



# UMSEBENZI

ONLINE

## YOUTH TO THE FRONT!

### YOUNG REDS LAUNCH JOE SLOVO RIGHT TO LEARN CAMPAIGN



PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN SOWS SEEDS OF SOCIALISM

## *SACP's inaugural national elections workshop*

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## EDITORIAL

# From the People's Red Caravan to working-class power



**This edition of Umsebenzi appears at a moment of sharpening contradiction in our society and in the life of the working-class movement.**

Across towns, villages and townships, the crisis of local government deepens, unemployment and poverty harden, and the distance between political institutions and the lived realities of the people grows ever wider.

At the same time, the South African Communist Party has taken a historic and deliberate step to contest local government elections independently. These two developments are not separate. They are bound together by a single strategic task: the rebuilding of working-class power from below.

At the centre of this task stands the People's Red Caravan (PRC). The PRC is not a campaign, a roadshow, nor an electoral device.

It is the Party returning to its most fundamental revolutionary duty — to go to the people, to organise, to educate, and to build collective capacity for self-emancipation. It is a method of work rooted in practical intervention, political education and mass participation. It insists that socialism is not declared from platforms nor delivered through state programmes alone, but constructed patiently through organised struggle in the everyday conditions of working-class life.

The PRC is therefore inseparable from the Party's decision to contest elections. Elections, in themselves, do not resolve the crisis of governance or representation. They become meaningful only when grounded in organisation, political clarity and sustained presence in communities.

The PRC affirms a basic communist truth: organisation must precede power, and power must be exercised in the service of the organised masses. To reverse this relationship is to reproduce the very alienation and decay that have hollowed out local government and disillusioned millions of working-class people.

This edition of Umsebenzi reflects this understanding. The reports and reflections gathered here do not speak from a distance. They emerge from land struggles, community marches, informal work, political education, and disciplined organisational efforts. They show a Party in motion, grappling with the material realities of poverty, dispossession and exclusion, while consciously preparing itself for the responsibilities that come with seeking political authority.

The PRC runs through these pages as both a practical programme and a political line — a reminder that communists must be present before elections, during elections, and long after votes have been counted.

The forthcoming local government elections are not treated here as an end in themselves. They are a terrain of struggle.

Municipalities have become sites of outsourcing, privatisation, corruption and abandonment, where the poor experience the state as either absent or predatory. To contest these spaces is not an act of opportunism, but a necessity if working-class interests are to be defended and advanced. Yet this contestation will mean nothing if it is not accompanied by deep roots in communities, collective oversight, and the mobilisation of people as active participants rather than passive voters. The PRC provides the organisational and political basis for such an approach.

An organisation preparing to exercise power must also prepare its cadres. This edition deliberately reconnects present struggles with the standards forged in the liberation movement.

The profile of MK Special Ops commander Rashid, a leader defined by discipline, attention to detail and responsibility to comrades, is not an exercise in nostalgia.

It is a reminder that revolutionary work demands seriousness, accountability and ethical conduct. These qualities are not optional; they are essential if the Party is to govern differently from the forces of corruption and careerism that dominate local government today. Similarly, the tribute to the Levy brothers affirms that working-class unity, non-racialism and socialist commitment were built through sacrifice, organisation and principled struggle, not rhetorical convenience.



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The struggles highlighted in this edition — for land, for food security, for dignity in informal work, for the recognition of marginalised livelihoods — are not peripheral to the socialist project.

They are its substance. They expose how capitalism reproduces inequality and insecurity at the most basic level of daily life. The PRC's emphasis on community ownership, cooperative activity and collective problem-solving speaks directly to these conditions. It asserts that working-class people are not objects of development, but subjects of history.

True to the tradition of Umsebenzi, this edition also locates our struggle within the global balance of forces. International solidarity is not an optional moral posture; it is a material necessity in a world dominated by imperialism, sanctions and militarism. The hardships faced by working people in South Africa are inseparable from global systems of exploitation and domination. To build socialism at home requires clarity, courage and alignment with all those resisting imperialism abroad.

Taken together, the contributions in this edition point in a single direction. The Party is moving from analysis to action, from episodic presence to sustained organisation, from protest to the conscious contestation of power. The People's Red Caravan is both a symbol and a method of this advance. It demands discipline, humility and hard work. It demands that communists earn the right to lead by serving, organising and remaining accountable to the people.

Socialism will not arrive by chance, nor will it be handed down from above. It must be built deliberately, collectively and from below. This is the road the Party has chosen to walk.

Forward with the PRC! Forward to working-class power!

**JOE SLOVO RIGHT TO LEARN**

**Chalk dust and red overalls**



*YCLSA National Secretary Cde Mzwandile Thakhudi on the Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign trail at the University of Limpopo, where young reds conducted an operation Khula YCLSA membership drive.*

**MZWANDILE THAKHUDI**

**At the district office they like to speak in numbers. Enrolment. Attendance. Progression. Dropout. Pass rate. Infrastructure backlog. Budget lines. Procurement. Children become entries. Broken schools become a “challenge”.**

**T**wenty minutes out, the figures rot into a smell. Sewage in a corridor. Damp that never dries. A toilet block greets learners before sunrise. One tap for a whole schoolyard. A boy in Grade 7 tries the handle anyway. It does not give. He turns away and joins the line at the tap.

The first bell is still far off when the red overalls appear at the corner of the street.

They arrive as a unit, an organised detachment, disciplined. Close enough to move as one. A wheelbarrow squeaks. Refuse bags bump against knees. Paintbrushes, brooms and mops. A box marked “JSR2LC”. Another marked “BOOK COVERS”. Sanitary towels. Stationery and learning aids are laid out.

A roll of fencing wire brought by a progressive comrade who said, “Use it at the school.” A spade. Seedlings. A thick file of school readiness sheets.

In the front, there is a teacher’s desk. On it, the notebook is already open. A learner points and says, “They are back.” No one asks, “back from where?” Everybody knows.

The comrade in front greets the general workers first. Then the teachers. Then the learners.

He asks for the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) office bearers. He asks who sits on the School Governing Body (SGB). He asks for the class reps. Names are taken and checked at the teacher’s desk. A comrade in a YCLSA cap runs his finger down the page, face flat, like he is checking stock. He compares it with the norms and standards and puts a small tick next to each person accounted for.

A woman curiously steps out of the staffroom and stops short.

“You are early,” she says. “You guys came last time with paint and light bulbs. The wall is still clean, the textbooks are still covered. But the toilets are worse. The district keeps promising. These children are learning hunger and shame before they learn anything else.”

The comrade nods once. “That is why we come early. The system trains us to tolerate neglect. We organise in the name of self-reliance. Show us the sewer line, then give us the circuit manager’s name,” he says.

The organiser writes while he receives a briefing from the teacher on the circuit office: dates; names; who was called; what was promised.

The teacher watches the pen move and adds, “Last time they said they would send plumbers. They never came.”

Work starts without the convening of a meeting.

Two comrades go to the toilets with gloves and bleach. Another team drags refuse bags to the back fence where rubbish collects in a makeshift shallow ditch. Broken bottles. Nappies. Plastic wrappers. Learners join in. Fast hands. Sleeves rolled up. They argue over who carries the heavier bag and then carry it together.

A third group mixes paint in old buckets and starts on the corridor wall. Under a tree, scissors and tape come out. Workbooks get wrapped in plastic. Exercise books get labelled. A comrade shows Grade 8s how to fold corners so covers do not tear in the first week. A small task that saves money in a time of unexplainable prices.

A Foundation Phase teacher watches from the corridor. Later she speaks like somebody who has carried this alone for too long. Girls lose notional time for two or three days every month because they have no sanitary towels, and because the toilets are unsafe even when they are open, the teacher states. They come back and say nothing. They fall behind. Some never return.



*The campaign visits schools and tertiary institutions across the country each year to make sure that students are not denied access to education due to fees and a lack of resources.*

A Grade 11 girl hovers at the edge of the tree’s shadow, waiting until the boys move away.

A young woman in red overalls calls her by name from a list compiled with the school-based task team (SBST). The packet is handed over quietly.

No announcement. The comrade leans in and tells her where emergency stock will be stored and who will hold the key. The girl nods once and disappears into the crowd.

Another comrade speaks to the Life Orientation teacher about a short session next week. Harassment. The things boys practise when nobody calls them to order.

They shift a few steps down the same corridor and open the next box.

