



groundWork

Environmental justice action

P.O.Box 2375, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, South Africa ● 8 Gough Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201, South Africa
Tel: +27-33-342 5662 ● Fax: +27-33-342 5665 ● team@groundwork.org.za ● www.groundwork.org.za

Friday, 22nd October 2021

The President
Honourable Mr Cyril Ramaphosa

By email: presidentrsa@presidency.gov.za

Dear Mr. President

Today marks the one-year commemoration of the murder of Mama Fikile Ntshangase, who with others led a campaign against the Tendele Coal Mine in northern KwaZulu Natal. Attached is a report about Ntshangase's killing that groundWork is releasing tomorrow: "Warnings Not Heeded: Death of an Activist".

Mama Fikile Ntshangase was shot dead in her house on the evening of Thursday, 22nd October, 2020. She was the vice-chair of the community-based organization, Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organization (MCEJO) that had legally challenged a planned expansion of the Tendele Coal Mine and publicly denounced the impacts of the coal mine on local health, water, livelihoods, land, housing and climate. A [joint statement](#) on the 23rd October, 2020, by civil society groupings condemned what it called a "senseless killing" and called for an investigation.

This letter seeks your urgent intervention to address the call for justice that has emanated from South Africa and across the globe.

On the 27th October, 2020 groundWork addressed a [letter to your office](#), the Minister of Police and copied to South African Police Service Commissioners, National and in KwaZulu Natal, the Portfolio of Committee on Police and the Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, calling for a speedy and urgent investigation into Ntshangase's death.

On the 2nd November Human Rights Watch addressed a [letter to the South Africa Department of Police](#) urging them to conduct a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation and to ensure that those found to be responsible for the killing are brought to justice.

In December 2020, the Mining Affected Communities United in Action [submitted 50 000](#) signatures to the Speaker of the National Assembly calling on her to ensure that the conditions which led to the death of Ntshangase are investigated.

In February 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, submitted to the UN Human rights Council her [report](#), analysing the killing of environmental human rights defenders. She used Ntshangase's story to begin the report,

Trustees: Judy Bell, Farid Esack, Patrick Kulati, Richard Lyster, Mawande Mazibuko, Angela Conway, Johan Riekert





highlighting the risks many environmental defenders operate under and the widespread attempts to silence their voices.

In July 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association highlighted the killing of Ntshangase in his [report](#) as an example of the dangers women environmental human rights defenders are facing.

On the 13th September 2021, Global Witness released their annual report – [Last line of defence](#) – reporting 227 lethal attacks against environmental defenders in 2020 worldwide – an average of more than four people a week – highlighting the extreme dangers activists face for defending their homes, land and livelihoods, and ecosystems vital for biodiversity and the climate. The report was foregrounded with the sad events of Ntshangase’s murder.

Despite these calls for justice, a year after Ntshangase’s death, the South African Police Service has apparently made very little progress in their investigation into her killing; nor has there been progress in wider efforts by the Presidency or Parliament to protect environmental defenders. Violence has instead intensified against local community people who resist the expansion of coal mines across South Africa.

We the undersigned call upon you to act with urgency and intervene with the South African Police Service to promptly, thoroughly, and impartially investigate the cases of Mama Fikile Ntshangase and ‘Bazooka’ Radebe, another environmental justice activist murdered on the 22nd March 2016, and bring those found responsible to justice.

The failure of your Office and the South African Police Service to bring those accountable before the courts of law would not only deny justice to victims but risks discouraging other community and environmental justice activists, in South Africa and abroad, from exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, key elements of any functioning democracy.

We would appreciate a response from your office within 2 weeks informing us of the present status of these investigations, and the Presidency’s consideration to ensure the safety of community and environmental justice activists.

