

3 April 2009



## **COSATU NW press statement on the outcome of the Ottosdal Magistrates Court eviction case against farmer**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions in the North West Province congratulates the Ottosdal Magistrate court for dismissing the case against farm workers who were to be evicted by a farm owner after they have worked for over 17 years on his farm.

COSATU led demonstrations since 7<sup>th</sup> November 2008 when those families had what we called a 'black Christmas' in December 2008 when they were unfairly dismissed with an illegal court order for eviction. We are happy that the application was dismissed with costs. Therefore farm workers who were evicted are now legal to stay permanently in this farm without fear. This is a victory to the poor farm workers.

COSATU will be there during the appeal, as we were there from the start, supporting our poor farm workers and their families. This should be a lesson to those who are still preparing to evict farm workers.

## **Farm workers to get time off to vote**

Employer organisations and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) have signed an agreement, which will ensure that all farm workers are able to cast their votes in a free and fair manner on 22 April.

Employers agreed to allow employees time off from work to vote and for the IEC to use designated areas on farms as registration and voting stations.

The workers will also be allowed to attend political rallies at public areas. IEC chairperson Dr Brigalia Bam and representatives from the Transvaal Agricultural Union of South Africa (TAU-SA), National African Farmers Union, Food and Allied Workers Union and the Rural Legal Trust signed the Memorandum of Agreement in Johannesburg on Wednesday.

Dr Bam said it was difficult to organise polling stations for farm workers to vote as they had to first get permission to enter the farm from employers. Many farm workers and farm dwellers also do not have Identity Documents or birth certificates. "Some second generation farm workers don't exactly know when they were born. When farmers allow them to visit their nearest Home Affairs office, they spend the whole day in the long queues and normally return without getting the documents."

She said the IEC intended to engage the Department of Home Affairs and the farmers unions to have mobile units visit the farms to ensure all workers received necessary documents. "Farmers must assist in uniting farm workers to assemble at one farm," said Dr Bam.

The Constitution, which is rated as one of the best in the country, made it clear that every citizen had a right to vote including farm workers.

"By signing the MoU, we want to indicate to the world that we are a country which observes every law. We don't want farm workers to continue to be viewed as non-existent. We also want to ensure that these elections are free and fair," she said.

Meanwhile, the IEC is in the process of recruiting and training 200 000 electoral officials ahead of the general elections.

IEC Outreach Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Matshidiso Masutha said they had developed a new set of criteria with regard to the appointment of electoral staff, presiding and deputy presiding officers.

Ms Masutha said the new criteria includes that presiding and deputy presiding officers must not in the last five years have held political office, or been a candidate in an election or have been political active for a political party.

"We are doing this because we must fulfil our mandate with impartiality," she said.

Currently, they are 23 million potential voters registered on the IEC's voters roll making it the highest recorded number of voters that have been registered since the national common voter's roll was first compiled for the elections in 1999. - BuaNews

## **Labour Minister To Address Farming, Fishing Industry Employees**

In continuing with his long running campaign in the Western Cape, Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana will on Sunday (Apr 5) address the farming community in Ladismith, about 200 kilometers from Cape Town. Pertinent issues that the Minister is expected to discuss with members of the community, most of who comprise farm workers in the area, as well as community leaders during the Imbizo include workplace rights and occupational health and safety. The audience at the Ladismith Senior Secondary School venue will also get an opportunity to interact directly with the Minister on such issues as registering for the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund.

On Monday (Apr 6) the Minister and the department's top managers will be addressing workers in the fishing sector in Strand, just outside Cape Town before moving to Murraysburg near Malmesbury, a farming and industrial area where they will engage workers on their rights and obligations. Details of time and venue for the Strand Imbizo are as follows:

**Venue:** 31 de Kok Street, Strand Cape Town  
**Time:** 10:00

*Released by Department of Labour*

## **Evictions Still Ongoing In North- West**

The North -West Secretary Tseleng Tau, said that they are planning a mass meeting with farm workers this coming Sunday 6 April 2009 in one of the locations in the area. In addition, the province is also going to have a Branch General Meeting in Rustenburg on the same day to discuss the upcoming elections and the issue of evictions. "Evictions is a method used by employers to intimidate farm workers here in the area and it is especially common now as we go into the electioneering period. We need now to get ESTA amended and we need some political intervention- from someone that will actually change the laws in this legislation so that there are no pitfalls. For this reason we are planning another march against evictions after our successful one in February 2009" says cde Tau.

There is a general perception that while ESTA is a huge improvement as opposed to the absence of any law previously to address the situation of evictions, it still is a document that basically tells the employer how to evict and does not necessarily stop evictions. For this reason, the legislation's weaknesses must be addressed and hopefully amended.

## **NOB's Visit To Cuba**

This serves as short report about our revival of our working relations with Cuba Unions.

We were invited by AGRICULTURE & FOREST WORKERS UNION congress that was held on the 14 – 15 March 2008. Comrade Nazo, Faw u President, addressed the congress and in his address he shared with Cubans the experiences of workers in the Forest and Agricultural sector in South Africa.

After the congress from the 16<sup>th</sup> March up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2009, we were interacting with other organisations amongst them was the Director of the Workers College in Cuba where we agreed with the college for the exchange education programmes.

The meeting with the Food & Catering workers union, we also agreed with them that we will start to have revolutionary working relations. They will have their National Congress in June 2009.

After the National Congress of the Agriculture and Forest there was a signing of the memorandum of understanding between the two unions.

It was the most challenging trip as there are very few CUBANS that can speak English we were depending to the interpretation services, in general Cubans are living their life of surviving under the sanctions that were imposed to them by the USA and EUROPE and their prepared to defend their revolution.

*Deputy General Secretary  
Mlamleli Pukwana*

## **Cde Blade Nzimande to visit North West Province**

The General Secretary of the SACP, Cde Blade Nzimande, will visit the North West to kick start the SACP's Chris Hani Election Trail under the slogan, 'Do it For Chris – Vote ANC!'.

Since the assassination of our late General Secretary, Cde Martin Thembisile 'Chris' Hani on 10 April 1993, the SACP declared April the 'Chris Hani Month' in honour and memory of this gallant son of the soil and a communist till the end. But this 16th anniversary is of particular significance.

We are commemorating the 16th anniversary of this dastardly act during the year in which we will be holding our fourth democratic elections since the historic 1994 democratic breakthrough. This is significant in that it was in the wake of his assassination that the stalemate in the negotiations was broken and the hand of the regime was forced to agree to set 27 April 1994 as the date of the first democratic elections. So it is even more appropriate that we dedicate the movement's electoral effort to the memory of this hero.

Details of the visit are as follows:

Day one, Saturday 04 April 2009

Activity – Door to Door  
Time : 08H00

Venue : Taung

Activity – Meeting with Traditional Leaders  
Time : 10H00  
Venue : Kgosi's Motlabane's place, Taung

Activity - Public Meeting  
Time : 14H00 – 16H30  
Venue : Dry Heart Community Hall, Taung

Day Two, Sunday 05 April 2009

Activity – Door to door & Blitz  
Time : 08H30  
Venue : Mafikeng

Activity – Meeting with Professionals, Business and NGO's  
Time : 10H30  
Venue : Reitsusetse Hall, Itsoseng Municipality

Activity – Rally  
Time : 12H30  
Venue : Itsoseng Stadium

**end**