Flashcards. Readers. Counting aids. Glue sticks. Chalk. A teacher picks up a set of readers and runs her thumb along the spine.

“We improvise,” she says. “Bottle tops for counting. We photocopy until the machine dies.”

She does not dress it up. She briefs the comrades without holding back her frustrations.

At the gate, a comrade sets up a smaller table. A simple form. A pen on a string. Learners who are sixteen and older are asked one question, “Do you have an ID?”

Some shake their heads. Names and addresses are taken. Parents’ numbers are written down. A date is pencilled in for an appointment at Home Affairs. A learner calls from a distance, “What is that table?” A comrade answers without looking up. This is the “Kabelo Thibeli” ID campaign of the YCL information stall. One comrade marks each name and what is missing. Another notes how many will need transport money to get there.

On the far side of the yard, a ball moves between younger learners. A comrade tells them to keep it moving.

“Saturday,” he says, “Ruth First games.”

An observing teacher remarks, “The debate club died two years ago when the bus money ran out.” The organiser looks up. “Who used to debate? Who still argues in class? Who can stand up and speak without shaking?” He tells the teacher to organise those learners.

“We will come for a Bua Thursday,” he says. “They will speak in their own words about this school. Then we will speak about why it is like this, and what must be done.”

One learner laughs. “You want us to speak about broken toilets?”

“Yes. Speak about what happens here every day,” the comrade says.

The principal arrives mid-morning, careful with his tone, careful with his eyes.

“We have submitted requests,” he says. “We are waiting.”

A comrade answers plainly, “We are also waiting. But we are not waiting quietly.”

The principal looks toward the toilet block, then away.

In 2026, the official story still sells education as a ladder. Work hard, pass, succeed. In this yard, the story does not hold.

Forty learners share twenty-eight chairs. Electricity trips. The science “lab” is a locked cupboard with two cracked beakers. Scholar transport fails in the rural section, and learners arrive late or do not arrive at all. The feeding scheme stumbles when contractors do not deliver, deliver rotten food, or disappear after payment. Children write tests hungry. Teachers do counselling without training. Teaching assistants sit on contracts that can be ended without notice.

A comrade responds to the principal, saying, “The YCL Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign does not come here as a substitute department. It comes as organised youth. It plugs what it can in the moment, and it takes up the fights that must be taken up.”

A spade hits hard ground at the back of the school. A garden bed is marked out. Seedlings go in. A teacher says month-end is where hunger bites most. The garden will not solve poverty. It will stretch meals when the feeding scheme (NSNP) runs short. It also forces a return. Watering. Weeding. Protection.

Near the fence, a comrade unrolls wire and points out where it was cut.

“This is where they come through,” a learner says. “After school they wait there.”

The comrade asks who lives closest. Who can bring pliers? Who knows an artisan? Who can come on Saturday morning? The list grows in the notebook.

Just before lunch, the organiser moves from class to class with a school readiness sheet. Water. Toilets. Electricity. Windows. Desks. Teacher vacancies. Scholar transport. Safety. Feeding scheme deliveries. Internet access. Basic healthcare support.

The principal signs where he can. He hesitates at sanitation. A teacher adds notes in the margin. Learners correct what adults understate. The organiser reads the sheet back, line by line, and asks for dates. These sheets do not end in a drawer. They move through districts and provinces. They build a picture from below. When comrades sit later in provincial offices, they speak from a position informed by empirical evidence.

The comrade asks why a suburban school can replace a sewer line in a week while this school waits through terms. He asks what outsourcing does to wages and to the school budget. He asks why the state pays contractors but cannot keep a school safe and clean.

A learner mentions Cuba. Doctors in schools. Libraries that do not leak. Another mentions Venezuela, community councils deciding priorities.

A third mentions China, campuses built while we argue with officials about broken lights.

The comrade keeps it short. "Power decides."

A cleaner stands up during the workers' segment. Her hands are raw. She says the contractor has not supplied gloves in months and wages came late again. "They say we must be grateful," she says.

A comrade asks her to repeat the dates, names of supervisors, and how many workers are affected. Learners listen. They are learning about how exploitation is unfolding in real time.

A delegation is set for the district office. SGB members will go. RCL representatives will go. Workers will choose who speaks. Learners will bring photos and written statements.

"We go with facts," the comrade says. "Names. Dates."

The JSR2LC does not survive on a single good day of work. It survives on return visits and local structures that do not dissolve when the red overalls leave the yard. It runs through the year because the work is varied and constant. Interventions at schools. Visits to TVETs and universities. ID work. Sanitary towels. Book covering. Political education. We are going school by school. TVET by TVET. Campus by campus. The same method each time. Work, organise, return.

It sits close to Party work. The SACP does not grow on declarations. It grows where the working class organises itself, keeps records, confronts officials, defends public institutions from privatisation, and turns anger into collective action. The league will work on the education front and develop cadres through praxis. The schoolyard teaches what pamphlets cannot.



*Join the Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign by contacting the YCLSA in your province!*

Under the tree in the afternoon, political education begins where the day's work has already gone. Learners name what was done. Toilets cleaned. Walls painted. Books covered. Pads distributed. Stationery sorted. The garden has started. Fence marked. Workers met. ID list compiled.

Then the question. "Why did we have to do it?"

The answers come fast. "Because they don't care about us." "Because our resources get stolen." "Because we are poor."

When broader initiatives pass through, there is coordination. Ground forces and logistics are shared where they must be. The Joe Slovo campaign keeps its line of march. It returns to the same schools on a rotational basis.

Late afternoon, the yard thins out. Learners drift toward taxis in small groups. Two comrades walk the perimeter fence and stop again at the area that was once a cut wire opening in the fence. Across the road, a spaza shop radio plays low. A mother calls her child to hurry home before dark.

The organiser closes the notebook, opens it again, and adds a final list. Fence, wire, artisan, Saturday morning. District, toilets, lights, feeding scheme, transport. Contractor, gloves, late wages.

Pad stock, storage, next date. Teaching aids list for Grade 4 and Grade 7. Follow up with the ID list. Bua Thursday topic for next week: Education and Work. Return date for book covering. Return date for the SGB meeting.

He writes it like work.

The toilet block is still locked when we leave. The paint is drying. The garden bed is marked. The book covers are stacked in a box. The delegation date is fixed.

The contradictions remain. The fire is still burning. The struggle continues.

***Cde Mzwandile Thakhudi is the National Secretary of the Young Communist League of South Africa.***

**2026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Forging a path towards working-class power – SACP's first revolutionary national elections workshop**



*The SACP's first national-level elections workshop.*

**AVIWE RAPELANG MOHAPI**

**The SACP marked a historic milestone with its inaugural revolutionary national elections workshop, held from 31 January to 1 February.**

**T**his gathering of dedicated cadres from across the country directly flowed from the Party's 2022 Congress resolution to contest elections independently for the first time, breaking from traditional alliance dynamics to assert a bold, working-class agenda.

The workshop was gripping. Inputs highlighted the energy and commitment among participants. As the SACP prepares for the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE), this workshop underscored the

Party's transformation from an analytical ally to a direct vanguard of working-class interests.

The workshop aimed to refine the SACP's electoral strategy, strengthen organisational capacity, and lay the foundations for a robust platform to advance working-class power in the 2026 LGE and beyond. Central priorities included:

- independent electoral preparation;
- sustained organisational presence;
- political education and cadre mobilisation;
- revolutionary leadership standards;
- tactical alliances and coverage; and
- manifesto development.

These aims are firmly anchored in the Party's strategic vision: rebuilding the democratic state from its foundational “legs”, with local government as the decisive primary terrain of class struggle.

**Overview of the General Secretary's political remarks**

General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila delivered a political overview that anchored the entire revolutionary national elections workshop. Seamlessly blending sharp Marxist theoretical analysis with concrete, actionable directives, he charted the SACP's decisive evolution from a historically supportive and analytical role within national politics and the Alliance to an independent, conscious vanguard advancing working-class power in practice.

This shift, he stressed, is a strategic advance of working-class power, not a tactical manoeuvre, in the face of deepening capitalist hegemony, neoliberal decay, and the intensifying suffering imposed on our people.

The General Secretary emphasised that cadres must fully understand the terrain we are entering,

recognising the elections as an organisational and political battlefield shaped by unemployment, collapsing services, privatisation of resources, and the expansion of squatter camps.

