community conflict stalls delivery for many months, and often stops it altogether. Very few contractors wish to work on these projects because of the social conflict that inevitably arises, which is why they always cost more and take much longer than initially planned".

She says "to facilitate these processes where possible, contractors usually employ a "community liaison officer" (CLO) to achieve consensus and minimise conflict.

"In Silvertown, the CLO was none other than ANC Youth League (ANCYL) regional secretary, Andile Lili, who achieved notoriety when he was one of the group smashing the toilet enclosures in pursuit of the ANCYL's call to destroy infrastructure and make the City "ungovernable". In his paid position as CLO facilitating the Silvertown provision of services, Lili had played a key role in implementing an agreement that emerged from lengthy negotiations with the community about how to meet their priorities out of the available budget," says Zille.

The budget, based on the national norms for the upgrading of informal settlements, provides one flush toilet for every five families, she says, but the community understandably wanted one flush toilet per family.

"The proposed way to achieve this was for the City to provide the toilets and plumbing connections, while the families themselves would make a contribution and enclose the toilets. This seemed an ideal win-win solution. It certainly was for the 97% (1,265) of Silvertown families who built their toilet enclosures, often in the most innovative "en-suite" arrangements attached to their dwellings. But it did not work for 51 families (less than 3% of total beneficiaries). For whatever reason, they did not enclose their toilets, and some even used their open air toilets under cover of blankets," Zille says.

She says when the City built enclosures for the 51 open toilets - it encountered resistance from the 1,265 families who argued that if they had built their enclosures themselves, so could the remaining 51.

"After listening to these arguments, Mayor Plato concluded that it would be untenable to continue with the indignity of open toilets. The City would therefore enclose the remaining toilets. By this time, the ANCYL had realised it was on to a good thing. Photos of unenclosed toilets had appeared in the media. The ANCYL lost no time using this to "prove" the lie that the DA treats black people with indignity, and developed a keen interest in ensuring the toilets remained open," Zille says.

She says when the City built enclosures, the ANC youth league broke down the enclosures "as fast as they could be built - against the pleas of the owners to stop doing so".

"This left the City with only two options: to leave the toilets unenclosed, or to remove them. The first option remained untenable. It was therefore resolved that the toilets would be temporarily removed until enclosures were built. Then the toilets would be returned. This could, theoretically, happen within a few days. In the meantime, the community would continue to be serviced by toilets on the national standard ratio of 5 families to 1 toilet (with a concrete enclosure)," says Zille.

She says this is far better than what is available in most informal settlements in ANC-run metropolitan areas. A recent National Treasury report found that Cape Town was well ahead of other metro municipalities in dealing with infrastructure backlogs and delivery of services.

"Cape Town would be even further ahead if it were not for the vandalism of municipal infrastructure, such as the wanton destruction of toilets perpetrated by the ANCYL last week," says Zille.

According to Alderman Clive Justus, Cape Town's Mayco member for Utility Services, the City last year spent more than R80 million on repairing or replacing stolen or vandalised basic services in informal settlements.

Zille says for every R3 that the City spends of its R125 million annual budget for water and sanitation facilities in informal settlements, R2 is spent on repairs and replacement of vandalized or stolen infrastructure.

Justus said recently that in the past financial year, the City had installed 422 water stand pipes, but had to effect 5 482 repairs to sabotaged or stolen pipes and taps. In the same year, the City's Utility Services installed 2 458 toilets, but had to make 4, 302 repairs to cisterns, pans, pipes and ablutions damaged by criminals.

Last December, 300 out of 464 toilets installed in a Delft informal settlement were broken or had parts stolen. In Philippi, vandals destroyed 26 ablution blocks containing six toilets each. In RR Section of Khayelitsha, chemical toilets were burned to the ground. This all happened within weeks of installation.

"To address the theft of copper cabling, brass valves, lead batteries, manhole covers and water meters, the City is now using only plastic or steel pipes, and concrete for toilets. Underground electricity cables are now covered with concrete so that they can't be dug out. Cape Town's 'Copperheads' task team has also cracked down on dealers of stolen scrap metal. The City has even provided padlocks and chains to community leaders to keep toilet facilities secure overnight," says Zille.

She says Justus warned that a new pattern is emerging, whereby plastic pipes are stolen, despite their minimal re-sale value, concrete toilets are smashed with axes, and even padlocks are being taken.

