



PRESS RELEASE

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LAND RESTITUTION ENGAGEMENT MEETING ON OUTSTANDING LAND CLAIMS: LIMPOPO

ARD AND LAMOSA CONDEMNS DRDLR'S COMPLICITY IN EXCLUSION AND SILENCING OF POOR, RURAL VOICES

On 20 August 2019, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Regional Land Claims Commission (RLCC) in Limpopo will host a land restitution engagement meeting in Vhembe district to 'give a progress report on outstanding claims lodged before 31 December 1988 deadline'

The Alliance for Rural Democracy (ARD), a cross-section of civil society organisations, academics and litigation partners that works to promote transparent participatory and accountable decision-making in rural communities regarding land, governance and mining, has a geographic footprint in Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern-Cape and the North-West.

We welcome progressive steps taken by the Restitution of Land Rights Commission in exercising their constitutional mandate to ensure that rural citizens are granted a just and fair restoration of their lost land and that their voices are heard. The ARD joins its alliance partner, the **Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA)** in strongly condemning the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) in its reckless negation of proper planning and processes, which have meant that many affected land claimants in Limpopo, were today unable to attend this critical sitting. The DRDLR acted unreasonably and irresponsibly in the way in which it disseminated information regarding this engagement as well as in its negation to make proper

logistical arrangements to enable all affected claimants to travel to and from Vhembe district, in order to attend the sitting.

There was too short a time period between the release of the notice to community members as well as local media, let alone an opportunity for claimants through lobby groups or movements to make means available to offset the failure of the state to make provision for all persons who have a stake in attending to be able to do so without any constraint. This is a further undermining of the rights of rural people to proper consultation and information to enable them to participate actively in matters which directly relate to their livelihoods. Considering the importance of such a meeting for claimants, it was critical that they attend and meaningfully participate, engage and ask questions as relevant regarding their land claims they had lodged before 1998 December cut-off date - information which they, together with their families have been desperately awaiting.

The Department has failed to ensure that claimants from several villages reach the Makhado Showground for the meeting. Most of whom were not even aware about the sitting or any related travel logistics by the department. Those in more remote areas were especially compromised and effectively excluded since they had no point of contact regarding the event.

It is unacceptable that over and above undue delays in granting people their dues and rights to land, that the Department acts in these ways. It cannot be that rural who have waited decades waited for their claims to be finalized, were unable to hear the outcomes of these. It is unfair that NGOs who are already financially burdened have had to receive calls from communities requesting urgent financial assistance which could not be granted in time. What is worse is that the department was unavailable to receive these requests and enquiries. The Department is aware of the existence of community movements like **LAMOSA and has attended its national meetings in Limpopo.**

We demand a schedule of dates planned for other districts of Limpopo, and everywhere in the country immediately so as to make sure that adequate notices reach the villages and intended claimants, especially women on time. Rural communities stand united in opposing policy, legislation and government collusion which threatens rural democracy and sustainable livelihoods. We are calling on all South African citizens, progressive media and civil society alike to stand in solidarity with rural citizens by demanding accountable governance and just practice in facilitating access to information, especially that which is so crucial to the livelihoods and dignity of its people.

For more information about the ARD contact the office of the National Coordinator, Constance Mogale on +27 82 559 0632 or visit www.allianceforruraldemocracy.org or visit www.stopthebantustansbills.org.za

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