



# UMSEBENZI

ONLINE

*Struggle  
Solidarity  
Socialism!*



- *Chris Hani Month*
- *Freedom Day*

**DEFEND GUBA! FREE PALESTINE!**

# CONTENTS

## EDITORIAL

**1. Freedom is not yet won – and they knew it when they died**

## SOLOMON MAHLANGU COMMEMORATION

**2. Build people's power, self-reliance and a people's economy – SACP message to the Solomon Mahlangu Memorial Lecture**

Tinyiko Ntini

## CHRIS HANI MONTH

**3. Chris Hani: 'I never faltered in my belief in socialism'**

**4. Chris Hani timeline: A revolutionary life**

**5. The People's Red Caravan advances the revolutionary legacy of Chris Hani**

Reneva Fourie

**6. The flame that capital could not extinguish**

Aviwe Rapelang Mohapi

## FREEDOM DAY – THE NDR

**7. A class analysis of the democratic transition in South Africa**

Lukhanyo "Bhanda" Mtshingana

## FREEDOM DAY – WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

**8. The quiet violence of being protected only on paper: the democratic deficits SA women live with**

Sarah Mokwebo

**9. Cosatu feminist school and gender conference spotlight class, race and gender struggle**

Thulile Kumalo

## FREEDOM DAY – INTERNATIONALISM

**10. A commemoration of solidarity and internationalism**

Hlengiwe Nkonyane and Tenanile Mngomezulu

## SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

**11. SA must step up to the plate on Cuba\***

Ronnie Kasrils and Mark Waller

## SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

**12. Legalising the killing of prisoners – a turning point in Israel's detention system**

Hanan Jarrar

**13. Palestinian Prisoners' Day 2026**

Embassy of Palestine



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EDITORIAL

# Freedom is not yet won – and they knew it when they died



*The struggle for Cuba and Palestine is a united struggle against imperialism!*

On 6 April 1979, Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu was hanged by the apartheid state. He was 23 years old. His last words were a political directive: “My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.”

On 10 April 1993, Chris Hani was assassinated outside his home in Dawn Park, Boksburg. He was 50. His last public words, given in a March 1993 interview, were a political directive too: “I never faltered in my belief in socialism. For me that belief is strong because that is still the life of the majority of the people with whom I share a

common background.”

This edition of Umsebenzi Online is published between those two anniversaries, in April 2026–Freedom Month. It is fitting, then, that this edition asks the hardest question the working class can ask: what, exactly, has been won? And what remains to be fought for?

The answer runs through every article in this edition, and it is not comfortable.

The NDR analysis by Comrade Lukhanyo Mtshingana, the class reckoning delivered by

Comrade Aviwe Mohapi, and the Mahlangu commemoration address by Acting National Organiser Cde Tinyiko Ntini—these three pieces form the theoretical backbone of the edition. Taken together, their argument is blunt: the 1994 breakthrough was real and must never be diminished. Universal suffrage, formal equality, the right to organise—these were won through sacrifice, including the sacrifice of Kalushi and Hani. But monopoly capital, pressured into surrendering political power, retained the economic base. The mines, the banks, the commercial farms, the key industries; these did not change hands. The Reconstruction and Development Programme was replaced by GEAR in 1996. And thirty-two years later, South Africa remains the world’s most unequal society.

Hani’s warning, issued before his death, reads today as prophecy: “Our biggest enemy would be what we do in the field of socio-economic restructuring.” The flame capital could not extinguish with a bullet; it has been trying — with considerable success — to smother through policy. That is the crisis of the NDR. And it is the crisis the SACP’s 2026 local government election campaign is positioned to address.

The Chris Hani timeline in this edition is worth reading slowly. It is not nostalgia. It is a measuring stick — a record of what a revolutionary life looked like when theory and practice were inseparable, when the armed struggle was also a class struggle, when cadres were required to understand why they were fighting, not merely how. The People’s Red Caravan, as Cde Reneva Fourie argues in her contribution, is the living heir to that tradition. The HHH campaign (Housing, Health, Hunger) is not a programme of charity. It is a programme of power. Sovereignty begins in a community that feeds itself, houses itself, and refuses to wait on a state captured by capital.

