

## **Abahlali baseMjondolo Attacked in Kennedy Road – People Have Been Killed**

Last night at about 11:30 a group of about 40 heavily armed men attacked the Abahlali baseMjondolo office in the Kennedy Road settlement where the movement was holding an all night camp for the Youth League.

The men who attacked were shouting: "The AmaMpondo are taking over Kennedy. Kennedy is for the AmaZulu." Some people were killed. We can't yet say exactly how many. Some are saying that three people are dead. Some are saying that five people are dead. Some people are also very seriously injured. They broke everything that they could.

The Sydenham police were called but they did not come. This has led some people to conclude that this was a carefully planned attack on the movement and that the police knew in advance that it had been planned and stayed away on purpose. Why else would the police refuse to come when they are being called while people are being openly murdered? When the attack happened one officer from Crime Intelligence was there in plain clothes.

This morning the police arrived under the authority of Glen Nayager and made arrests. As far as we can tell only members of the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC) have been arrested. If this is true it indicates clearly that the police are part of this attack on the movement. It also seems that the police are only taking statements from the people that attacked us! Some of the people that they have arrested were not even at Kennedy Road when we were attacked. These arrests feel to us like the [Kennedy Sixx](#) scandal all over again.

We believe that this attack has been planned and organised by Gumede, from the Lacy Road settlement, who is the head of the Branch Executive Committee of the local ANC. There has never been political freedom in Lacy Road. Since 2005 we have been told that anyone wearing the red shirt of Abahlali baseMjondolo in Lacy Road will be killed. But anyone can wear any shirt of any politics that they like in our settlements. You will see COPE, ANC and SACP shirts in our settlements. We are democrats. Our politics is a politics of open and free discussion - not violence and intimidation.

This is not the first time that our movement has been attacked. Last year both Mzonke Poni, head of AbM in the Western Cape, and S'bu Zikode, head of AbM in KwaZulu-Natal, were attacked and seriously beaten by well organised and mysterious groups of young men. These attacks happened a few days apart. The men who attacked Zikode also said that he was selling Kennedy to the AmaMpondo. Some time after the attacks on Mzonke and S'bu Mashumi Figland, Deputy President of Abahlali baseMjondolo and Chairperson of the Kennedy Road Development Committee, was also attacked and seriously beaten. Again the attack was very well organised and carried out by a mysterious group of young men. During the attack Mashumi, who is Xhosa, was told that the AmaMpondo must leave Durban and go back to the Eastern Cape.

Gumede, head of the local BEC of the ANC, has been trying by all means to undermine the movement for many years. He has failed. Every year we have open elections in Kennedy Road and every year people vote for Abahlali baseMjondolo.

We believe that Gumede, with the support of councillor Yakoob Baig, has tried to build a coalition against the movement in order to attack it violently. This coalition is now a militia. They have found 3 types of people that want to attack the movement:

1. **People who want to follow an ethnic politics:** The movement accepts all shack dwellers on an equal basis. We do not care where a person was born or what language they speak. This has caused those who want an ethnic politics to oppose us.
2. **Criminals:** We have a Safety & Security committee and we have been working to get the criminals out of our settlement. In recent months we have been working very well with the local police to get them arrested. We have also put a time limit on the shebeens saying that they must close at 10:00 p.m. so that people can sleep properly and that there is no

violence, especially violence against women, when people get too drunk. The criminals and some shebeen owners do not like what the movement is doing to make the settlement safe for everybody.

3. **People who want Gumede's patronage:** Everytime the movement wins a small victory, like getting toilets built or even cleaned, Gumede tries to ensure that the jobs go only to his people. We are opposed to development becoming misused for party politics. The people who want to get Gumede's jobs are also unhappy with what we are doing.

The next Kennedy Road AGM is coming soon. Once again the people of Kennedy Road can vote for ever they want to represent them. The people who attacked us last night do not want democracy. If they felt that they had support they could just have waited for the AGM and put up candidates.

What Gumede, and Baig are doing is not just an attack on Abahlali baseMjondolo. It is also an attack on democracy. They have now set up a militia to destroy the movement. We have no armed wing. We have never attacked anyone. Our politics is a politics of open meetings and popular democracy. It is a politics of debating and discussing together. The politics that is being used to attack us is a politics of war.

We see no difference between what is being done to us and what the apartheid regime did with the Witdoeke in the shack settlements in Cape Town in the 1980s.

After what has happened many people are saying to us that they do not trust the police. They are asking for the army to be sent in as the army might be neutral.

As we write the attacks and threats continue. We are under attack. We are not armed.

Gumede and his militia are not just a threat to us and our community. They are a threat to democracy in South Africa. It is very clear that democracy is under attack.

As we are sending this statement a helicopter and many more police officers are arriving. We hope that they will be neutral and follow the law – not Gumede's politics of war. But as far as we can tell the police that are here are just looking for statements against the KRDC - those who were ambushed in the night! The violence is continuing. Gumede's people are saying that if Mashumi Figlan returns to Kennedy he will be killed. We do not have confidence that he and others will be protected by the police.

Things are still confused. If there are any errors in this statement we will correct them when we can talk to everyone safely and send out a more detailed statement.

For more information and breaking news please contact:

Mzwakhe Mdlalose: 072 132 8458

Anton Zamisa: 079 380 1759

Bheki Simelane: 078 598 9491

Nokuthuka Manyawo: 083 949 1379