



## **The ANC Government is the National Disaster in the Water Crisis**

### **Forward to a People's Dialogue with Parliament on the Water Crisis Towards Food and Water Sovereignty for South Africa**

#### **Press Release**

**12 February 2018**

Last week the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Des Van Rooyen, announced that the current drought could be declared a national disaster<sup>1</sup>. The state of water scarcity in the Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape have already been declared provincial crises.

When asked why the national government has failed to respond earlier although numerous towns had already been without water and local government had been pushing for the declaration since the beginning of 2016, the response was that the government was not able to respond earlier to the ongoing calls because certain “processes” needed to be followed, including that numerous provinces had to be affected and all natural resources needed to be exhausted prior<sup>2</sup>. This is reactive and bureaucratic leadership.

South Africa's drought began in 2014 in Kwazulu- Natal. Since then several communities and towns have been devastated by the drought. Small scale farmers in different parts of the country lost a great deal. Food prices went up and impacted on hunger. Before the drought 14 million people went to bed hungry. Now big cities like Cape Town and Nelson Mandela Bay face catastrophic water crises. Despite these realities government has not taken the people and country into its confidence. Inept messages have been sent to the public. Nobody knows what the ANC government's plans are. There has be no consistent effort to provide scientific information on water levels, drought measurements and the links to climate change. There has been no effort from the side of the ANC government to provide pro-active, transparent and visible leadership to meet the needs of all affected. The drought and water crisis is a South African crisis. The ANC Government has failed to mobilise the country on what is going to be a serious

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<sup>1</sup> see <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/drought-could-be-declared-national-disaster-by-feb-14-20180208>

<sup>2</sup> see <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/everydropcounts-government-defends-delay-in-aiding-watercrisis-13147804>

challenge for all of us with more climate shocks and droughts in the future. South Africa's failed climate crisis state is the national disaster.

The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) and alliance partners in the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) have taken the drought, that began in 2014, very seriously.

Together with the Human Rights Commission, during 2015 we held a hunger tribunal at Constitution Hill, and in 2016 we held a national drought speak out, a national bread march in Johannesburg and a Peoples Parliament to raise awareness about high food prices as a result of the drought and the need for alternatives. Out of these events, and through our activism and engagements with grassroots forces, we have developed two important tools;

1. A People's Food Sovereignty Act, adopted at the Peoples Parliament, to give rights to small-scale food producers, consumers and citizens of South Africa to take control over the food system. Industrial agriculture in South Africa uses about 62% of our water resources, is very wasteful, exploitative and contributes to carbon emissions causing the climate crisis. We believe the alternative to this corporate controlled food system is a food sovereignty system controlled by the people. Our Act is a compass to achieve this.
2. An activist guide on water sovereignty entitled 'Building people's power for water sovereignty' - to assist us as we work towards people's control of our water in South Africa. Central to this is a people's water charter process we want to initiate through the use of this guide.

Last year we resolved that we would bring both of these documents, and particularly the conversation around a People's Water Charter to parliament in 2018. Instead of sitting in front of a portfolio committee, we have decided we would rather like to create a people's space under the banner: **'A People's Dialogue with Parliament on the Water Crisis and National Disaster: Towards Water and Food Sovereignty for South Africa.'** This platform will be convened in March in Cape Town. As part of the build up to this event we demand the following:

- We demand transparency and openness around the state of water levels and national governments plans. In the three crisis provinces of Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape we demand to know what the state is doing, what actions are being taken and why.
- We want all government responses to the drought to be democratised and people led. The government, at all levels, should not be acting in a top down way. We would like to see water sovereignty committees, forums etc. established with state support to lead the water crisis response.
- We demand to know how the 5000 dams that are on private land are being used and we demand for them to become part of the national debate. We believe that they need to be integrated in the national water commons especially in the face of the current and future water challenges the country will face.

- We demand a commitment to address the water crisis by the government that is consistent with democratic planning, peoples science, indigenous knowledge and water commoning as part of an integrated and sustainable water management system. There is a need for more effective regulation and awareness raising around peoples water rights. Therefore, what is required is an institutionalization of peoples water commons committees, forums etc.
- We demand South Africa advance a deep just transition that moves away from dirty industries such as coal, gas and oil as well as industrial farming which have contributed to the current water crisis and more general climate crisis. In this context systemic alternatives like food, seed and water sovereignty need to be taken more seriously together with a substantive citizens' basic income grant, socially owned renewable energy, public transport, solidarity economies and climate jobs.

Ultimately, we call on progressive civil society to unite and join together in a powerful people's movement to end climate crisis denialism in South Africa and to advance system change to sustain life.

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See:

Water Sovereignty Activist Guide: [http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Water-Guide-Final-Web\\_colour.pdf](http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Water-Guide-Final-Web_colour.pdf)

Seed Saving Activist Guide:

<http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Seed-Saving-Activist-Guide.pdf>

People's Food Sovereignty Act:

<http://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Peoples-Food-Sovereignty-Act-2016.pdf>

Food sovereignty activist guide:

<http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Food-Sovereignty-for-the-Right-to-Food-Activist-Guide-compressed.pdf>

Solidarity Economy guide:

<http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SEM-guide.pdf>

Worker co-operative guide:

<http://safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Worker-Coop-Guide-Final-Web-Version1.pdf>