Two pieces in this edition speak to the particular character of women’s freedom (or its absence). Comrade Sarah Mokwebo’s essay is remarkable in its form. It begins with a taxi driver hitting her car in the Johannesburg CBD and driving away without pausing. What unfolds is not a complaint.

It is a class analysis conducted in real time, from inside the body of a Black woman navigating a city that tolerates impunity as policy. She writes: “That small act of insisting, of refusing to absorb it and move on, is itself a political act: a quiet fight for my country, as a woman demanding that democracy be applied evenly to everyone.” This is political writing of the highest order — the personal made structural, the incident made indictment. Comrade Thulile Kumalo’s report from the Cosatu feminist school and gender conference completes the picture: capitalism and patriarchy are not parallel oppressions but interlocking ones, and the emancipation of women cannot be deferred to the day after socialism.

The internationalism in this edition is direct and urgent. Cde Ronnie Kasrils and Cde Mark Waller write about Cuba with the authority of those who know what solidarity looks like when it is more than words. Trump’s threats to “take” Cuba, a sovereign nation, are not bluster. They are the same logic that drove the Bay of Pigs, the same logic that dismembered Venezuela’s oil supply, the same logic that is daily bombing Iran. South Africa owes Cuba a debt that cannot be paid in silence. President Ramaphosa spoke with passion in Barcelona about Palestine and was applauded. He did not add his name to the Brazil-Mexico-Spain declaration on Cuba. That absence is a political choice, and this publication names it as such.

On Palestine: this edition carries two pieces of exceptional moral weight. The Palestinian Ambassador to South Africa, Cde Hanan Jarrar, writes directly about the new Israeli law legalising the execution of Palestinian detainees — in a military court system where conviction rates consistently exceed 95%, and in some reports reach 99%. This is not a justice system. It is a killing pipeline. The Palestinian Prisoners’ Day statement from the Embassy documents what is being done to Marwan Barghouti — beaten, denied medical care, mauled by a military dog — and asks the question the entire international community must answer: if this is done to the most visible prisoner, what is being done to those whose names we do not know?

Kalushi Mahlangu was 23 when they hanged him. He had not corrupted the movement. He had not defended greed. He had not sat at the dinner table with his colonisers. He stood against injustice and paid with his life.

The question this Freedom Month asks, and that this edition refuses to let go unanswered, is simple:

are we honouring that sacrifice? Not in ceremony. In practice. In policy. In whose interests the state actually serves.

***The struggle continues. So does our obligation to wage it.***

**SOLOMON MAHLANGU COMMEMORATION**

**Build people's power, self-reliance  
and a people's economy – SACP  
message to the Solomon Mahlangu  
Memorial Lecture**



*Statue of Cde Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu in the permanent Long March to Freedom exhibition in Tshwane.*

**Key points**

- The anniversary of Cde Solomon Mahlangu’s murder falls at a crisis time for the NDR and the working class.
- Neoliberal strategies are weakening the democratic state, boosting class inequality.
- We must unite against the hijacking of the South African revolution, commending Gauteng structures for rejecting coalition with the far right.
- Glorifying betrayal dishonours Cde Mahlangu’s sacrifice.

We are here to commemorate the life of a communist and a soldier of the people’s liberation army, uMkhonto we Sizwe. Little did he know that beyond political freedom, we would have the responsibility to wage another fight against a neoliberal economic trajectory that keeps weakening the democratic state and reducing it to a feeder of capital.

The moment requires a united working class that will seize it through a militant and powerful socialist movement of the workers and poor, compelling us to liberate the economy of our people from capitalism, with its intense class divisions that breed poverty, unemployment and inequality exerted through ‘Operation Vulindlela’.

**TINYIKO NTINI**

**We are here to remember and commemorate one of the most outstanding young revolutionary cadres of his time, Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, on this 6 April, the 47th commemoration of his brutal hanging.**

**W**hen you hear the song, “Ulele, Ulele uSolly, Solomon Mahlangu”, it would be an expression of revolutionary morality; of paying tribute to a young cadre who paid the ultimate price for this revolution with his own life. In his own words, when facing the brutality of the apartheid regime, he said, “My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.”