Kind regards,

S. (Bobby) Peek
Director

No.s	Name	Organisation	Country	Email
South Africa				
1	Bobby Peek	groundWork	South Africa	bobby@groundwork.org.za
2	Glen Tyler-Davies	350Africa.org	South Africa	glen@350.org
3	Alex Lenferna	350Africa.org	South Africa	alex.lenferna@350.org
4	Nontando Ngamlana	Afesis-corplan	South Africa	nontando@afesis.org.za
5	Constance Mogale	Alliance for Rural Democracy (ARD)	South Africa	ruraldemocracytrust@gmail.com
6	Leigh Collingwood	Author	South Africa	leighcollingwood@hotmail.com
7	Melissa Fourie	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	mfourie@cer.org.za
8	Phindile Khulu	Centre for Applied Legal Studies	South Africa	phindile.khulu@wits.ac.za
9	Nozuko Poni	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	nponi@cer.org.za
10	Nicole Loser	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	nloser@cer.org.za
11	Lerato Letebele Balendran	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	lbalendran@cer.org.za
12	Timothy Lloyd	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	tlloyd@cer.org.za
13	Gabrielle Knott	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	gknott@cer.org.za
14	Catherine Horsfield	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	chorsfield@cer.org.za
15	Paul Wani Lado	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	plado@cer.org.za
16	Wandisa Phama	Centre for Environmental Rights	South Africa	wphama@cer.org.za
17	Pam Haynes	Disability Action Research Team (DART), Howick	South Africa	dart@sai.co.za
18	Makoma Lekalakala	Earthlife Africa	South Africa	makoma@earthlife.org.za
19	Ross Haynes	Friends of Beacon Hill, Howick	South Africa	haynes@sai.co.za
20	Nerisha Baldevu	Friends of the Earth Africa	South Africa	nerisha@foei.org
21	Happy Khambule	Greenpeace Africa	South Africa	hkhambul@greenpeace.org
22	Melita Steele	Greenpeace Africa	South Africa	msteele@greenpeace.org
23	Chris Vlavianos	Greenpeace Africa	South Africa	cvlavian@greenpeace.org
24	Grace Coates	Greenpeace Africa	South Africa	gcoates@greenpeace.org
25	David Hallows	groundWork	South Africa	david@groundwork.org.za
26	Asiphile Khanyile	groundWork	South Africa	asiphile@groundwork.org.za
27	Tsepang Molefe	groundWork	South Africa	media@groundwork.org.za
28	Bongiwe Ndondo	Hlanganisa	South Africa	bndondo@hlanganisa.org.za



29	Tracey Davies	Just Share	South Africa	tdavies@justshare.org.za
30	Emma Schuster	Just Share	South Africa	eschuster@justshare.org.za
31	Shanét Le Grange	Just Share	South Africa	slegrange@justshare.org.za
32	Robyn Hugo	Just Share	South Africa	rhugo@justshare.org.za
33	Annette Gibbs	Just Share	South Africa	agibbs@justshare.org.za
34	Lorena Pasquini	Just Share	South Africa	lpasquini@justshare.org.za
35	Emily Tjale	Land Access Movement of South Africa	South Africa	info@lamosa.org.za
36	Monica de Souza Louw	Land and Accountability Research Centre	South Africa	monica.desouzalouw@uct.ac.za
37	Nolundi Luwaya	Land and Accountability Research Centre	South Africa	nolundi.luwaya@uct.ac.za
38	Wayne Ncube	Lawyers for Human Rights	South Africa	wayne@lhr.org.za
39	Carina Conradie	Life After Coal	South Africa	cconradie@lifeaftercoal.org.za
40	Alexis Scholtz-Wheeler	Life After Coal Campaign	South Africa	ascholtzwheeler@lifeaftercoal.org.za
41	Claire Martens	Natural Justice	South Africa	claire@naturaljustice.org
42	Marina Magana	Ntoane Village	South Africa	maganam@nmrw.org.za
43	Gaynor Paradza	PARI	South Africa	ggparadza@gmail.com
44	Fred Kusambiza	Planact	South Africa	fredkusambiza@planact.org.za
45	Teresa Yates	ProBono.Org	South Africa	teresa@probono.org.za
46	Mbongiseni Buthelezi	Public Affairs Research Institute	South Africa	mbongisenib@pari.org.za
47	Desmond D'Sa	SDCEA	South Africa	desmond@sdceango.co.za
87	Wellington Madumira	Climate Action Network Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	canzimbabwe@gmail.com
88	Mikhail Aruberito	Centre for Alternative Development	Zimbabwe	cad.org.zw

