

4 December 2017

South Africa: Killing of human rights defender Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku

On 19 November 2017, at around 11:00 pm, human rights defender **Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku** was dragged from his shack and stabbed to death.

[Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku](#) was the Chairperson of the local Sisonke Village branch of **Abahlali baseMjondolo** and a member of Abahlali's KwaZulu/Natal Provincial Council. Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku worked to defend the rights of shack dwellers to basic services and political participation in Sisonke Village. Abahlali baseMjondolo is a grassroots movement of poor shack dwellers in Durban, Pinetown, Pietermaritzburg and other parts of the province and of the Western Cape. The movement advocates for the rights of people living in shacks including access to decent housing, services and education. Its members have been the targets of ongoing intimidation and physical attacks due to corruption at the local political level, and since 2007, including Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku, seven members of Abahlali baseMjondolo have been killed.

On 2 December 2017, a funeral was held for Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku. The human rights defender was killed at around 11:00 pm on 19 November 2017, when he was forcibly taken from his shack and stabbed to death by unknown assailants in the informal settlement of Sisonke Village in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The killing is believed to be a reprisal for his work defending human rights. The Sisonke Village branch of Abahlali baseMjondolo was created in November 2014, as a result of which, Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku received ongoing threats and harassment from individuals linked to local politicians.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku as it believes he was targeted for his legitimate work in the defence of human rights in South Africa.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in South Africa to:

1. Strongly and immediately condemn the killing of Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Sibonelo Patrick Mpeku, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in South Africa are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.