We are here for his honour and commemoration, in challenging times within the movement and in the face of trying times for our National Democratic Revolution. We are again witnessing a deep systemic crisis of capitalism and what Lenin characterised as the highest stage of capitalism, which is imperialism.

**Fight imperialism**

The world is changing, and we are indeed part of that change. The anticipated emergence of a multipolar global order cannot be delayed further. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the escalation of imperialist wars undermining international law and the sovereignty of countries exerted through US imperialism.

*“We are here to commemorate the life of a communist and a soldier of the people’s liberation army uMkhonto we Sizwe”*

The apartheid government denied Kalushi his own education so that they could later label him a rebel, a terrorist and other names just for his conscious stance of fighting oppression in the people’s quest for justice. Little did he know that today, when you stand against the injustice, you are seen as and labelled a reactionary.

**Sharper class struggle**

During his time, capitalism had created a racialised class-divided society where education was also used as a weapon to oppress the lower class and empower the upper class, and both classes were composed based on race. Yet again, capitalism has mastered the art of class divisions in society, with education as a tool to empower its mission and, this time around, has created an elite pact of former revolutionaries and an educated system commodified both in terms of value and curriculum content to maintain the status quo. Despite this, we saw it necessary to hand over the critical phase of our education system (basic education) to the enemies of our revolution.

Little did Kalushi know that today we would be co-governing with his erstwhile class enemy and those who hanged him. We indeed commit to continuing the fight against what you opposed, and we dare not fail the working class, as you mandated us to continue the struggle.

Today, his own peers who could not take the same decision that he took are the ones destroying the movement of our people through corruption, which emanates from greed and this reactionary tender system that has eaten the moral fibre of the liberators who today are not ashamed to sit at the dinner table with our erstwhile colonisers.

### **Rescue the revolution**

As we remember Solomon Mahlangu, we appreciate the political posture of the Gauteng leadership and its regions, who continue to preserve what is left of our movement by rejecting the racist and extreme right-wing party from being part of their minority government and councils. We will never work with our class enemies or keep quiet when political choices are turned into a tactical manoeuvre.

*“We cannot glorify the betrayal of the revolution and its achievements, which came about because of the fight waged by revolutionaries like Kalushi.”*

The working class continues to face the brunt of the brutality of capitalism through imperialist wars, policy choices and deliberate indecisiveness for a radical path of our National Democratic Revolution. The moment to rescue the revolution of the masses of the working class and the poor is now, and thus we call all left forces to unite in defence of the South African revolution that is about to be hijacked by our erstwhile colonisers.

Little did Solomon know that the water he drank

freely would be privatised, and that what he fought for was on the brink of being handed back to those he stood against.

*“Little did Kalushi know that today we would be co-governing with his erstwhile class enemy and those who hanged him.”*

Solomon Mahlangu was tried from 7 November 1977 to 1 March 1978 for charges associated with the attacks in Goch Street in June 1977. He was therefore charged with two counts of murder and

several charges under the Terrorism Act.

He was not accused of corruption and did not defend greed, and neither was he involved in any activity that would have afforded oligarchs an opportunity to capture the people’s government. He was intolerant of injustice against his people. While we fight for our sovereignty, on the other hand, we adopt ‘Harvard-inspired economic policies’.

### **Preserve Kalushi’s legacy!**

We remain inspired by what Mao Tse-tung defined. We are not saying that revolutionaries who fought for the liberation of this country should not be honoured; what we are saying is that if you were a revolutionary yesterday but a reactionary today, we will acknowledge you as a revolutionary yesterday, but treat you as the reactionary you are today. We cannot glorify the betrayal of the revolution and its achievements, which came about because of the fight waged by revolutionaries like Kalushi.

To the family, the Party: will be by your side, and we commit to implementing what you requested us to do in preserving the legacy of Kalushi!

Let us work as a collective to advance our democratic gains, end the tenderisation of the state and in-source basic services.

**Amandla!**

**Long live the undying spirit of Kalushi Solomon Mahlangu!**

**Cde Tinyiko Ntini is a member of the Central Committee and the Acting National Organiser**

# CHRIS HANI MONTH



**CHRIS HANI MONTH**

**Chris Hani: 'I never faltered in my belief in socialism'**



Now I am sure the next question is, why did I join the CP? Why was I not just satisfied with the ANC?

