

Government ignores apartheid style evictions on vulnerable farm dwellers by ANC Cadres

By Thandeka Mbabama MP – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development

On 26 April 2021, during an oversight visit to Sunnyside farm in the Eastern Cape, I was met by the stench of rotting meat.

Carcasses of cows lay exposed on the ground. Their twisted bodies infested with maggots and flies. It soon became apparent to me why this was the case.

Neziswa, a farm dweller, had just knocked off from work at Grey Hospital in King Williamstown where she works as a nurse. She had to rush home to buy water in a rundown bakkie, a futile exercise as most of the water spilt out of the 20 litre drums on the uneven gravel road. This she did every other day when not buying lucerne from local farmers on credit to feed the animals - all this because her family and animals were restricted to a small portion of land with no water, no toilet, no electricity and nowhere to source firewood for cooking. Surely this is gross inhumanity and cruelty to animals?

Nonezile Moyeni, her mother, told me that they had been on the farm since 1964 when the farm was owned by one Mr Burger who allowed them to share the grazing and water in peace. Her husband died and she watched as the farm changed hands among several owners who were not as kind as Mr Burger.

The previous owner told them that their animals were becoming too many. They need to sell them or remove them from his farm. They bore the brunt of their animals being constantly impounded and having to release them thereafter at huge cost - money they could ill afford.

This went on until 10 August 2020 when a man drove into their yard and without so much as a "Molweni" loftily proclaimed that he was the new owner of the farm and he wanted them off his property in 2 days. He further told them that he had already procured a TLB (tractor loader backhoe) to bulldoze their humble abode down. When they resisted he confined them to a small portion by fencing them in, and cut off the water supply!

The man is Thembelihle Gxothiwe, husband to Eastern Cape Transport MEC Weziwe Tikana-Gxothiwe. The attempt to mimic apartheid era evictions by an ANC cadre is reminiscent of George Orwell's classic novel titled *Animal Farm*, where some are, indeed, more equal than others.

The Moyeni story is not isolated. This is the fate of farm dwellers across our provinces. The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has an obligation to protect and assist farm dwellers who are ex-employees, or whose husband's were employees through the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 (ESTA) from exploitation by farm owners including ANC cadres - like Mr Gxothiwe - who have recently acquired farms.

There is little evidence of the Department being effective in implementing the reliefs found in the Extension of Security Tenure Act (ESTA) such as finding suitable alternative accommodation or facilitating the legal allocation of a suitable piece of land on the same farm.

The DA is extremely appalled that 27 years into our democracy families, especially those headed by women, can be so severely traumatised due to the inefficiencies of a Department tasked with their protection.

Minister Didiza , the Democratic Alliance demands justice for the family of Nonezile Moyeni and her animals which are dying on a daily basis.