



## **EFF STATEMENT ON 109 YEARS SINCE THE PASSING OF THE NATIVE LAND ACT**

Sunday, 19 June 2022

Today, the 19th of June 2022 marks 109 years since the enactment of the Natives Land Act No 27 of 1913. This piece of legislation was the legal consolidation of the dispossession of African people's land which had taken place centuries before, and it did this by limiting the amount of land available for African people in this country to just 7% of the entire surface of the country.

The Natives Land Act made it illegal for African people to buy land outside of their designated native reserves, and it criminalized the sale of land to Africans outside of the areas designated for Africans, it banished the practice of sharecropping on farms owned by European settlers which had been in practice for years since Europeans annexed the land. The Act further banished the rental of land by Africans from the European settlers and severely limited the practice of labour tenancy.

Up to that time, African people had been major agricultural producers and were able to hold their own against European farmers with limited resources and under strenuous land tenure arrangements. Thus, one of the key objectives of the 1913 Land Act was the obliteration of independent black farmers and land-owning class, which could from that day only occupy "white owned land" if they were prepared to be wage labourers.

The aftermath of the passing of this Act was perhaps the most brutal and inhumane period of the 20th century. In his book "Native Life in South Africa", the first Secretary-General of the South African Natives National Congress, Sol Thekiso Plaatje details the brutal uprooting of African people from the land and the farms they had occupied for generations, the appropriation by their European settlers of not just land, but the livestock that Africans had owned up to that period, and the huge psycho-social implications of the removals, which our

society has not recovered from up to this day. He remarked that the Act made Africans “not just slaves, but pariahs in the land of their own birth.” It was only in 1936 through the enactment of the Natives Land and Trust Act that the land available for African occupation was increased from 7% to 13%.

This Act subjected Africans to abject poverty and underdevelopment. The current structure of the South African economy, class formations, capital and resource concentration and the political economy at large is indivisible from and has direct roots in the dispossession of land from the black majority in the country.

The country has been unable to shed off the legacy of the Natives Land Act, even after 28 years of political freedom. While all the discriminatory Land Acts were abolished in 1991, there has been little progress made in returning land back to African people.

The government’s own land audit shows that African people still own about 4% of privately owned land in this country, while Europeans own more than 70%. The various land reform programmes introduced from 1994 have failed to restructure land holding in the country and have been focused much on massaging the feelings of the European minority.

The Land Restitution programme, which allowed people who were removed from their land since the enactment of the Native Land Act in 1913 to lodge claims to get their land back, has been hamstrung by the inefficiency of the government, and the high prices that the government is required to pay European settlers in order to get the land back.

One example of these ridiculous transactions is the R1 billion that the government paid to settle the Mala-Mala Land Restitution Claim. To this day, the government has not completed the settlement of land claims lodged in 1998.

The ruling party is not serious about resolving the land question, and that is why they frustrated attempts to amend the Constitution to permit the expropriation of land without compensation.

The resolution of the land question can only be attained by recognizing that the current land holding structure in the country is a result of colonial and apartheid land annexation and then putting measures in place to get that land back from European settlers to the African majority.

There must never be any obligation for the dispossessed to compensate the dispossessor. The EFF will continue agitating for radical legislative changes to return the land back to its rightful owners.

**ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS**

**Sinawo Thambo** (National Spokesperson) 072 629 7422

**Leigh-Ann Mathys** (National Spokesperson) 082 304 7572

**Sixelise Gcilishe** (National Communications Manager) 071 142 1663

✉ [communications@effonline.org](mailto:communications@effonline.org)

🌐 <http://www.effonline.org>

🐦 @EFFSouthAfrica

📷 @EFFSouthAfrica

📘 Economic Freedom Fighters