Theory must be translated into practice, as we cannot remain trapped in endless analysis, but must instead forge Marxist theory into living, organising activity.

Key highlights from Cde Mapaila's address included:

- **Critique of current governance:** Local government stands exposed as a site of profound rot and systemic failure, incapable of delivering on the basic needs of the masses and thus demanding a genuine working-class alternative rooted in proletarian struggle. Capitalist dominance now permeates the Government of National Unity, which subordinates the national democratic revolution to neoliberal and right-wing interests. This must be confronted head-on through unwavering revolutionary discipline in public service, guided by the strategic interests of the working class and the advancement of the NDR.



*Participants at the elections workshop examined the strategy and tactics of the Party's preparations for the local government elections.*

- **Candidate and campaign integrity:** Candidate selection must be deeply rooted in the trust and active endorsement of the masses, not elite networks or opportunism. Campaigns must embody ethical conduct, iron revolutionary discipline, and unyielding accountability to the working class. There can be no tolerance for corruption "in red colours," careerism, or any form of self-enrichment. Participation in the 2026 elections is a revolutionary duty and a means to transform how the people experience governance.
- **Mobilisation strategies:** The Party must systematically convert the legitimate anger simmering arising from service delivery challenges, unemployment, and exploitation, into organised class power. This requires wall-to-wall participation across wards and metros, mobilisation in communities, workplaces, and organisational forums, and direct engagement with bread-and-butter issues. The manifesto must be forged through broad working-class participation, as the SACP prepares to convene a Conference of the Left in early 2026.
- **Rebuilding the state:** One of the strategic priorities is rebuilding the "legs" of the democratic state – starting at local government as the primary terrain of class struggle. Strategic focus must be placed on the largest municipalities through wall-to-wall contestation, dismantling fragmentation and agencification, strengthening cooperative governance, and advancing municipal control over basic services. Local government must be consciously shaped to respond to the needs of the people. The People's Red Caravan must function as a continuous, mobilising programme to tackle poverty at its roots, to build working-class self-reliance, and to lay the material and organisational basis of socialism.
- **Post-Election Commitment:** Communists dare not vanish after the polls; we must remain ever-present and transform communities into rolling schools of socialism. We must prepare seriously to win seats and to operate as conscious agents of the proletarian struggle within the electoral arena. The crisis of working-class representation can only be resolved through our principled participation in elections.

- **Broader Vision:** The address situated the SACP's tasks within shifting international political dynamics and imperialist aggression. Venezuela remains at the centre of a seismic geopolitical confrontation. The US continues to demand that countries cease trading with Cuba, intensifying its economic blockade in an effort to collapse socialism, despite its own failure to eradicate poverty, in contrast to Cuba's achievements. Imperialist forces seek to dominate Latin America and continue to threaten Iran. However, Iran represents a qualitatively different balance of forces, reinforced by strategic cooperation with Russia and China and by advanced military capabilities. These realities underline the urgency of deepening anti-imperialist consciousness and socialist political education.

Cde Mapaila concluded by calling on cadres to march forward with unity, discipline, and revolutionary clarity, reaffirming that the SACP's independent path in 2026 is not merely an electoral exercise but a revolutionary leap toward socialism. Rooted in Congress resolutions and mass struggle, this path is aimed at nothing less than the seizure of working-class power to advance socialism in our lifetime.



*Get registered to vote SACP!*

## Consolidating an election mood

Following the General Secretary’s opening remarks, cdes Smuts Matshe and Mandla Dlamini outlined our approach to the forthcoming elections, with Young Communist League National Secretary Mzwandile Thakhudi providing a crucial youth perspective.

Cde Smuts’ scanning of the electoral environment emphasised mood and relevance. The campaign must cultivate a focused public sentiment, directly rebutting the falsehood that communists cannot contest elections, a practice dating to 1921.

He said that standing is a strategic decision debated for 22 years. His critique identified a landscape where all major parliamentary parties accept capitalism, dominated by “money politics” and self-serving leaders, with opposition often reduced to criticising the ANC rather than targeting capital itself.

The strategic purpose of contesting is to advance working-class programmes, with implementation not solely dependent on winning seats. While scenario planning covers all outcomes, the primary goal is municipal council representation. This demands disciplined hard work: mobilising unregistered voters and direct contact targeting. Echoing this focus, Cde Mandla stated that the Election Manual is a clarion call for implementation, not discussion, containing a message from the General Secretary and provisional chapters.

Comrade Mzwandile concluded the workshop, framing the youth strategy within the SACP’s broader analysis. He noted the retreat of the National Democratic Revolution due to collusion between capital and compradorial forces, highlighting how the restructured local state excludes the working class, fuelling voter apathy. Addressing the pandemic of youth unemployment is a strategic priority as vital as class representation and it is imperative to make the political system worthwhile for youth.

As the SACP gears up for 2026, this workshop stands as a testament to the Party’s unwavering commitment to the working class. Cadres marched out battle-ready, armed with revolutionary clarity, steeled by iron discipline and unshakeable, sharpened conviction, ready to rebuild the people’s power from the ground up, to resist without compromise, and to reclaim every inch of dignity stolen by exploitation.

For more updates, follow the SACP’s ongoing preparations and join the struggle for a socialist South Africa.

*Cde Aviwe Rapelang Mohapi is the National Education Officer at NEHAWU and a writer and political activist. He writes in his personal capacity.*



**THE PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN**

**Revolution in motion, poverty in retreat**



*Ganspan community members discuss the impact and follow-up of the PRC in the town with SACP CC and PB member Tebogo Phadu. The activities and initiatives brought to Ganspan, Northern Cape, last December have taken root and retained momentum.*

**BENGEZA MTHA**

**The People's Red Caravan (PRC) stands as a living testament to the revolutionary mission of the SACP.**

**L** aunched in 2025 in Motlhabhe Village, Moses Kotane Province, the PRC is not a fleeting campaign nor a gesture of electoral opportunism. It is a strategic weapon of empowerment, forged to place the responsibility for safety, food security, and collective survival squarely in the hands of the working class.

Through the leadership of the Central Committee, the PRC advances from province to province, compelling provincial executive committees, districts,

sub-districts, and branches to activate its vision at every level of society.

The PRC now enters its fifth leg in Ixopo, Johannes Phumani Local Municipality, Thembisile Hani District, Moses Mabhida Province. It gathers cadres and activists in their thousands, not for spectacle, but for seven days of revolutionary praxis – cutting the chains of poverty, dismantling dependency, and cultivating self-reliance as the seed of socialism.

While bourgeois parties busy themselves with hollow electioneering, the SACP marches to a different drumbeat.

The Party's duty is not to chase votes but to deliver solutions to the proletariat still shackled by the triple crises of poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

The PRC is the embodiment of this duty: a caravan of liberation, a movement of solidarity, and a declaration that the SACP has no interests apart from those of the working class as a whole.

**Recommitting the SACP at the grassroots**

The SACP has mastered the revolutionary art of weaving together workstreams, collective engines in which the diverse skills of the community unite with the discipline of Party cadres to become the vanguard of service delivery.

Through the PRC, these workstreams have become fertile ground for building and strengthening both SACP and YCLSA branches, from the historic launch in Motlhabe to the recent consolidation in Ganspan and now advancing towards Ixopo.

These structures are not mere administrative tools; they are fortresses of collective power, designed to prevent the atomisation of struggle and the individual capture of projects meant to liberate the poor.

They remind us that poverty cannot be defeated by isolated effort, but only through unity, collaboration, and the conscious culture of supporting local production.

The PRC insists that every branch, cadre, and community member must be armed with revolutionary consciousness.

These structures are the schools of socialism, teaching our people that liberation is not charity but struggle, not individual gain but collective victory. They are the living proof that the SACP recommits itself at the grassroots, where the heartbeat of the revolution truly lies.

**Principle of participation**

The PRC is not charity, nor tokenism. It is the living manifestation of collective participation, where the masses themselves build the foundations of self-reliance and sustainability. It is the people, organised and conscious, who become the architects of their own liberation.



*PRC activities include boosting community health work and clinical services.*

**Problem solving**

The caravan advances with a principle of disciplined problem-solving: a problem identified once must never be allowed to fester; it must be confronted and resolved through coordinated activism.

