

We, the undersigned South African organisations, write an open letter to Sasol in solidarity with the people of Mossville, Louisiana, USA. The historically African-American community of Mossville has suffered enormously from long-standing toxic pollution produced by Sasol's Lake Charles Chemical Complex, which sits on the fenceline of their homes. Moreover, Sasol's expansion of this facility has depleted the population of this once-vibrant community. We urge Sasol to make things right for this community and conduct an equitable property buyout for the remaining Mossville residents who are interested in relocation.

Sasol's Destruction in South Africa

For two decades, once United Nations oil sanctions were imposed on the apartheid regime running South Africa, the parastatal company Sasol was given [state support to bust sanctions](#). The firm's privatisation and its double-listing on the New York and Johannesburg stock exchanges paved the way for massive capital flight from South Africa in the democratic era.

Weak post-apartheid environmental regulation meant Sasol kept polluting at its main facilities in Secunda and Sasolburg. And predictably in South Africa, like in the United States, communities living near Sasol facilities are still harmed by its pollution.

Sasol's Secunda plant is the world's [largest single source](#) of greenhouse gas emissions. This single facility emits more than over [100 countries](#) do nationally, largely due to its energy intensive coal-to-liquid operations. Leaks from the [gas pipeline](#) that feeds the facility further contribute to the climate catastrophe, as methane is [over 80 times](#) more potent than CO₂ over a 20-year period.

The Secunda facility also releases toxic pollutants, estimated to be responsible for [17% of hospital admissions](#) in Mpumalanga Province and as many as [72 deaths](#) every year. Emissions from multiple Sasol facilities contribute to the Vaal Triangle being the "[most polluted place on Earth](#)." Sasol is also facing criminal charges for its alleged intentional [dumping of hazardous waste](#) from its Secunda facility into the Vaal River, a waterway on which approximately 19 million people depend.

The Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, along with numerous other civil society organisations, has long campaigned for Sasol to pay its ecological debt and halt all toxic and greenhouse gas emissions. Though we are separated by thousands of kilometres, we stand in solidarity with the people of Mossville, who face the same consequences of Sasol's unforgiving recklessness in their community as many South Africans do in ours.

Sasol's Mistreatment of Mossville, Louisiana, USA

Mossville, Louisiana was founded by formerly enslaved people and was once a thriving community of over 500 families. Today, just over 50 families are left due to the ongoing decimation of their community. Sasol's massive Lake Charles Chemical Complex emits toxic chemicals into the air, soil, and water each year, poisoning these essential resources and risking the health of those who live nearby. The Sasol plant emits thousands of pounds of the potent

carcinogen ethylene oxide, which has led to cancer risk in the surrounding communities being [three times higher](#) than the risk considered acceptable by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

When Sasol initiated a buyout program for residents in 2013 after announcing a major expansion of its Lake Charles facilities, it failed to do so equitably. One [study](#) by the University Network of Human Rights found that in the neighbouring community Brentwood, where residents are 90% white, residents were offered 45% more compensation for their houses on average compared to residents in Mossville, which is 90% Black. This inequity resulted in division in the community and in many Mossville residents refusing the buyout. Since then, the people of Mossville have organised a community advocacy group, named Concern Citizens of Mossville (CCOM).

Ten years after the initial failed buyout, the situation is dire. The United States Environmental Protection Agency just fined Sasol \$1.4 million (over ZAR 22 million) related to an October 2022 fire at the facility and violations of the U.S. Clean Air Act found during a 2021 compliance evaluation. This is just scratching the surface of the damage.

Concern Citizens of Mossville have continued to advocate for the remaining residents who face grave risks in the community where they went to school, raised families, knew their neighbours, and honoured their heritage.

Our Demands

Sasol's initial buyout program did not sufficiently solve the problems that the corporation created. Sasol made Mossville unlivable for many residents due to the dangerous emissions from its Lake Charles facilities. Instead of ensuring that the people of Mossville were adequately compensated for their homes/properties, Sasol's [inequitable buyout program was insufficient](#) for many Mossville residents to relocate.

As South Africans, we are familiar with Sasol's mistreatment of the people and communities that live near its facilities. **In solidarity with the people of Mossville, Louisiana, USA who wish to relocate, we demand that Sasol conduct an equitable buyout of their homes.**

Signed,

Centre for Applied Legal Studies
Centre for Human Rights
Diocese of Mzimvubu
Legal Resources Centre
Natural Justice
Oxfam South Africa
Sekhukhune Environmental Justice Network
The Green Connection

The Movement for Debt and Reparations
Tyinirha Rural Development and Advice Centre