



CLIMATE
JUSTICE
CHARTER
MOVEMENT



SAFSC
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN

16 October 2020

TO:

President Cyril Ramaphosa
Speaker of Parliament, Ms Thandi Modise
Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli
Leaders of political parties in Parliament

**Adopt the Climate Justice Charter as Per Section 234 of the South African Constitution
Memorandum of Demands on World Food Day
End Hunger, Thirst, Pollution and Climate Harm!**

1. Introduction

1.1 On World Food Day, activists from the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign, the Climate Justice Charter Movement and the Orange Mask Campaign have peacefully gathered across the country, in 68 local actions informed by public health guidelines, to call for an end to hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm!

1.2 We are gathered in this online assembly today to say to all political parties: South Africa cannot continue with a business as usual approach. We note the State President's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan but do not believe it represents the thinking that will ensure South Africa rises to the challenge of addressing multiple systemic crises through just transformation. Many of the strategic policies envisaged will serve a few in our society and will reproduce a carbon based minerals-energy complex that is extremely destructive to our wellbeing and eco-systems. Before Covid-19, fourteen million people went to bed hungry; we have experienced one of the worst droughts in our history (now in its 6th year) with many in water stress; and pollution from refineries, incinerators and coal fired power stations continues to impact negatively on the health of workers and communities. All of this is connected to the worsening climate crisis which has continued even during Covid-19. We have multiple crises that need to be tackled at once. Our state is failing the people on all these fronts.

1.3 Covid-19 has exposed the deep roots of corruption in our society. Civil society, the courts, progressive media and our academy were crucial in pushing back against Zuma led corruption. His removal was a people's victory and rescued our democracy from complete destruction; the post Zuma period gives us an opportunity we cannot squander. Corruption has systemic roots in the state and economy which we have to tackle head on with the full strength of the law if we also want to address the deeper challenges facing South Africa. We have also gathered to say: no to looting society, particularly the public and private sector! Money stolen takes away from addressing hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm. It is cruel.

2. End Hunger

2.1 Hunger has escalated during Covid-19 and we do believe South Africa is transitioning towards mass starvation with at least thirty million people who are in food stress. Several studies confirm the worsening crisis. The roll out of food parcels from May to September, by the Social Development Department, Solidarity Fund (220 674) and other state aligned institutions amounted to 1 368 426 food parcels distributed to 6 842 130 people. This has been extremely inadequate to stem the tide of hunger. From Food Sovereignty Campaign tracking work of food relief efforts, we have seen that communities have stepped up to fill in the huge gaps of government and Solidarity Fund failure and have risen to the challenge of feeding themselves. However, local resourcing, capacity and support is reaching its limits. We demand government considers the democratisation of its Disaster Management approach during Covid-19 to work in partnership with civil society at national, provincial and local level to ensure we address the worsening hunger crisis.

2.2 The distribution of food parcels by the Department of Social Development has been mired in corruption according to the Auditor General's report. We demand action by the Minister of Social Development against the looters.

2.3 While government topped up grants and introduced the special Covid Social Relief Distress grant of R350, this was also too little, too late. Bureaucratic means testing impacted the roll out of the Covid Relief grant and instead of 9 million people receiving it, only 4.5 million have received it to date. The gains of grant top ups have been eroded by food price increases, with an essential basket of nutritious food for poor working class households now costing on average R3 961,72. This is higher than the minimum wage of R3 653,76. We demand government consider carefully its approach to reversing social grant top ups, given the existing humanitarian crisis in the country, while it also seriously works with civil society to overhaul and integrate the welfare system through a non means tested basic income grant system that builds on the gains made through existing grants. We want a #UBIGNOW!

2.4 While the Nobel prize has been given to the UN Food Aid program for its humanitarian efforts, we are also concerned the UN Food AID program supports globalised commercial agriculture which is central to the food crisis in the world. We believe the Nobel prize should go to La Via Campesina the largest movement on planet earth, with over 200 million members, at the frontlines of defending the commons, small scale farming and advancing food sovereignty systems. In South Africa we will intensify our efforts to affirm the right to food through building agro-ecology centred food sovereignty pathways in communities, villages, towns and cities. Where we breakthrough with local government, we will secure implementation of the people driven Food Sovereignty Act (link here: <https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FS-Act-no.1-of-2018.pdf>) we have developed. We reject the ANC government's approach to globalised commercial agriculture and food security including in the State President's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

3. End Thirst

3.1 Water inequality is a major problem for working class communities and rural communities. Before Covid 19, 54% of households did not have access to clean water from a tap. The democratic government has not rolled out the necessary water infrastructure to meet the needs of people. Besides bureaucratic incompetence and lack of planning capacity, corruption has been a central problem in the realisation of water rights and needs. We commend the Minister of Human Settlements, Water Affairs and Sanitation for acting on corruption in her department. However, this problem is deep and has also paralysed many local governments. The Auditor General's reports have also confirmed this challenge including numerous community struggles. We demand action against the looters of public finance in local government that have undermined the needs and rights of communities to water and other basic needs.

