



KZN: 'Hands off Ingonyama land'

The traditional control of land was defended by many residents during hearings in the province

Paddy Harper

Changes to the Constitution to allow for the expropriation of land without compensation received overwhelming support on the first day of hearings by Parliament's joint constitutional review committee in northern KwaZulu-Natal on Wednesday.

So did the Ingonyama Trust, which gives King Goodwill Zwelithini control of almost three million hectares of rural land. Residents of rural areas around Vryheid told the hearing that although they wanted section 25 of the Constitution changed, land under traditional control should not be affected.

The vast majority of the several hundred people who turned out for the hearing backed expropriation without compensation, with only a few — mainly white farmers and representatives of farming organisations — opposing it.

A large crowd of people was forced to wait outside the gate until after a break in proceedings because the number who had arrived with the intention of speaking was far higher than the capacity of the town's Cecil Emmett Hall. There was a large police presence on hand, testimony to the tensions that have surrounded the land reform issue in KwaZulu-Natal.

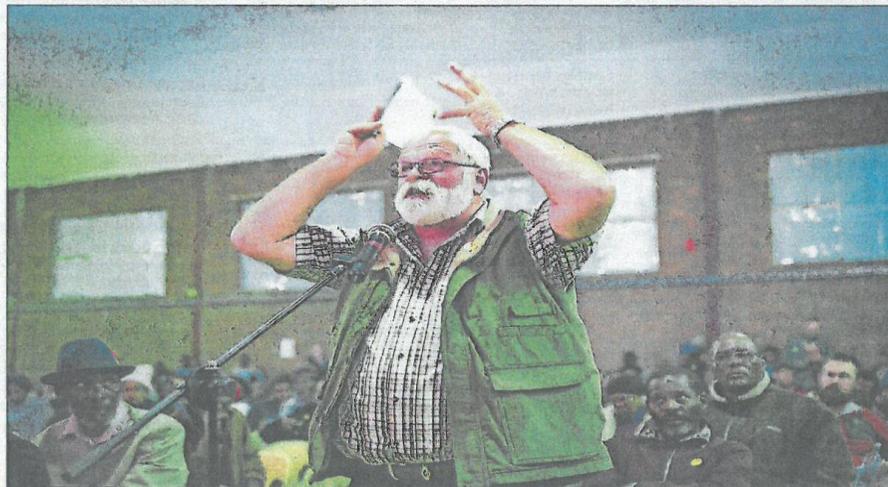
Last week, President Cyril Ramaphosa met Zwelithini to reassure him that the current process was about the expropriation of white-controlled land and not land under the Ingonyama Trust.

Despite committee cochairperson Louis Nzimande telling speakers to restrict themselves to a three-minute input on why they supported, or opposed, changing the Constitution, many used the opportunity to reiterate their support for land to remain under the control of the king and the amakhosi.

Mbongiseni Ndlovu, a farmer from eDumbe, which also falls under the



Catharsis: Emotions ran high during the Vryheid leg of the land hearings when people talked about their experiences. Most were in favour of expropriation without compensation. Photos: Delwyn Verasamy



Zululand district municipality, said he believed that the Constitution needed to be changed to ensure that the 87% of South Africa that is under white ownership should

be transferred into black hands.

"There are plenty of black farmers who can work the land but they do not have enough land to till for themselves. These are the people that

government should be working with," Ndlovu said.

Ndlovu argued the government should identify people who had the capacity and the will to work the

land and assist them by providing farming equipment.

"When this process unfolds, the land under the Ingonyama Trust should not be disturbed," he added.

Musa Ndwandwe from Mandlakazi in Nongoma said that the government needed to ensure disputes over traditional leadership titles were resolved and that traditional authorities were running smoothly so that they could help with the administration of land.

Zakhele Buthelezi, a former miner from Denny Dalton in Mahlabathini who is now a subsistence farmer, told the *Mail & Guardian* he and other people from his area had hired two taxis to enable them to come and address the hearing.

"They told us at first we could not come in but we were not prepared to leave without speaking. This is important to us. Things need to change," said Buthelezi.

"We need land at home if we are to survive. I was retrenched as a miner. There are no other jobs here. The land we have is too small to farm properly on. We support that government gives us land that was taken from our grandfathers, so we can earn a living through this land," he said.

"We don't need the land that is under amakhosi. We need that land that was taken and fenced and used by other people to be given to us."

Political parties also weighed in on the issue, with ANC provincial legislature member Jomo Sibiya expressing the support of the party in KwaZulu-Natal for expropriation without compensation.

Economic Freedom Fighters deputy president Floyd Shivambu, who sits on the committee, said the party believed the trust was "part of custodianship of land by the state" and, as such, was not a target for expropriation. Rather, the trust and all traditional councils would continue to play a role in relation to administering the land. There would be a "defined relationship" that would ensure this did not take place in a discriminatory way, Shivambu said.

Similar sittings are to be held in Jozini, Pietermaritzburg and Kokstad in KwaZulu-Natal by the committee before it leaves the province.