Cde Solly Mapaila, our General Secretary, has remained steadfast to this principle. He has reminded us that the SACP does not enter villages to deliver empty speeches, but to forge practical solutions with the people themselves, solutions rooted in their daily struggles, their lived realities, and their collective strength.

**Specific conditions**

Each caravan is shaped by the unique conditions of the community it enters. Motlhabe’s challenges are not the same as those of Matibidi or Mqhekezweni or even Ganspan.

This is why our workstreams are composed of activists with diverse expertise, ensuring interventions are customised and meaningful. We salute our community profilers, whose revolutionary diligence ensures that every intervention is not abstract policy, but a concrete response to the material needs of the people.

**Critical challenges**

The Party must erect a strong monitoring and evaluation machinery to defend projects against sabotage and collapse. Without this, the fifth leg of the PRC risks becoming hollow.

**Continuity:** In Moses Kotane, where this initiative was first launched, provincial and district structures have not adequately rolled-out the PRC. The General Secretary activates, then leaves the project in the hands of the community and local SACP structures. It is the duty of members in the province to nurture, expand, and defend it. Provincial executive committees and district executive committees must rise to this responsibility, identifying new communities equally deserving of revolutionary intervention.

**Coordinated patronage:** The SACP must remain vigilant to organisations or individuals who appear to share our vision and offer help, only for their true intentions to later surface as efforts to control, exploit, or intentionally sabotage the PRC and its goals.

It is equally essential for the SACP to monitor and discipline its members who enter communities under the party's name but act against its values.

Their actions include taking advantage of vulnerable communities, committing sexual abuse or harassment, profiting from people's suffering, or displaying anti-communist behaviour such as substance abuse, elitism, or actions that separate them from the people they claim to support.

**Distortion and disinformation:** There are deliberate attempts to distort the PRC, mischaracterising it as an election campaign. In truth, it is the revolutionary deepening of the Party at grassroots level through activism and work streams. If branches fully embrace this model, the credibility of the SACP will shine as the vanguard of the working class.

**Government and PRC:** While we respect government programmes, the PRC is not government-driven. Government service delivery is suffocated by red tape, corruption, and bourgeois culture. The PRC cuts through this, offering direct, people-centred solutions rooted in socialist practice.

**Trajectory of PRC**

After national launches, provincial and district secretaries must deepen the PRC on the ground.

It is not enough to activate; it must be entrenched, expanded, and defended at every level of community life.

**Political education**

The PRC must be embraced as a school of political education, a living classroom where cadres and communities learn the principles of socialism, solidarity, and revolutionary discipline.

**Melting pot**

The PRC is a melting pot of struggle, uniting all structures in collective work streams. It is also a crucible of purification, exposing members, especially those in government, who refuse to participate. Their absence reveals their betrayal; their attitude is a warning.

**Financial restraints**

The PRC is not sustained by the bourgeois state nor by the charity of capital. It is self-funded, built on the revolutionary principle that the working class must mobilise its own resources, both monetary and in-kind, to secure its liberation. Every contribution, whether a coin or a sack of maize, is not a donation in the capitalist sense, but an act of solidarity, a declaration that the people themselves will finance their struggle.



*Food security – in the Northern Cape town of Ganspan, the PRC organised the ploughing and irrigation of a large tract of arable land for growing spinach. In the foreground, Cde Norman Shushu, Provincial Secretary of the Northern Cape.*



*Nutrition boost: Laying the foundation of the chicken coop after completing the enclosure, after which the cages for the layers were assembled. Ganspan, Northern Cape.*

This model of self funding is the antithesis of dependency. It rejects the corruption, red tape, and patronage that plague government programmes. Instead, it affirms that the caravan is powered by the collective will of the masses, by the sweat and sacrifice of communities who refuse to be passive recipients of aid.

Through this, the PRC becomes more than a programme; it becomes a living cooperative of struggle, where every contribution strengthens the chain of unity, every act of giving becomes an act of resistance, and every resource mobilised is a weapon against poverty and exploitation.

To sustain the PRC, we must mobilise resources, collectively opening a PRC account, organising debit orders, and building a culture of mass resource solidarity.

### **Ownership**

Communities must develop a sense of ownership over PRC projects. These initiatives are theirs, born from their struggle, sustained by their labour, defended by their unity.

### **PRC co-operatives**

All cooperatives established through the PRC must be registered and linked to funding, ensuring they are not symbolic gestures but engines of sustainable transformation.

The People's Red Caravan represents the dialectical synthesis of grassroots empowerment and revolutionary praxis.

It is both a mechanism of material transformation and a school of socialist consciousness, proving that liberation is not bestowed from above but constructed from below.

In this, the SACP reaffirms its historic duty: to stand as the vanguard of the working class, advancing socialism through collective struggle and self-reliance.

***Bengeza Mtha is a PEC member in SACP Moses Kotane Province.***

**CHRIS HANI INSTITUTE**

# Sharpening the tools of revolutionary theory – AGM Statement



*Chris Hani: "I felt that my role was to contribute something and if I got a bit of education, I should use that education in a system to politicise the people, to rally the people..." The Chris Hani Institute aims to do precisely this – to use rigorous theoretical analysis as a form of struggle to politicise the people into action.*

**PRISCILLA MAGAU-MAZIBUKO**

**The Chris Hani Institute (CHI), as a working-class revolutionary institute, held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 30 January 2026 in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.**

**T**he meeting was attended by 20 members drawn from CHI’s founding organisations, the SACP and Cosatu.

The CHI exists to promote the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and democracy, advance political education and research, empower the working class and low-income people, and influence public policy to pursue

the emancipation of the working class. As such, the AGM received detailed reports from both management and the board, highlighting progress toward fulfilling CHI’s overarching mandate.

In keeping with the AOA's provisions, the AGM welcomed the appointment of new members. The AGM further resolved to appoint new financial auditors in accordance with Section 92 of the Companies Act 71 of 2008, which stipulates that the same individual auditor may not serve as auditor for more than five consecutive financial years. In addition, the AGM endorsed a rotational co-chairing arrangement to ensure a fair distribution of workloads between Cosatu and the SACP.

The AGM also reflected on the CHI's role as a strategic intelligence centre for the working class, committed to socialism and internationalism. The institute was born of the understanding that no revolutionary movement can advance without rigorous research and high-level strategic thinking. The CHI must therefore be a go-to reference point for revolutionary analysis, trusted by trade unions, community movements and organisations, progressive and other socialist forces.

As the CHI fortifies its revolutionary intellect, it will critically engage with the realities of liberal restructuring, deindustrialisation, unemployment crisis, informalisation of labour, and the crisis of the national immigration project. In this regard, the working class will be provided with clarity, foresight and scientific understanding of domestic issues.

However, a revolutionary movement that ignores geopolitics is one that walks blindfolded. As such, the institute will place the global balance of forces at the centre of its analysis with a particular attention to the decline of US-led unipolar domination and its increasingly reactive and brutal attempts to maintain imperial power. As a result, the working class will be armed not only with courage but also with theoretical clarity.

The AGM charged the CHI to reassert itself as an elevated revolutionary research institution. The institute must not only address domestic issues but also situate them within broader international developments. Thus, the CHI becomes a space where workers' lived experiences meet rigorous theoretical analysis. It will also be viewed as a respected

intellectual depth and feared by reactionary forces for exposing the real relations of power. In other words, it must be a true working-class institute.

The AGM also declared that revolutionary research is a form of struggle in itself. Ideas shape policy; theory shapes organisations; strategy shapes history. If the working class is to lead society, it must assert its superior logic in the battle of ideas. Accordingly, the struggle must continue, but with sharper theoretical tools forged by the CHI.

***Cde Priscilla Magau-Mazibuko is the Chris Hani Institute company secretary.***

LAND

# Farmers march for dignity and justice



*Norma Mbatha, Executive Chairperson of Izwi Labantu Forum (third from right) said that farmers feel trapped in a cycle where they are set up to fail without secure land ownership or support. “The sector is treated as a slush fund for politicians, officials, and connected individuals.”*

**SPHE YALO**

**On 29 January, the SACP joined Izwi Labantu Forum in the people’s march through the streets of Pretoria to the Union Buildings in demand for dignity and justice on the land.**

**P**rotestors demanded support for home gardens and household food security, an end to farm murders, stock theft and organised crime.

They also called for a fair and secure land redistribution and an end to corruption and redirection of farmer support funds.

