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# Natal News & Prayers

## Raising awareness about the plight of the shack-dweller movement

*Link Office, Barbara Holbrook writes:*

Last month, Bishop Rubin visited the UK to raise awareness about the plight of the Durban-based shack-dweller movement, Abahlalibase Mjondolo. The following is an extract from their web page.

‘Abahlali have insisted on speaking for themselves about the realities of the poor, and on the right of the poor themselves to shape their own lives. For this, they have won support in many shack settlements, and have also incurred the wrath of the political establishment.

In September 2009 Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) leaders were attacked in the Durban-based Kennedy Road settlement by an armed mob chanting ethnic slogans. The police refused to come to the aid of AbM and only stepped in to disable spontaneous resistance to the mob. Two lives were lost during the attempt to mount a defence against the mob, and the homes of more than 30 AbM leaders were destroyed and looted following which local leaders of the ruling party seized control of the settlement. Twelve supporters

of AbM were arrested in relation to the attack on the movement, and eight months later they are still waiting for the presentation of evidence from the state.

Three weeks after the attacks AbM succeeded in having the Slums Act declared unconstitutional in the



Constitutional Court. This Act gave the provincial Minister of Housing the powers to make it mandatory for landowners and municipalities to institute eviction proceedings against shack dwellers, undermining tenure security for all shack dwellers in the province.

Despite this victory, supporters of the ruling party were simultaneously openly

issuing public death threats against the movement’s leadership in the context of intense hostility to the movement from local party leaders and police officers.

The church believes it is imperative to establish, publicly and with confidence, the truth of what has happened and to help ensure that those who are found to be responsible are held accountable.’

This issue challenges the ruling ANC. Around the world, people have applauded them for the transition in government in South Africa, so it is hard to hear of them – at whatever level – involved in injustice.

Please pray for all those involved with the shack dwellers, and for the shack dwellers themselves, as court cases and enquiries are held. Pray especially that there will no violence and that justice will be done.

**For more information see [www.abahlali.org](http://www.abahlali.org) and [www.churchland.co.za](http://www.churchland.co.za)**

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