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ARTICLE

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WILL THE FARM DWELLERS INHERIT THE LAND TOO

Even before the announcement of “Expropriation of Land without Compensation” by the state president Cyril Ramaphosa during State of the Nation Address, most of the farm workers have been suffering the ill treatment by various farmers around MAP areas. Most farm residents’ rights to basic necessities’ such as water, electricity and residence are being violated on the farms.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) Councillor in Maluti A Phofung, Beukers who owns Smaldeel Farm claiming that he is in a process of selling it to new owners has evicted black farm residents whom most of them lived there for most of their lives. Beukers gave them proposition of two weeks to evacuate his premises saying he sold the farm to the new owners. And when the residents of Samldeel refused to vacate the farm, he threatened to destroy their houses and further said he’ll cut electricity and water if they continue to stay there forcefully attested Palesa Mofokeng as she stated: “Beukers ore yena haa tebele batho feela polasi ena ose a e rekisitse, ha a tsebe hore lekgowa leo le keneng le letjha letla sala le ba etsa eng hoba yena ha asa leyo. O ne asa rate ha aka ba siya ka hara polasi, le yena ke maemo hoba le di finance ha disa mo dumella, ke ka hoo asa batleng hore aka ba siya ka hara polasi. Ose a sokola leyena ha asa kgona ho sebedisa polasi”.

Most of the Smaldeel Farm residents explained that they were beaten and abused by the DA councillor for most their lives working for him generating him millions. After the matter was reported to Land Affairs in Bethlehem, Labour Department in Harrismith and Department of Agriculture with no feedback thus far, the community felt that they didn’t have any choice but took yet another step to inform the Maluti A Phofung Executive Mayor Cllr. Vusimusi Tshabalala. Following the submission of their grievances, on Tuesday, 9th March 2018 the office of the mayor visited the area and was surprised to discover that the entire Aberfield Farm regions suffered from the same treatment, threats and evictions. The region comprise of areas such as Misgund Farm, Appen, Albertina, Julia (Smondia) and Khanye area amongst others.



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It is alleged that the petulant DA Councillor Beukers seemed to have had a briefing with some white farmers around Aberfield Region and those nearby after an announcement of correcting the ills of the past by the president. Beukers is also accused of offering Ntate Mabusetsa Mokoena(70yrs) who worked for 55years of his life at the farm R 25 000 to start his new life at Bluegumbosch, Qwaqwa.

The follow-up meeting with Smaldeel community was held on Friday, 9th March 2018 at Smaaldeel Farm, with the office of the Executive Mayor, on the farm of the DA Councillor intended to include Department of Agriculture and that of Land Affairs but to no avail. The purpose of the meeting was to intervene in resolving the farm dweller's challenges and to hear decisions made after being given instructions to leave by the furious and dictating farmer. On arrival at Smaldeel most of the residents had already evacuated the area fearing for their lives after they have been intimidated and threatened. Few families relocated to Kestell, Makgolokoeng and Qwaqwa where most of their family members are residing. All these relocated families were not paid to move out of Smaldeel Farm.

Another meeting was then held on Friday, 16th March 2018 with the community of Smaldeel, the Department of Land Affairs, Department of Agriculture (Legal Services) and the office of the Executive Mayor. The Department of Land Affairs official Morena Ntsane had shown little commitment in resolving the issues faced by the residents. He didn't know the address of the farm, nor the state of ownership of the farm. He was also not aware that DA councillor had any intension to sell or lease the farm or was it just a way to evacuate residents as there were no papers of any proof showing ownership state or hiring out of Smaldeel farm from the department. Morena Ntsane reluctantly promised to get back to the people after the 30th March 2018; meanwhile the remaining residents were left desperate and were told to remain at the farm until then.

Lehlohonolo Bereng Mosikili of the Department of Rural Development emphasised that it would be difficult for the department to assist relocated families even if they were unfairly dismissed as he expressed "Batho ba nkileng qeto ba setlela le rapolasi ha ane are ba tsamaye ba be ba dumellana le yena, hase ba tswile haho ntho eo lefapha kapa mmuso oka e etsang hobane ke tumellano ya bona le rapolasi" explaining the out of court settlement to community.

Residents complained that the new land owner also threatened to kill cows of the residents if he sees them around his land, he ordered that the cows owned by farm



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residents should remain at the small residential area. The residents also repeated that the new owner would cut water and electricity until they leave his farm. The Department of Agriculture promised to engage with Beukers to resolve this issue. Now the residents want to know “Is the expropriation of land without compensation real to farm dwellers?”