To the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa

Dear Mr President

Re: Stop eThekwini Municipality’s evictions of shack dwellers

I am writing on behalf of UK-based human rights charity, War on Want, to express our deep concern and worry for the citizens of eThekwini Municipality who are being violently evicted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 26 March you announced a 21-day lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and protect the citizens of South Africa. The Justice Minister Ronald Lamola also issued a directive under Regulation 10 of the Disaster Management Act, to halt all evictions until midnight on 16 April, or until the lockdown is lifted.

Yet at this time of national crisis we are appalled to learn that eThekwini Municipality is flouting the directives of your Government and instead of protecting citizens from the spread of Covid-19, it is violently evicting people living in Azania (Cato Manor) and Ekuphumeleleni (Mariannhill) resulting in increased numbers of hospitalisations and families being made homeless during the lockdown.

As news of the devastating impact of Covid-19 on the lives and livelihoods of the citizens of South Africa grows each day, the use of tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition against unarmed, men, women and children living in impoverished conditions is deeply shocking.

In three days 5,430 people have signed our petition in solidarity with shack dwellers and our partner Abahlali baseMjondolo asking for your immediate intervention to prevent eThekwini Municipality from launching any more evictions of people from Ekuphumeleleni, Azania and any other informal settlements.

We hope you will listen to the concerns of our members and address the urgent needs of vulnerable South Africans.

Yours sincerely

Asad Rehman
War on Want

CC: Minister of Justice & Correctional Services, Mr Ronald Lamola
Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu
Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Mr Sihle Zikalala
MEC KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements, Ms Peggy Nkonyeni,
High Commissioner for South Africa to UK, Ms H.E. N Tambo