

ANC has failed comrade in arms for 25 long years

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The 25-year struggle of Mrs Jeanette Mulobela continues.

The ANC promised her and her family a replacement home in Livingstone, Zambia, after the one in which she sheltered exiles in transit out of South Africa was reduced to rubble in the April 26 1987 raid by commandos of the SA Defence Force.

In the attack, Mulobela lost two sons, David and Sydney, aged 19 and 20, respectively.

Representatives of then ANC president O R Tambo made promises to the family at the funeral that the ANC would compensate her for her loss by replacing the damaged house, by providing educational assistance for tertiary studies to her remaining children and by paying for the cost of the funerals. The promises only ever went as far as three months' worth of groceries.

In the 25 years since, Mulobela travelled at her own expense to pursue the matter with the ANC in Lusaka and in Johannesburg.

"It's frustrating for me to know that all I worked hard for was lost in one night," she says.

In November 1990 she was told that the ANC would cover the cost of rebuilding her destroyed home and that she should submit the plans of the original house to builders, but funds never became available.

On July 2 1992, Mulobela wrote to the ANC to remind it of its commitments to her.

"I was given an option to choose from several houses. I turned down the first because it was inferior to the house I had lost."

The second was known as "green house" and had been used to accommodate "needy and indigent" students who had run away from the apartheid regime. "But I was told I would have to wait for the tenants to move out."

Then in 1993, it emerged the ANC did not in fact own the "green house".



Jeanette Mulobela

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Again the ANC reassured the Mulobela family the ANC would secure alternative accommodation for Mrs Mulobela in Lusaka.

Eventually, Mrs Mulobela received notice from the head of ANC administration on September 15 1993 that the ANC had resolved to compensate her by providing her with a structure equivalent to the property she had lost. Comrades at the ANC's Zambian mission were asked to expedite the issuing of a house.

But the house they offered her was apparently in a serious state of dilapidation and she requested the ANC find her a suitable house of equivalent value before they closed down their Zambian operations. A house was apparently identified by the ANC, but Mulobela was told she would have to raise R30 000 to cover costs, including transfer costs, which she did not have.

Since that time, the ANC has remained tight-lipped on the issue, despite the efforts of the Legal Aid Clinic for Women in Zambia.

Over the course of the intervening years, the family has dealt with many different ANC representatives and has received many contradictory promises. "It seems there was no consultation among members of the ANC, especially with their superiors.

A further difficulty we experienced was that most ANC members we dealt with in Lusaka used pseudonyms so it was difficult to track them down."

Mulobela's daughter, Ms Muzumara, says: "My mother has nothing left and at 79 she lives in a country that does not have an old age pension system. I am appealing to the ANC to grant her a house (or to provide her with a monetary amount to represent the cost of the house she lost) so she can have closure on this issue."

Mulobela did attend a hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and was declared a victim of a gross human rights violation. "Yet the people I stood side by side with during the struggle have yet to fulfil their promise.

The time they needed my help, I took up the challenge and fought with them. No amount of compensation can replace my children, but I would welcome a bit of sympathy from the ANC to at least replace my house," says Mulobela.

The last written communication between the family and the ANC took place on June 9 2012. It was an email addressed to Luthuli House. There has been no response from the ANC.

Mulobela's struggle over the past quarter of a century throws up many concerns about the way in which those who served the ANC are treated. Khulumani calls on the ANC to honour its promises. Mrs Mulobela should be at the top of that list.

» Jobson is national director of the Khulumani Support Group

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