3.2 Water relief during Covid-19 has been done without proper transparency, sustainability and has not been adequate. After May, the national Water Affairs department has stopped publicly reporting on its water tank delivery program and it is still not clear which of the 2000 communities it planned on delivering to have had such delivery. The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign has been working with 120 water stressed communities over the past few months, since lock down level 5. Most of these communities are in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, where the drought has continued. We demand action from the provincial and local governments in these provinces to meet the needs of these communities, failing which we will continue with legal action.

3.3 South Africa's drought has not been handled effectively by the current government. Lessons have not been learned. As a water scarce country facing more multi-year droughts we demand that water and sanitation infrastructure spending be prioritised to fix the water system. Again, the R900 billion water master plan of the Minister has to be done with zero tolerance for corruption and should be community led. It is also not clear if the President's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan prioritises water and sanitation issues.

4. End Pollution

4.1 South Africa's air, water and soil has been seriously polluted by mining, industry, refineries and commercial farming activities. If we continue exploiting our resources as we are doing now, we could end up with a country that is akin to a waste land. In this regard we fundamentally disagree with the President's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan which calls for: 'The current timeframes for mining, prospecting, water and environmental licenses will be reduced by at least 50% to facilitate new investment.'

4.2 South Africa is the 11th largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the world – with most emissions from the country's heavy coal addiction, as observed by numerous research reports. The Sasol's Secunda plant, alone, is the largest single point source of CO₂ in the world and spews out tonnes of other poisonous compounds.

4.3 The estimated annual health cost of Eskom coal fired power stations PM_{2.5} emissions is about R28 billion per year. Moreover, the health impacts from air pollution include asthma, pneumonia, heart disease and cancers and are very prevalent in communities around polluting industries. In many instances this is about racialised environmental injustice.

4.4 In addition, the focus on mining is stealing land that can be used for farming. By 2014, 61.3% of the surface area of Mpumalanga fell under prospecting and mining right applications. This is a province that has the richest soil – which is now threatened by mining activities. If mining continues at its current rate, around 12% of SA’s total high potential arable land will be ruined.

4.5 The focus on mining and coal is also polluting our water – from acid mine drainage, high levels of radioactive pollutants to destroying entire river systems, such as the Vaal, Olifants and Crocodile that are all severely affected by salinity which have been mainly attributed to mining activity.

4.6 Given the devastating pollution impacts emanating from the carbon based minerals-energy complex and the worsening climate crisis, we demand the government stops any new projects and expansion plans of this system including off shore gas and oil exploration, fracking, the mega coal fired power station being pushed for the Makado Special Economic Zone and other such projects. In this regard we fundamentally disagree with State Presidents Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan particularly: ‘The Petroleum Resources Development Bill will be finalised to unlock our country’s enormous untapped potential in upstream oil and gas reserves.’

4.7 We also demand a participatory review of the IRP 2019, as it continues to lock the country into further dependence on dirty fossil fuels and will not enable a low emissions trajectory during this decade. Such a reviewed IRP must take on board deep just transition plans from Eskom, Sasol and other big polluters so we make our country contribution to prevent a 1.5°C overshoot in planetary temperatures and limit the harmful impacts of pollution.

4.8 Finally, we call on the Minister of Environment to implement the Air Quality Management Plan drawn up for the Mpumalanga Highveld and to also implement necessary legislative emission standards against polluting industries such as Eskom and Sasol.

5. End Climate Harm

5.1 Climate Science has confirmed that Southern Africa is one of ten climate hot spots in the world. We are heating at twice the global average. We have to act now to prevent a 1.5°C overshoot of planetary temperatures within the next decade because this will mean we are heating at 3°C. At such temperatures South Africa will experience hotter weather, multi-year droughts, extreme weather shocks and industrial scale food production will be compromised. To help parliament and society understand this challenge we are sharing the attached document prepared by some of South Africa’s leading climate scientists. See https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Climate-Science-Doc_June-2020.pdf.

5.2 We are also demanding that the Climate Justice Charter (CJC) (see: https://www.safsc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-Climate-Justice-Charter_EN_August2020.pdf) be adopted by parliament as per section 234 of the South African constitution. The CJC is the product of six years of activism, during the worst drought in the history of South Africa, led by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and a vibrant partner, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre. Over the past two years, intensive dialogues have been had with key social constituencies and the public to finalise the contents of the charter. In this regard, the CJC is truly a peoples document and embodies our aspirations for

a deep just transition to achieve a post-carbon South Africa that can handle the challenges of more planetary heating.

5.3 Given the urgency of the climate crisis we are giving parliament one year to deliberate on and adopt the Climate Justice Charter. This means we will be returning to parliament on World Food Day, 16th October, 2021 to get a report. This will be supported by rolling mass action by the current 220 organisations that have endorsed the climate justice charter, together with individual endorsees (currently at over 5000 <https://awethu.amandla.mobi/petitions/together-we-can-help-ensure-parliament-brings-an-end-to-water-problems-hunger-and-pollution>). We will increase endorsements for the charter through constantly messaging our demand for the Climate Justice Charter to be adopted during Earth Day, May Day, Youth Day, during local government elections and all other climate justice actions we will be engaged in. If necessary will also take legal action against parliament.

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