

The Midrand Workers

A hard won victory!

A 24 year campaign for reinstatement of municipal workers dismissed for exposing corruption has finally ended in victory. *Izwi* spoke to Stena Molepo, convenor of the Midrand Workers.

1) When, why and how many Mid-Rand workers were dismissed?

Close to 600 workers were dismissed for exposing corruption in the now-defunct Midrand town council in July 1994.

2) What was the role of the union in the struggle against dismissal and for reinstatement?

We were members of the 'sweetheart' union SAMWU and we can safely say besides playing a role in our dismissals, SAMWU also divided the workforce.

3) What was the role of Cosatu and the SACP in the reinstatement struggle?

We tried our best to raise our matter with leaders of both the SACP and Cosatu but to no avail except what they are best at – lip service.

4) Who offered the workers solidarity support in the struggle?

It was after more than 15 years that we received solidarity support from the civil society organisation like Corruption Watch, Section 27 and R2K. We also had Friends of the Midrand workers outside the borders of SA.

5) How did the workers sustain the struggle? How were they organised?

We started funding our own struggle years before we started feeling the difficulty of being unemployed. We were self-sufficient.

6) When and why did the workers join Demawusa?

Our union, SAMWU, did absolutely nothing to fight for us against what we called our DES – Dismissals, Expulsions and Suspensions. We marched, petitioned Cosatu, wrote to SACP general secretary,

Blade Nzimande, and even the ANC president. The entire Tripartite Alliance abandoned us.

Over time there was a rank-and-file rebellion against the corrupt SAMWU leadership. We joined with many workers to demand a forensic audit of SAMWU's finances. Eventually this led to the formation of the Save Our Samwu campaign out of which our new union Demawusa was formed in 2015.

We were with them when we embarked on a Save Our SAMWU campaign that led to some of us forming a certain yellow union. We remained with those who sought a mandate from members and fortunately we founded the Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Union in 2015.

7) How many workers remain since the dismissal?

We are mandated by 280 members even though only 50 were the pillars of this struggle.

8) What are the terms of the reinstatement agreement? Will all dismissed workers be reinstated?

We believe that come July 2018 all remaining Midrand workers will be absorbed into permanent funded jobs as agreed between SAFTU and the City of Johannesburg and also that forensic investigations will be conducted into workers' pension funds.

9) What political conclusions drawn from the struggle?

After 23 years of our out struggle against the African Notorious Corruption [ANC] administration we feel is high time that engagements on a mass workers party become inevitable. The working class needs to contest the vacant political space that has been in existence since the dawn of democracy in this country.

10) Who are the workers working with political and why?

The Midrand workers hence are in the hands of the SAFTU and are currently working with WASP because we are of the firm believe that their principles are based on a socialist agenda.



Them...



Average CEO pay
R24,000,000
per year

New minimum wage
R3,500 per month

For a family of 5...



Cost of minimum
nutritional food basket
R3,237.08 per month

That leaves...
R262.92 per month
for everything else!

Electricity & water costs
R573.70 per month

Transport costs
R720 per month

Clothing costs
R416.65 per month
And more...

The minimum wage
leaves a family of 5
R -3,209.59 per month
short for the basic
necessaries of life.

Data from Pacsa (2017).

...and Us



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