Global

88	Natalia Salvatico	Amigos de la Tierra Argentina	Argentina	agua@amigos.org.ar
89	Shenna Sanchez	Friends of the Earth Europe	Belgium	shenna.sanchez@foeeurope.org
90	Annelies Schorpion	Friends of the Earth Europe	Belgium	annelies.schorpion@foeeurope.org
91	Nataša Crnković	Friends of the Earth Bosnia & Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina	natasa.crnkovic@czzs.org
92	Lúcia Ortiz	Friends of the Earth Brazil	Brazil	lucia.ortiz@atalc.org
93	Tarcísio Feitosa		Brazil	tarcisio.xingu@gmail.com
94	Beatrice Olivastri	Friends of the Earth Canada	Canada	Beatrice@foecanada.org
95	Diego Cardona	CENSAT Agua Viva	Colombia	dcardonac@censat.org
96	Isaac Rojas	Friends of the Earth	Costa Rica	isaac@coecoceiba.org

97	Palle Bendsen	NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark	Denmark	palle@noah.dk
98	Ingvild Haukeland	NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark	Denmark	ingvild@noah.dk
99	June Rebekka Bresson	NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark	Denmark	june@noah.dk
100	Emmeline Werner	NOAH Friends of the Earth	Denmark	emmeline@noah.dk
101	Bente Hessellund Andersen	NOAH-Friends of the Earth Denmark	Denmark	bente@noah.dk
102	Ricardo Navarro	CESTA Friends of the Earth	El Salvador	foelsalvador@hotmail.com
103	Finnian Murtagh	Friends of the Earth - United Kingdom	England, Wales & Northern Ireland	finnian.murtagh@foe.co.uk
104	Davit Sidamonidze	The Greens Movement of Georgia	Georgia	davit.sidamonidze@yahoo.com
105	Heffa Schuecking	Urgewald	Germany	heffa@urgewald.org
106	Giorgos Catsadorakis		Greece	doncats@otenet.gr
107	Sreedhar Ramamurthi	Environics Trust, India	India	
108	Anna Giordano	WWF Italy - MAN	Italy	a.giordano
109	Bulat Yessekin	Central Asian Water & Climate Change	Kazakhstan	bulat.yessekin@gmail.com
110	Gustavo Castro Soto	Amigos de la Tierra México	México	guscastro@otrosmundoschiapa.ss.org
111	William Kostka	Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT)	Micronesia	director@ourmicronesia.org
112	Sanjay Adhikari	Pro Public	Nepal	sanjayadhikari2052@gmail.com
113	Loreto de Amunátegui Colao	Friends of the Earth International	Netherlands	loreto@foei.org
114	Von Hernandez	Break Free From Plastic	Philippines	von@breakfreefromplastic.org
115	Alexey Zimenko	Biodiversity Conservation Center	Russia	zimenko@biodiversity.ru
116	Živa Kavka Gobbo	Focus Assoc. Sustainable Development	Slovenia	ziva@focus.si
117	Víctor Barro Casal	Amigas de la Tierra / FoE Spain	Spain	vbarro@tierra.org
118	Vasna Ramasar	Global Tapestry of Alternatives	Sweden / South Africa	vasna.ramasar@protonmail.com
119	Charlotte Ludnqvist	Friends of the Earth, Sweden	Sweden	charlotte.ludnqvist@jordensvannner.se
120	Chris Allan	Ajabu Advisors	United States	chris.allan49@gmail.com
121	Craig Williams	KY Enviro Foundation	United States	craig@cwwg.org
122	Julie Boetger	Ohio Poor People's Campaign	United States	julieb44004@yahoo.com
123	Collin Rees	Oil Change International	United States	collin@priceofoil.org
124	Maria Gunnoe	www.motherjoneswv.org	United States	wvhollowgirl@gmail.com



125	Christie Keith	GAIA	United States	christie@no-burn.org
126	Karen Orenstein	Friends of the Earth U.S.	United States	korenstein@foe.org
127	Peter Kostishack	Global Greengrants Fund	United States	peter@greengrants.org
128	Laura Garcia	Global Greengrants Fund	United States	laura@greengrants.org
129	Allison Davis	Global Greengrants Fund	United States	allison@greengrants.org
130	Pavel Sulyandziga	Batani Foundation	United States & Russia	info@batani.org
131	Karin Nansen	REDES Amigos de la Tierra Uruguay	Uruguay	urusust@redes.org.uy
132	Sviatoslav Zabelin	Socio-ecological union international	Russia	svetfrog@gmail.com
133	Winfriidus Overbeek	World Rainforest Movement	International	wrm@wrm.org.uy