"City officials report that residents sometimes vandalise facilities to secure more jobs in the subsequent repair programmes on the basis of the City's "local employment" policies, creating a perverse incentive for people to destroy newly installed infrastructure, to secure employment in the repair work. When contractors employ other outside labour, local communities often drive them out of the area, delaying projects by months and years. This pushes up the cost of services in informal settlements," says Zille.

She says the city has decided that the best way to instill a sense of ownership and an ethos of respecting property, is for each family to contribute to the construction and maintenance of their own toilet.

- Times Live

Vavi receives death threat - Cosatu Comments
June 4, 2010

Submit your comment

Click here to vote in a poll about what you think will happen if the ANC decides to press disciplinary charges against Cosatu general-secretary Zwelinzima Vavi after he publicly accused ANC ministers of corruption

Congress of SA Trade Unions general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi has received a death threat amid a furore over his complaint that allegations of high level corruption are not being investigated, Cosatu said on Friday.

"The general secretary of the Congress of SA Trade Unions, Zwelinzima Vavi, has received a letter containing a death threat. It says that 'You will die like Molefi'," Cosatu spokesman Patrick Craven said in a statement.

"This is presumed to be a reference to Molefi Sefularo, the late deputy minister of health, who died in a car accident outside Pretoria on 5 April 2010, and could imply that the writer knows that it was not an accident," he said.

Cosatu had referred the letter to national police commissioner General Bheki Cele for investigation.

Cele's spokesman was not immediately available to confirm whether the letter had been received.

Craven said Cosatu had no reason to associate the letter with the ANC national working committee's decision to take disciplinary action against Vavi.

The ANC has not publicly said it will discipline Vavi, but Cosatu said sources with the party had confirmed media reports on the matter.

Cosatu said that while it was not taking the death threat lightly, it would not be "driven to panic or paranoia" by the letter.

"No amount of death threats or blackmail will cause us to scale down or abandon our campaign to end corruption."

Earlier, Cosatu said Vavi would not apologise for linking Communications Minister Siphwe Nyanda to a complaint that reports of corruption were not being investigated.

"He hasn't received that letter yet, even though it is in all the newspapers," Craven said of a letter apparently demanding that Vavi make a public apology and retraction.

"I am confident that he will not be apologising, because he has nothing to apologise for," said Craven.

He explained that Vavi recently delivered a speech in which he complained that newspapers continued to carry stories of allegations of corruption against ministers, but that the president and the Cabinet had yet to say these allegations would be investigated.

No names were mentioned in the written speech.

However, when a reporter later asked Vavi to which ministers he was referring, he named Nyanda and Local Government Minister Sicelo Shiceka.

The Mail&Guardian had reported earlier that Nyanda ran up R500,000 in hotel bills in Cape Town waiting for his official residence to be ready, and that Shiceka allegedly doctored his curriculum vitae.

"He wasn't making any fresh allegations," said Craven.

"These are people against whom allegations have been made, and that is public knowledge."

Nyanda has disagreed and has retained legal representation over the matter.

"We have proceeded to demand a retraction and an apology from Mr Vavi for allegations which are calculated to be understood by an audience that our client is morally reprehensible and that he is corrupt," said Siyabonga Mahlangu, director of litigation at Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs.

Cosatu has said the unprecedented move will destroy its alliance with the ANC and the SA Communist Party.

Mahlangu said the firm had not been briefed to deal with the details of the story, but Nyanda wanted the retraction of the defamatory allegations made against him, and an unqualified apology, by June 10.

"Our courts have ruled that a repetition of a defamatory statement in itself constitutes a cause of action against a person repeating such defamatory allegations."

The demand is that Vavi's retraction and apology must be published in the same matter and through the same media that he used when he made the statement.

Nyanda's lawyers were not instructed to demand an apology from the publications which carried the allegations.

The firm believed "in freedom of the press and the media's duty to inform the nation" and that courts applied different standards to the press. He said the legal team would "take a view" if Vavi did not comply.

"What the minister wants to protect, is to protect his right to his good name and to his dignity as a person," said Mahlangu.

"He moves from a premise that as a public representative he still maintains his rights to his dignity and his good name and that in fact, it is upon such dignity and such good name and reputation that he was entrusted with public responsibilities," he said.

The team was waiting to hear from Vavi whether he had explanation or facts that could be brought to Nyanda's attention which would inform how the team proceeded with the matter. - Sapa