Izwi Labantu Forum is a non-profit organisation focusing on community empowerment and advocacy. It seeks to address social, economic and governance concerns, acting as a voice for underprivileged communities and fighting against social injustice.

It also supports small and emerging farmers in the struggle for land justice, food security, and rural economic freedom, especially black emerging and small-scale farmers who have been neglected since 1994.

Issues highlighted during the march include the provision of title deeds to farmers, in opposition to the 30-year leases granted to farmers. The non-granting of title deeds has kept many emerging farmers in poverty and unable to access finance or invest in their farms.

Describing black farmers’ financial situation, Thulani Ndlovu, a farmer from KwaZulu-Natal, said, “We are not receiving any financial support from financial institutions, as the lease agreements are invalid. We remain helpless.”

Bennie Van Zyl, from the Transvaal Agricultural Union, stressed the importance of security of tenure and unity among farmers, stating, “We need title deeds and training. We asked already in 1995 for title deeds for new entry farmers in a proposal we made to the government. They put it aside and said they will do it their way. But I think we should be angry at the right people, not at each other. We cannot rewrite history.”

The SACP affirmed its support for Izwi Labantu Forum for their consistent fight for the marginalised and neglected communities.



***SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila backed the core demands of the protest – accelerated land reform, justice on the land question and broader socio-economic reforms.***

SACP General Secretary, Cde Solly Mapaila, backed the core demands raised, which include accelerated land reform, justice on the land question, and broader socio-economic reforms, framing the protest as a people’s struggle for dignity and justice.

He added that the government must provide what is due to the farmers and called for the government to expropriate the land as per section 25 of the constitution, linking these demands to the urgent need for land transformation and local economic

development rooted in food production, food security, and equitable access to land.

The SACP also backed demands for debt relief and improved rural security, emphasising the need to prevent stock theft and farm murders.

Cde Mapaila reaffirmed that land is the base of our struggle, stating, “Land is the base of our struggle. It is the most vital source for food production, the foundation of our livelihoods, and the key to achieving food security and sustainable development for our communities.”

Other issues that were highlighted by various speakers included the question of corruption, which leads to the lack of financial support for farmers in addition to the lack of training or advisory support as well as no capacitation programmes for emerging farmers.

Activists further called for the exemption of emerging and small-scale producers from high electricity costs, as affordable energy is critical for sustaining food production, ensuring food security, and supporting livelihoods in rural communities.

Izwi Labantu Forum Executive Chairperson Norma Mbatha expressed the plight of black farmers and rural communities as they continue to suffer structural exclusion, exploitative working conditions, obstacles to land access, and pervasive corruption.

“Funds channelled through the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development are routinely redirected away from deserving black farmers to preferred individuals or entities or simply fail to reach the intended beneficiaries altogether,” she said.

“This misdirection and outright withholding of critical support”, she continued, “not only perpetuates marginalisation and collapse in the sector, but it also kills the black farming legacy and discourages youth and future generations from entering the agricultural sector.”

Mbatha also showed how ordinary South Africans, especially black farmers and vulnerable households, are paying the heaviest price of neglect.



# IZWI LABANTU FORUM NPC

“Chronic unemployment in rural areas, rising malnutrition and the collapse of home and community gardens due to lack of support,” she stated.

“Supply-chain corruption drives up the cost of basic staples. It’s deepening hunger in a country that should be a regional breadbasket,” she concluded.

Should the government ignore the people’s demands, Izwi Labantu Forum has vowed to organise a nationwide protest during February.

***Cde Sphe Yalo is YCLSA Greater Tshwane District Secretary.***

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

# South African activists denounce imperialism against Venezuela



*On the picket: for over twenty-five years, the US waged a campaign to overthrow the government of Venezuela and strangle the Bolivarian Revolution. Photo: Owen Poggenpoel*

## MARCO ANTONELLI AND EXLIRA GIOSE-DAVIDS

On the blazing morning of 23 January 2026, the rallying cries of “Phantsi, US Imperialism Phantsi!” shattered the usual quiet of the affluent suburb of Steenberg Estate.

**H**undreds of protesters had converged outside the US Consulate in Cape Town to denounce the most recent act of aggression by US Imperialism against the people of Venezuela.

The platform was shared by speakers from Alliance partners – Cosatu, the SACP, the ANC and Sanco).

Joining the protest were representatives from a broad range of progressive organisations including the

National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, New Unity Movement, Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, Pan Africanist Congress and the Economic Freedom Front.

Behind the speakers stood a line of police officers who stood guard to protect the US diplomatic mission.

The consulate, although more of a fortress, sits hidden away in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, beside the wealthy enclave of Steenberg Estate and opposite the elite grounds of the private school Reddam House.

For many comrades, reaching the venue was a maze of missed turns and last-minute redirections. This location is not incidental; it is strategic.

Originally situated in the centre of Cape Town, the US Consulate became a major target of popular anger in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

When the US unleashed a wave of military aggression throughout Africa and the Middle East, protestors took to the streets of Cape Town with molotovs and stones. As retaliatory attacks on US diplomatic missions intensified globally, the US State Department made a calculated decision to insulate their missions from urban centres.

This particular protest was triggered by the latest act of US aggression against the people of Venezuela. On the morning of 3 January, US Special Forces bombed the capital city of Caracas and kidnapped President Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores.

For over twenty-five years, the US waged a campaign to overthrow the government of Venezuela and strangle the Bolivarian Revolution. Deployed in this offensive has been every dirty trick in the US playbook: coups, sanctions, mercenaries, and now direct military intervention. What was Venezuela's crime? Setting its own independent course and refusing to surrender its resources to U.S. imperialism.

The fate of Venezuela is not unique. As Cde Yusuf Chikte reminded the crowd, the same forces of imperialism neutralised African leaders who sought an independent path, from Lumumba, to Cabral, to Sankara.

We must keep this in mind as the US takes formative steps of regime change in South Africa, recruiting local allies such as the right-wing DA and AfriForum in this endeavour.

Cde Chikte emphasised that solidarity must go beyond words and into concrete action.

"We have asked other people in the world to boycott when we were struggling. So, it is now our turn to do that kind of solidarity work," he told the gathering, while also calling for the US ambassador, Brent Bozell, to be declared persona non grata. We must also remember that imperialism is a material process that affects the everyday hardship of the working class.

Imperialism can be seen in the price of medicine, dictated by the interests of US pharmaceutical monopolies. It can be traced in our collapsing healthcare and education system, gutted by austerity policies imposed on us by international financial institutions. It even manifests in our high unemployment rate, which produces a docile and easy-to-exploit reserve army of labour for foreign capital.

Cde Mickey Titus of the New Unity Movement cut through the rhetoric about international law. "There's never been respect for the laws of the people of Africa, Americas and the Global South," he said.

"Trump and the United States", he continued, "are just carrying on what they've been doing for centuries. They have owned unto themselves the right to take what they want from Palestine to Venezuela, from the Congo to Syria."

The message from the protest was clear: international solidarity must move beyond symbolic gestures. Workers must be mobilised to take concrete economic action against imperialism.

The broad front of progressive forces must be consolidated into a disciplined programme of militant resistance. Only through such measures can we hope to resist the predations of US imperialism and stand in genuine solidarity with the peoples of Venezuela, Palestine, Iran, and all those struggling against oppression across the world.

