**ABATHEMBU PETITION SEEKS NCOP INTERVENTION IN ALLEGED PREJUDICE AGAINST THE THEMBULAND ROYAL EMPIRE**

The petition, which was submitted by AbaThembu nation to the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings, contains the allegations that include the manipulation of the justice system with the intention of destroying the nation of AbaThembu in South Africa, and the delay of the land restitution process which is to the detriment of the AbaThembu nation.

The committee received a briefing yesterday from Emperor Thembu the Second, Votani Majola, on the petition which urges the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) to intervene in respect of the allegations contained in the petition.

Emperor Thembu the Second, who briefed the committee on behalf of the Abathembu Chiefs, told the committee that the petition centres around four allegations: the manipulation of the justice system, delay on land restitution, lack of economic development, and lack of housing delivery for the AbaThembu nation.

The committee was told that based on the incidents, events, and activities that have occurred in the past few years, the Thembuland Royal Empire reasonably believes that the justice system in South Africa has been, and is still being manipulated and abused. That, they argued, is done in the same manner as it happened during the apartheid era, with the intention to destroy the Nation of AbaThembu. The petitioner believes that the ruling party and some right-wing elements are responsible for this.

On the issue of land restitution, the committee was told that that AbaThembu were the first to arrive in South Africa, and for this reason and many other reasons, this land called South Africa belongs to the AbaThembu nation in its entirety.

The committee heard that applications to approve traditional councils and chiefdoms, which would be eligible for governmental budget allocation aimed at development, were delayed by the former Eastern Cape Premier. The allegation goes further that the application is delayed for some unexplained reasons, and has been delayed for more than a year and a half.

The petition also calls for the acceleration of the delivery of housing in the nation of AbaThembu.

The committee also received a briefing from the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL), which made reference to the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act No 43 of 2003) (the Act).

The Act provides for the process of recognition of traditional leaders and traditional communities, and according to this, the positions of the petitioners are not recognised.

The committee was told that the AbaThembu have two major communities, the AbaThembu of Rhode that are under Chief Matanzima – and AbaThembu of Dalindyebo, under Acting King Azenathi Dalindyebo.

The NHTL told the committee that the decision of the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims says that all AbaThembu in the Republic of South Africa are under Acting King Azenathi and nobody else.

The committee told Emperor Thembu the Second that the petition is very complicated and encompasses a number of issues, especially those related to legitimacy, and it views the petition as a very sensitive one. Based on that, the committee said the petition deserves to be treated as such.

By Felicia Lombard

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