

# Abahlali Basemjondolo welcomes investigation by the SAHRC into political killings



*Members of Catocrest Abahlali Basemjondolo on the march during a recent demonstration in KZN. | S'BONELO NGCOBO*

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**Community rights group, Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement has welcomed the recent developments in the attempts to find justice for its members who have been killed and targeted during political violence.**

This week, the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) announced that a police task team has been established to investigate the string of assassinations and murders of the civic organisation. The commission wrote to President Cyril Ramaphosa in June last year, seeking the intervention of the justice, crime prevention and security agencies in what many believe to be persistent human rights violations reportedly experienced by the organisation and its members.

In 2022, Abahlali experienced multiple killings of some of its activists, especially in KZN.

However, there have been complaints by the movement that the police are not doing enough to investigate and curb some of these targeted killings against its members.

SAHRC's KwaZulu-Natal provincial manager, Pavershree Padayachee, revealed that a letter to the president had revealed the sad reality faced by the activists.

“The letter was pursuant to the SAHRC's receipt of various complaints regarding the plight of Abahlali baseMjondolo relating to, among other things, the assassination of their members and complaints about socio-economic rights, access to adequate housing, access to water and sanitation and high-mast lighting,” said Padayachee.

Last year, on July 17, Khayalihle Gwabuzela (known as Khaya Ngubane) was found guilty of the murder of Ayanda Ngila, deputy chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo's eKhenana branch. Acting on behalf of the movement, the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) welcomed the court's decision as a significant step towards achieving justice and fostering healing for the family of Ngila, as well as for the entire eKhenana commune.

At the time, Ngila was the first of four Abahlali baseMjondolo members killed in 2022, which was at the height of the most recent and gruesome politically motivated killings. He was gunned down on March 8 at the eKhenana Commune in Cato Manor, eThekweni by multiple gunmen, allegedly led by Ngubane.

“We welcome the latest developments with the involvement of the commission into our matter, but the best people to speak to on this matter is the commission,” said Abahlali's Mqapheli Bonono on Thursday.

Padayachee decried the lack of progress in some of the reported cases, indicating that only two convictions have been secured by the authorities in connection with these killings.

Padayachee indicated that most of the killings happened in informal settlements, making them easy to be ignored by the law enforcement agencies.

Over the years, the commission says it has been engaging the eThekweni Municipality regarding the socio-economic challenges faced by the movement of shack dwellers.

Speaking to the SABC, SAHRC Commissioner Philile Ntuli said more than 24 activists belonging to the movement had been killed in the last 14 years.

“The number of assassinations of members of Abahlali baseMjondolo is exponentially high, with 24 members in the past 14 years having been killed and assassinated without any investigations being done.

“As the Human Rights Commission, we did, over the years, receive complaints from both individuals, as well as organisations within the country (and) international individuals, concerned at the plight of Abahlali baseMjondolo,” said Ntuli.

Other activists who have died include Siyabonga Manqele, who was allegedly shot and killed by masked police officers on March 11, 2022, in eNkanini settlement; Nokuthula Mabaso, who was shot and killed on May 5, 2022, in eKhenana; and, Lindokuhle Mnguni, who was also shot and killed in eKhenana on 20 August 2022.

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