***Marco Antonelli is a mathematics teacher and activist representing Energy Embargo CT and SA-BDS Coalition.***

***Exlira Giose-Davids is an economics Master's student at the University of the Western Cape and a YCLSA national committee member.***



***Launch of the #BringThemBack, 3 February, campaign at The Forge in central Johannesburg to demand immediate and unconditional release of President Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, kidnapped 3 January by the US regime.***



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

**President Trump has signed an executive order to impose a total blockade on fuel supplies to Cuba. Basically, the US will monitor whether a foreign country directly or indirectly sells or provides any oil to Cuba in order to impose arbitrary and abusive tariffs on them.**

**The US is resorting to blackmail and coercion to make other countries join its universally condemned and failed policy of blockade against Cuba.**

**This is a further unwarranted escalation of aggression towards Cuba. To justify it, the US lies in order to portray Cuba as a threat to its National Security. Absolute slander!**

**We denounce before the world this brutal act of aggression against Cuba and its people.**

**The only threat to peace, security, and stability in the region, is the US government imposing it's "Our America" "Our backyard" policy to subjugate, to dictate, to strip resources, to mutilate sovereignty, and to rob independence.**

*The SACP condemns the latest US government's total blockade of fuel supplies to Cuba, an act of aggression against the Cuban people.*

*We recognise that these actions by the US government are intended to annihilate the Cuban state and provide Donald Trump with a semblance of credibility and legitimacy amidst a disastrous foreign policy that has come to typify his administration. The desperate return to the naked implementation of the Monroe Doctrine concerning the entire region of South America occurs in the context of a chaotic political situation for his administration and is a result of an empire in sharp decline.*

*The cruelty and barbarism inherent in this policy action are impossible to ignore and signify the violence and immorality of the US imperialist regime in office and indeed the immorality of the US state as a whole. The unashamed suppression of the entire region of South America and the looting of its resources is not only backward and corrupt but also a gross violation of human rights and international law.*

*As the SACP, we denounce in the strongest terms the continued aggression of the US towards Cuba and call for an immediate cessation of these activities, just as we have called for the end of all economic blockade against Cuba by the US. We stand with the Cuban people and the Cuban revolution at this critical moment in time.*



*Trump's "Board of Peace" to reconstruct Gaza into a concentration camp for Palestinians and a luxury resort for Zionists and their imperialist buddies, clearly has nothing to do with peace. It is a board of colonisation, aimed at cementing Israel's occupation, fragmentation, and domination of the Palestinian people and their land. It is the next stage in the attempt to erase the Palestinian people.*

## HAMBA KAHLE

# A red flag lowered: honouring the twin pillars of liberation, the Levy brothers



*Cde Leon Levy, 1929–2006. Upon his return to a democratic South Africa, his activism evolved but never ceased. He contributed vital historical analysis to Cosatu's submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, ensuring the complicity of business under apartheid was scrutinised.*

### RENEVA FOURIE

**The death of Cde Leon Levy, on 2 February, marks the closing of a profound chapter in South Africa's struggle history.**

**C**de Leon Levy's story was irrevocably entwined with that of his twin brother, Norman, who died in 2021. To speak of one is to invoke the other; a partnership of principle forged in the fire of anti-apartheid activism. Their journey of resistance forms a remarkable narrative of unwavering commitment.

Born in 1929 to Lithuanian immigrants, the Levy brothers' political consciousness was shaped by a family intimately acquainted with the scourge of European racism.

a partnership of principle forged in the fire of anti-apartheid activism. Their journey of resistance forms a remarkable narrative of unwavering commitment.

Born in 1929 to Lithuanian immigrants, the Levy brothers' political consciousness was shaped by a family intimately acquainted with the scourge of European racism. This awareness, translated to the South African context, propelled them into the fold of the Young Communist League by their mid-teens. Their activism was not a casual pursuit but a lifetime's vocation. By 17, they were members of the then Communist Party of South Africa, embedding themselves in the very heart of the organised resistance that the apartheid state so desperately feared.

That fear manifested concretely with the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. The state's brutal response eventually ensnared the twins in the massive Treason Trial of 1956, where they stood defiant among 156 accused. Their subsequent acquittal did not deter them; it deepened their resolve.

While Norman's path continued within the SACP and broader liberation structures, Leon's monumental contribution unfolded in the arena of worker solidarity. At just 24, he helped forge the South African Congress of Trade Unions, Sactu, a pioneering non-racial federation and the direct forerunner of Cosatu. His nine-year presidency was a masterclass in building unity across the colour line, a dangerous and radical act in that era.

His leadership placed him among the architects of the Congress of the People, where he stood as a signatory to the seminal Freedom Charter in Kliptown. This document, a blueprint for a just South Africa, bore his signature alongside icons like Luthuli, La Guma, Naicker, and Beylveld. The regime's retaliation was predictably harsh: banning orders, arrests under draconian laws, a stint in solitary confinement, and finally forced exile to Britain in 1963.

Yet, even from afar, the struggle remained his compass. He lent his energy to the international anti-apartheid movement, his voice never silenced.

Upon his return to a democratic South Africa, Leon Levy's activism evolved but never ceased. He contributed vital historical analysis to Cosatu's submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, ensuring the complicity of business under apartheid was scrutinised. His published works on labour relations stand as a testament to a lifetime of intellectual engagement alongside practical organising.

In dipping its red flag, the SACP rightly honours a stalwart. But the tribute transcends the individual. It is a salute to a generation of twins, literal and figurative, who stood shoulder to shoulder. The Party's call for working-class unity against capitalism and neoliberalism echoes the very project the Levy brothers dedicated their lives to building.

Their legacy is a reminder that the fight for a socialist future was never a solitary one; it was, and must continue to be, a collective endeavour, built on the unbreakable bonds of solidarity first championed by siblings like Norman and Leon Levy. Theirs was a life lived in tandem, a double helix of resistance woven into the very DNA of our liberation.

***Cde Reneva Fourie is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member.***

## CRIME

# The struggle against crime in the Western Cape



*Crime in the Western Cape continues to rise. According to SAPS's Second Quarter 2025/2026 crime statistics, crime increased by about 9.1%, with murder topping the list. The City of Cape Town leads nationally in murder rates.*

## LIZWI GEGULA

**The surge in violent crime and criminal activity has pushed the Western Cape into a deep safety and security crisis.**

**T**his has constrained economic growth and development, trapping the province in stagnation and subjecting citizens to sorrow and trauma for more than two decades, particularly in working-class communities, with little or no meaningful breakthrough in resolving this chronic crisis.

This situation can largely be attributed to the gradual resuscitation of the stubborn apartheid spatial design patterns, combined with the continued rollout of neoliberal policies, which is significantly contributing to the collapse of provincial governance.

The result has been systemic failure, aggravated by chronic underfunding, under-capacitation, and under-resourcing of government programmes and institutions, including the South African Police Services (SAPS).

The Provincial Department of Community Safety, not excluding the National Department of Safety and Security, has been severely weakened, limiting its ability to protect citizens through effective crime prevention and combating measures.

This has compromised development through extortion, business intimidation, and hostile takeovers, while deterring potential investors and driving away existing ones. Crime creates instability, discourages investment, and undermines social reproduction, leaving workers and the poor to bear the harsh consequences.

Crime in the province continues to rise. According to SAPS's Second Quarter 2025/2026 crime statistics, crime increased by about 9.1%, with murder topping the list. The City of Cape Town leads nationally in murder rates.

Most alarming is that the highest concentration of crime remains in working-class communities such as Philippi, Nyanga East, Mfuleni, Delft, and Gugulethu. These areas collectively contribute more than 80% of gun-related murders and other violent crimes in the metro.

At the centre of these crimes is the proliferation of firearms, some of which originate from state institutions. The City of Cape Town has failed to account for 18 firearms that went missing from Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) officers, raising serious concerns about accountability and transparency.

The result is devastating: at least nine deaths per day in the City of Cape Town alone.

The provincial government has yet to present a clear, coherent, and implementable strategy to effectively combat crime. Among the many manifestations of criminality is the continued recurrence of political killings, which disproportionately affect alliance-deployed representatives, particularly councillors.

These killings occur mainly in Black townships where the African National Congress governs, raising troubling questions: Why is the movement repeatedly targeted? Why do these cases remain unresolved? Why did it take so long for the state to establish a national commission of inquiry into criminality, political interference, and corruption within the justice system?

This is a demand the SACP raised more than a decade ago through mass action in the Western Cape, led by Cde Solly Mapaila when he was First Deputy General Secretary.

While some may regard this quest as subjective, there is a noticeable pattern in which many victims of political violence continue to be communists or individuals aligned with the SACP, a reality that warrants serious and unbiased investigation.

In the province, the SACP has been among the most vocal in condemning crime and demanding decisive action, not only because its members are affected, but because of its principled commitment to fight against injustice, defending the poor, and advancing social justice in defence of the democratic gains of our people.

The SACP, working in solidarity with progressive forces, including organised labour, community organisations, and neighbourhood watches, has proposed practical and feasible interventions. These include:

- The appointment of a Provincial Head of Crime Intelligence to strengthen early detection and prevention of criminal activity;
- The declaration of a provincial state of disaster in response to chronic violence and escalating gun-related murders, enabling the government to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks, mobilise resources faster, and mitigate austerity constraints; and
- The development and implementation of a comprehensive, actionable provincial crime-fighting strategy, including the full implementation of the Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza Commission recommendations.

