



CLIMATE  
JUSTICE  
CHARTER  
MOVEMENT



**SAFSC**  
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD  
SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN



19 March 2021

## Press statement

### **Let's Stand Together Against the Threats to Our Constitutional Democracy - The Climate Justice Charter is a Compass and Beacon to a Rights-based Society!**

The 21<sup>st</sup> March marks 26 years since we first commemorated Human Rights in South Africa and since then much has changed. The rampant looting in the ANC-run state, the rise of neo-fascist political parties (white and black), one of the worst droughts in the history of the country and the increasing imposition of dogmatic neoliberal policies continue to undermine the rights mandate of our constitution. Covid-19 tested our constitutional order. Many communities faced hunger, water stress and the unemployment rate has skyrocketed to 42%, 11 million people.

Currently, the future of our constitutional order is being threatened by Jacob Zuma's defiance of judicial processes and the imposition of austerity policies by the Ramaphosa government leading to cut backs in funding to universities, undermining the provisioning of rights-based public goods and worsening service delivery in local governments. At the same time, the Ramaphosa government is promoting a coal intensive energy path and offshore oil and gas extraction as the 'game changer' for South Africa further undermining the realisation of climate justice and our constitutional rights.

According to Ferrial Adam, Climate Justice Charter Movement organiser at COPAC, 'both factions in the ANC threaten our democracy. Both the looting and the austerity factions deepen the crisis of our constitutional democracy and entrench inequalities. Progressive civil society must stand up to both these threats to our democracy.'

The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre, the Climate Justice Charter Movement and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign call for government to adopt the Climate Justice Charter and to act with urgency to deal with the climate pandemic.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing the world. The world's continued reliance on fossil fuels is not only destroying ecosystems and driving species to extinction but also violating basic human rights. Vishwas Satgar (co-founder of the Climate Justice Charter process and South African Food Sovereignty Campaign) of COPAC stressed "The climate pandemic is not just an environmental or economic issue but a human rights issue that poses a risk to all life, health, food, and water. We have to deal with climate change as an urgent matter".

Globally, climate change will bring with it more drought, famine and extreme weather events that will affect millions of people. Science has shown that Southern Africa is a climate change hotspot with frequent extreme weather occurrence such as drought, floods and tropical cyclones. Southern African temperatures are rising at twice the global rate of temperature increase. Awande Buthelezi (COPAC organiser and activist in SAFSC/CJCM) said, "If we look at what the science is telling us, the lack of action is a crime against humanity. Government is dragging their feet to act on humanity's biggest threat ever. Their climate crisis ambitions are just not adequate."

In October 2020, COPAC, together with endorsing organisations, submitted the Climate Justice Charter to the South African Parliament for adoption, as per section 234 of the constitution which provides for charters to be adopted. We are deeply disappointed that the parliament led by the ANC has not communicated further with us about the affirmation of our demand for the CJC to be adopted as per the constitution. Its continued silence is denying our constitutional right to have the CJC support and strengthen our constitution. The Climate Justice Charter is described as a signpost; a trumpet call, to move South Africa in the direction of system change and for a Climate Justice Deal that ends the suffering of the most vulnerable and oppressed. Jane Cherry (COPAC organiser and SAFSC/CJCM activist), added “We have the support of 238 organisations and 5800 signatures, and climbing, for the charter. We have given government a year to respond and will be back in Parliament on World Food Day, 16 October 2021. Before that we call on everyone to stand with us as we take the Climate Justice Charter, Climate Science document, the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act, community demands for the deep just transition and a firm demand to end corruption to SALGA and local and provincial governments on Earth Day, 22 April.”

Satgar reiterated the importance of the Climate Justice Charter [1], “More climate shocks and ecological crises will result in more suffering (and more pandemics), for the majority, particularly workers, the poor, people with disabilities, landless and the vulnerable. As we defend the web of life and live with climate breakdown, we seek to end race, class, gender and ecological injustice. We cannot let grassroots women and children be the shock absorbers of this crisis, like before and during Covid-19.”

Climate Justice is Social Justice!

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**Additional information:**

[1] link to Climate Justice Charter: <https://www.safsc.org.za/climate-justice-charter/>