

## **The Archbishop of Cape Town Endorses the Bishop of Natal's Condemnation of the Kennedy Road Attacks in Durban**

**Press Statement, 1 October 2009**

The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town has lent his weight to the Bishop of Natal's condemnation of recent brutality in the Kennedy Road shack settlement of Durban. 'I share Bishop Rubin Phillip's view that it is a profound disgrace to democracy, that militia have been allowed to drive out the leaders of the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement, and many hundreds of families with them' said Archbishop Thabo Makgoba.

'When we remember how much we suffered, and how hard we struggled, in order to ensure that an armed minority could no longer exert oppression and deny freedom of speech, of opinions and of dissent, it is completely unacceptable that such intolerance should rear its head again in a different political guise' the Archbishop said, strongly endorsing the statement issued by the Bishop of Natal, who also chairs the Kwa Zulu-Natal Christian Council. 'I too shall be making political representations' he added, inviting others to take up Bishop Rubin's proposals for supporting the displaced, whether through political action, through material support, or through prayer for all those injured or bereaved. 'The people of our country deserve better than this' he said. 'Political leaders and the police must ensure that democracy and the rule of law are upheld.'

Issued by the Office of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town  
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*The full text of Bishop Rubin's Statement is carried below.*

*More details of Abahlali baseMjondolo are available at <http://www.abahlali.org/>*

### **Democracy Under Attack in Kennedy Road, Durban**

I was torn with anguish when I first heard of the unspeakable brutality that has raged down on to the Kennedy Road shack settlement. In recent years I have spent many hours in the Kennedy Road settlement. I've attended meetings, memorials, mass ecumenical prayers and marches. I have had the honour of meeting some truly remarkable people in the settlement and the work of Abahlali baseMjondolo has always nurtured my faith in the power and dignity of ordinary people. I have seen the best of our democracy here. I have tasted the joy of real social hope here.

The achievement of our hard won democracy was a great moment of shared grace. The militia that have driven the Abahlali baseMjondolo leaders and hundreds of families out of the settlement is a profound disgrace to our democracy. The fact that the police have systematically failed to act against this militia while instead arresting the victims of their violence and destruction is cause for the gravest concern. There are credible claims that this militia has acted with the support of the local ANC structures. This, also, is cause for the most profound concern.

I have shuddered to the core as my thoughts have, with those of many others, turned to the attacks on democratic politics unleashed by apartheid and its allies in the 1980s. Once again people have been beaten, had their homes destroyed, been driven from their community and killed for their political views and practices. Once again an armed minority have used violence to implement a ban on a democratic organisation favoured by a majority. Once again there is just cause for deep concern about the role of the

police. Once again we in the churches are looking for safe houses for activists, accommodation for political refugees who have fled with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, doctors for the injured and lawyers for the jailed. Horrors that we all believed to have been buried in our past now stalk the present. This is unacceptable. There can be no compromise on this score. I will take my anger and my fear for the future of our democracy to the highest levels of leadership in our country and to our sister churches around the world. I encourage others to do the same.

In 2007 I was part of a group of church leaders that issued a statement testifying to the brutality and political intolerance that the Sydenham Police had unleashed against Abahlali baseMjondolo in our presence. It is clear that the Sydenham Police should not be allowed to police Kennedy Road or to investigate the crimes that have been committed in recent days. A credible and independent force needs to be deployed as a matter of urgency.

It is equally essential that all of our political leaders take immediate steps to distance themselves from the actions of the militia that have seized control of the settlement, that they call party members who have been complicit with this militia to account, and that we all affirm that Kennedy Road and its residents have the same right to democratic practices as everywhere else and everyone else in South Africa. This includes the right to dissent.

Of course my condolences go out to all those who have lost people whom they love and on whom they depend. It seems that some among the militia that launched the attack on the elected leadership of the settlement may also be among the dead. If, as may well be the case, the militia has been exploited by local elites determined to roll back the development of a vibrant popular democracy then we will pray for their own healing and for a turn away from violence and lies and towards life and truth.

Many people are asking what they can do. I would like to make three suggestions:

1. It is essential that the attack on democracy in Kennedy Road is widely publicised so that we can all confront what has happened and ensure that it never happens again. We need to give platforms to the victims of these attacks where ever we can.
2. It is also essential that we convey our concerns to our political leaders with urgency and clarity. I will be writing to President Zuma and encourage others to do the same.
3. Many people have fled their homes with nothing but what they could carry. They need urgent financial assistance. I have agreed to co-ordinate a relief fund and donations can be made to: Diocese of Natal Trust Account, First National Bank  
Account number: 509 3118 7386; Branch code: 257 355, Midlands Mall Branch, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

A democracy that is not for everyone is a democracy in name only.

29 September 2009

Bishop Rubin Phillip

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