The SACP's interventions are not merely theoretical rhetoric but grounded in Marxist-Leninist principles in its approach that emphasise the substantive balance of theory and practice, and a dialectical materialist approach to deal with social transformation.

The Party has actively contributed to the formation and strengthening of neighbourhood watches as part of community-driven solutions.

This work goes beyond policy proposals, it has been reinforced through revolutionary activism, including mass mobilisation of communities and organised labour, pickets, and marches demanding decisive action against crime, restoration of social justice, and the building of safer communities.

Communists must be encouraged and conscientised to remain at the forefront of these struggles and must never normalise crime, even when it becomes widespread and familiar.

Crime is rooted in the structural contradictions of capitalism, which both reproduces and profits from it – whether through its commission or through industries built around combating it.

This reality must never be justified, regardless of who benefits. Those driven solely by profit, regardless of its source, must be challenged and displaced through progressive, people-centred transformation led by the working class and its revolutionary organisations, including trade unions.

***Cde Lizwi Gegula is the SACP Western Cape provincial spokesperson.***

**INFORMAL ECONOMY**

# Carthorses: the economic backbone of vulnerable communities in South Africa



*Working horses and their handlers, known as ‘carties,’ have become an integral part of the informal economy. Stripped of their traditional markets, cart owners have adapted, focusing their efforts on the collection of scrap metal and garden refuse. Photo: Nicholas Ashby/ GroundUp*

**ALLISTER JACK**

**In the bustling streets of Diepsloot, Orlando, Cape Flats, Gqeberha and other towns in South Africa, the rhythmic clip-clop of hooves is more than a nostalgic sound – it is the heartbeat of a vital informal economy.**

**F**or thousands of residents in South Africa’s most vulnerable communities, cart horses are not just animals; they are essential partners in survival, driving a local industry that provides a primary source of income where formal jobs are scarce.

The sight of a horse-drawn cart is more than a nod to the past but a vital, modern-day economic engine.

Working horses and their handlers, known as ‘carties,’ have become an integral part of the informal economy, providing essential waste management and transportation services while supporting thousands of families.

**A history of resilience**

The history of carthorses in the different disadvantaged communities all over South Africa is deeply intertwined with the social history of the country.

In the early 20th century, carts were used for trading coal and transporting fresh produce, things like fish and meat, as well as scrap and building rubbish, a lucrative trade in rural communities.

However, during the 1970s, apartheid-era-forced removals saw these communities moved to the Cape Flats and the carthorses got more visible.

Stripped of their traditional markets, cart owners adapted, focusing their efforts on the collection of scrap metal and garden refuse. Today, this 'skarrel' industry remains a crucial, albeit informal, livelihood for men and women ranging from 15 to 70 years old.

Despite their importance, carthorse operators face significant hurdles. High maintenance costs for feed and shoeing can consume a large portion of daily earnings, which average around 287 rands per day. Furthermore, the industry has historically struggled with animal welfare issues due to a lack of resources.

While some may view the use of cart horses as outdated, in certain areas of our country they are a sustainable, low-carbon, and indispensable part of the city's infrastructure. They provide a vital, 'honest living' that allows many to escape the trap of poverty.

Without the carthorse industry, the informal recycling, fresh produce trade and transport, and other rural entrepreneurial sectors in South Africa would look very different, supporting fewer families and relying on more carbon-intensive alternatives.

### **Economic and community importance**

Working equines are a lifeline for people in resource-poor areas, often serving as the primary source of income for households where unemployment rates are high.

Livelihood benefit information studies we did amongst these communities show that over 89% of participants identified working with carts as their primary source of income.

This also started to build a broader job creation such as shoeing, repair of the harnesses and carts, stable management and other related studies.

Subsequently, the youth started to be more innovative to keep up with global technology development.

### **Supporting families**

The informal horse industry generates a lot of work in the communities yearly by means of breeding by owners and selling or sponsoring horses to community members who want to work for themselves.

Yearly statistics show that a single cart horse worker and owner could support multiple family members, as well as creating secondary and tertiary wellbeing outside of their families.

Township tourism also becomes an important income generator amongst the elderly where they take foreign tourists in the carts to the different attractions in and around their suburbs. Through this, they also keep their family and community culture and heritage alive.

For many young people, this industry is a deterrent against the street crime and gang violence that often plague high-unemployment areas.

The relationship between riders and their horses has a myriad of effects on individuals and communities by helping to build greater empathy within humans, along with creating alternative forms of entertainment with casual or competitive horse riding/showing competitions.

***Cde Allister Jack is the 1st Deputy Provincial Secretary in the Northern Cape.***

## MK SPECIAL OPS PROFILES

## Rashid: the meticulous commander



*Rashid with Wim Trengrove at the TRC hearings.*

## YUNUS CARRIM

**We continue our series of MK Special Ops profiles with this portrait of the unit's commander Rashid (Aboobaker Ismail), taken from *Attacking the Heart of Apartheid: The ANC's MK Special Operations Unit* by Yunus Carrim, published by Penguin Random House, 2025**

‘Meticulous’ is the word most used for Rashid, the only surviving commander of Special Ops. His ability to plan an operation, attention to the minutest detail, technical understanding of the materiel to be used, consideration of contingency arrangements, concerns about the safety of comrades, capacity to explain plans clearly and determination to see an operation through is what this word is meant to convey.

He had to be like this to play the key role he did in Special Ops. And when he later became MK's Chief of Ordnance. He first surfaced in the public domain in 1984 when the Sunday Times reported that the police were trying to locate in southern Africa an elusive ‘Carlos the Jackal’ type figure behind some of the big MK bombings. The reference to Carlos was unfortunate because of the very different contexts, aims, forms of armed struggle and other reasons. But it suggests how seriously the police took him.

Whatever Rashid's abilities, Special Ops achieved what it did because of the many cadres who took part in it and the guiding role of Slovo and Tambo. Rashid acknowledges this. And it's not as if Rashid was perfect. There were also glitches and gaps in the plans and their implementation, some of them inevitable, others not. But, overall, he certainly was formidable in his roles.

So, where did he surface from?

Aboobaker Ismail was born on 25 December 1954 in Newlands in Johannesburg. He came from a lower middle-class family, grew up in Vrededorp, his father

co-owning a small clothing shop and his mother attending to domestic responsibilities and sewing clothes for sale.

As explained (Chapter 16), Vrededorp or Fietas was a small hive of political activity in the 1950s. TIC leader Mosey Moola lived a street away from the Ismails and nearby was a TIC and ANC leader Babla Saloojee who was killed in detention in 1964. This led to a demonstration outside the police station. Rashid and other children were nudged into joining the crowd. They also distributed political literature.

In 1961, school children were given flags, sweets and medallions to celebrate South Africa's declaration of a republic. His father told the children about what the celebrations meant and threw the tokens into the fire. 'Actually, my mentor politically was my father.' He would also talk about communism and the SACP's Yusuf Dadoo.

One of the first places hit in the sabotage campaign was the Post Office, which was a street away from our house. Our political conscientisation started at a very early age.

Rashid would go by bus to school in Lenasia passing by Soweto and was struck by the poor living conditions there and Africans living in one area and Indians in another.

By the age of fifteen, he had read Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and banned books by left-wing South Africans.

I felt that I would do what I could for the liberation of the country, knowing I wasn't physically very strong. There was some innate sense that I will go out and contribute. How exactly and when, I couldn't say. In mosque, I often prayed that I would be given the opportunity to contribute. I felt that I would rather die than not succeed.

Over the years I've felt that there was some force that protected me. I know it may sound strange, but it's always been with me, and it's also in my gut. It's like an instinct and a drive to get things done with others.

He referred to 'a strange anecdote':

My father and mother had a spiritual guide who came to the house. My parents introduce us. He looks at me. He looks at my brother, Rashid Ahmed. But then he looks troubled, turns around and looks at me and says, but who is Rashid? So, I was mistaken for a Rashid even then. And this was long before I went into exile. Not that I believe in such things, but on the other hand, this is interesting ... In exile, I was asked for a pseudonym, and before realising it, said 'Rashid' and [ANC leader] Aziz Pahad said, 'okay, Rashid Patel' ...

Also, a fortune-teller reads her tarot cards, years before I left the country and says, 'You're going out of the country, you'll live in grave danger', and then clams up. For what all that's worth [laughter]. Partly you don't believe in it, she's talking nonsense, and partly where did this come from?

When I was in Special Ops, my mother dreams that I came into the country while I was actually in Durban doing reconnaissance.

In 1971, he attended Ahmed Timol's funeral, as well as a protest meeting thereafter.

Rashid was keen to study medicine but couldn't because of the restricted number of Indians given admission. So, from 1972 to 1974, he studied for a BSc degree at the University of Durban-Westville, which catered for Indians. He came into contact with Natal Indian Congress activists, some of whom had ANC links. They often talked about joining the armed struggle.

Back in Johannesburg, he was linked with the famous Naidoo family with a history of struggle from Gandhi's time. He took part in the activities of the ANC-oriented Human Rights Committee (HRC).

In 1975, he worked at a chemical firm. His science background and this work experience 'served me well in my later Special Ops years.'

On 10 December 1974, he distributed leaflets and attended an HRC public meeting. The security police detained and assaulted him, fuelling his belief that he should join the armed struggle. This was reinforced by the killing of school children on 16 June 1976. He told his father he wanted to study in London and left in July 1976. In January 1978, the ANC sent him to the GDR for training, including in advanced military engineering, use of explosives and sabotage.

During June 1978, he was sent to the MK camp at Funda in Angola as an instructor and in February 1979 became the chief instructor. He was appointed Special Ops Commissar in 1979. In April 1983, he was appointed Special Ops' Commander after Slovo was appointed MK Chief of Staff.

He was moved from Special Ops to become MK's Chief of Ordnance in August 1987. He took responsibility for the procurement, storage and distribution of materiel. He was among the senior MK commanders instructed in 1987 to go to the forward areas and meet with units operating inside the country, as far as possible, to reassert the ANC's policy against targeting civilians, following the 'Wimpy Bar' and other such attacks.

Rashid returned to the country permanently in mid-1991. He continued in his ordnance role, now arming self-defence units (SDUs) to protect people being attacked by Inkatha and the 'Third Force'.

He was tasked by Modise to lead the pre-negotiations and worked with Gebuza in the formal negotiations to integrate the liberation armies and the SADF to form the SANDF. In 1994 he was appointed as an SANDF major-general and in 1995 appointed Chief of Policy and Planning in the Department of Defence. In February 2000, he joined the South African Reserve Bank as Head of Currency and Protection Services, leaving in 2013.

Rashid and Slovo, though quite different personalities, were very complementary. Slovo was the big picture person, with the helicopter perspective, and Rashid the detailed planner. Slovo was 'able to bring Rashid back to reality when he was overenthusiastic or overzealous, or too meticulous or perfectionist and make him accept that people are not robots and have flaws,' says Van Hecken.

The South African Communist Party's Central Committee congratulated Rashid and Iqbal Shaik for their 'exemplary and honest' evidence at the TRC and said that:

the combatants' honesty indicated the political and moral basis on which MK conducted the struggle. The preparedness of these comrades to be completely open and to assume personal and collective responsibility is admirable.

It is in stark contrast to the abbreviated, self-serving evidence given by former leading members of the apartheid security forces when they have bothered to appear before the TRC at all.

Rashid is described as a perfectionist, brilliant, astute strategist, obsessed with detail, temperamental, demanding, stickler for making operatives account for money even in impossible underground circumstances, over-disciplinarian, imaginative, committed, loyal, very caring about the safety of the operatives, humane, aloof, lacking in human relations skill, not very sociable, intensely private and shy, among other issues.

Some say several of these things. The different emphases and views of cadres seem to be shaped by what they worked on with him, how long and how closely. All of these descriptions can apply to the same person. After all, what are we, if not multi-faceted? As Rashid is the only surviving and longest-serving Special Ops commander there's a lot more said about him than any of the other cadres.

'Every single thing you planned, he needed to check ... He was always looking for the best results ... standards were absolutely high - whether the operation was big or small.' He was 'an outstanding soldier...' said Muff Andersson, who worked with him on ordnance.

With his worry about 'the small, small detail' he got a stomach ulcer.

Pule saw him as:

a very alone type of person. He read a lot. You stop him, he listens to you and then he continues again. He's not someone who used to engage people a lot.

But in terms of the job, he was very strict. He used to discipline us. 'Hey guys, I want one, two, three. Please do this by next week. I want to get firm confirmation from you.' And then we would hit the ground.

In less expansive ways and with fewer words, Lentsoane, Matyobeni, Chamusso and other operatives say similar things.

'Perhaps he's a bit too closed, he doesn't talk very much. You must be his lover probably to know more about him [laughter],' says de Jonge.

Passtoors says that he was:

demanding but we shouldn't underestimate how precious that was ... [He] pushes you to constantly learn and surpass yourself ... [He had] instincts that few of us had ... All commanders have to be tough, also to themselves.

On accounting for monies, he 'seemed worse than Comrade Nkobi [ANC Treasurer-General] [laughter].'

Rashid despised sloppiness or carelessness, it was said, as it could mean operatives being arrested or killed.

Passtoors described how she found him very distressed.

He pointed to what he was writing and said that was the most terrible task he had. A comrade had been killed, and he had to write to the family. He was truly miserable.

Rashid 'was only about thirty-one and he had such a big burden on his shoulders,' says Robert McBride.

Which thirty-one-year-old could do what he did?... He would take you through things minute by minute... He was like a bigger brother to us, concerned about us. I think Rashid should get an award from the president.

On a lighter note, Van Hecken says that Rashid was jailed for about seventeen days for being illegally in Swaziland. He was deported to Mozambique.

The first thing he did was lock himself in the bathroom for almost two hours to scrub himself completely clean [laughter]! I remember it, because we were having a severe water shortage and no running water between five p.m. and five a.m. [laughter].

All the Special Ops internationalists interviewed speak very highly of him. Kasrils says he was very good at winning them over. Rehmann even says he was 'quite a sweetie.' A commander? That's probably a first ...

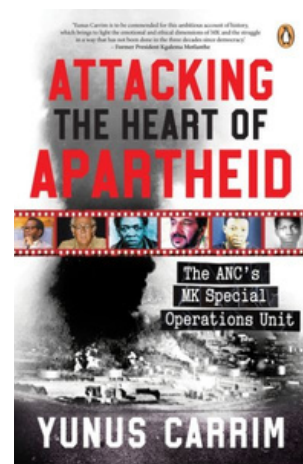
Despite being targeted by the security police and several narrow escapes, Rashid managed to survive. How?

You have to be constantly alert to danger and when things start going wrong move quickly from the position you're in. Have back-up positions to move to. Then reassess the situation. Flexibility and agility are key to survival.

All of us have our weaknesses and are usually more multi-faceted and complex than we think. Rashid is no exception. As is clear, some put his weaknesses down to his being a perfectionist and the pressures of the armed struggle. Others think it's innate to him. Maybe both were reflected in different situations.

The writer found him articulate, erudite, with a capacity to explain issues very clearly and simply. His overt demeanour is of a soft-spoken, gentle, calm person, with a soothing voice of sorts. But simmering underneath is a well of anger and frustrations. And occasionally flashes of temper.

Although he says that he acknowledges criticisms of Special Ops, he is far too defensive of it. Mac Maharaj has it that Rashid 'takes every criticism of Special Ops personally. A commander has got to take a lot of nonsense. I also think Rashid was short-changed after 1994.'



*Attacking the Heart of Apartheid: The ANC's MK Special Operations Unit by Yunus Carrim is essential reading for anyone who wants to learn about the connections between military and political strategy and tactics during the liberation struggle.*

So etched is his Special Ops identity that he's still called 'Rashid' by many.

As with some other cadres, there is an almost inevitable trajectory leading Rashid into MK. His being mistaken for his brother Ahmed Rashid and other experiences in his youth he mentioned suggest an almost predestination quality about it.

As with others, he hasn't been sufficiently acknowledged for the very significant role he played in MK and, after 1994, wasn't allocated roles befitting this contribution and his considerable skills. A view held by several others too.

Speaking with academic Pdraig O'Malley, Rashid said during the struggle there was : a sense of purpose, a determination. For as long as the enemy was there, we knew what we had to do, so everybody was very focused. At the same time, I think people realised these were the lives we led and you made the most of it. You also lived a fairly wild life.

Does he miss that struggle life? The certainty of the goal being achieved some day? As against the uncertainties and rudderlessness of the ANC and country these days? Probably yes and no.

***Cde Yunus Carrim is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member.***

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