I belonged to a world, in terms of my background, which suffered I think the worst extremes of apartheid. A poor rural area where the majority of working people spent their time in the compounds, in the hostels, away from their families. A rural area where there were no clinics and probably the nearest hospital was 50kms. Generally, a life of poverty with the basic things unavailable. Where our mothers and our sisters would walk 3kms and even 6kms, whenever there was a drought, to fetch water. Where the only fuel available was going 5, 6kms away to cut wood and bring it back. This was the sort of life.

Now I had seen the lot of black workers, extreme forms of exploitation. Slave wages, no

trade union rights, and for me the appeal of socialism was extremely great. Where it was said that workers create wealth but in the final analysis, they get nothing. They get peanuts in order to survive and continue working for the capitalists.

So it was that simple approach, that simple understanding, which was a product of my own observation in addition to theory. I didn't get involved with the workers' struggle out of theory alone. It was a combination of theory and my own class background. I never faltered in my belief in socialism despite all the problems currently. For me that belief is strong because that is still the life of the majority of the people with whom I share a common background.

*From an interview with Cde Chris Hani by Luli Callinicos, March 1993*

### Chris Hani timeline: A revolutionary life

- **1942** — Thembisile Martin Chris Hani born on 28 June in Cofimvaba, Eastern Cape, into a poor working-class family, the fourth of six children.
- **1957** — Joins the ANC Youth League at 15, politically awakened by the lived brutality of apartheid and the influence of his deeply religious but socially conscious father.
- **1961** — Joins the newly formed uMkhonto we Sizwe and the SACP, recognising that national liberation without class struggle would leave the black working class in chains.
- **1962** — Graduates from Fort Hare University with a BA in English and Latin — one of the few institutions accessible to black students — where his Marxist convictions deepen.
- **1967** — Takes part in the Wankie Campaign, fighting alongside ZIPRA guerrillas through Rhodesia in a bold but costly attempt to infiltrate South Africa — a baptism of fire that forges his military credentials.
- **1969** — Authors the Memorandum, a courageous internal critique of ANC leadership corruption and stagnation in exile, nearly costing him his life but cementing his reputation as a principled revolutionary.
- **1970s** — Rises through MK ranks, eventually becoming Chief of Staff, combining military strategy with rigorous political education — insisting cadres understand that the armed struggle was simultaneously a class struggle.
- **1974** — Settles in Lesotho as a key MK underground operative, building cross-border networks and radicalising a new generation of South African exiles and activists.
- **1982** — Survives a murderous attack by apartheid-backed assassins in Maseru, Lesotho, where South African operatives kill ANC members — Cde Hani escapes, but the regime's determination to destroy him intensifies.
- **1990** — Returns to South Africa after the unbanning of the ANC and SACP, immediately plunging into mass political work in the townships and emerging as the most popular leader among the black working class and youth.
- **1991** — Elected to the ANC National Executive Committee, positioning himself as a leading voice for socialist transformation within the liberation movement and a firm counterweight to creeping compromise. Succeeds Cde Joe Slovo as General Secretary of the SACP.
- **1992-93** — Emerges as the people's leader commanding enormous support among workers and the poor precisely because he refuses to decouple national liberation from economic emancipation.
- **10 April 1993** — Assassinated outside his home in Dawn Park, Boksburg, by Janusz Walus, a Polish far-right immigrant acting in concert with Conservative Party politician Clive Derby-Lewis — a counter-revolutionary act designed to derail the democratic transition.
- **Legacy** — Cde Hani's death nearly plunged South Africa into civil war, forcing the apartheid regime to agree on a date for the first non-racial election (27 April). But his life's work endures as a standing indictment of the unfinished revolution — his insistence that freedom must be measured by working-class control of the economy, not the race of those in office, is more relevant now than ever.

**CHRIS HANI MONTH –  
PEOPLE’S RED CARAVAN**

**The People’s Red  
Caravan advances the  
revolutionary legacy  
of Chris Hani**

**PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT  
FOR SELF-RELIANCE  
AND SUSTAINABILITY!**



**Key points**

- The PRC is the Party’s biggest grassroots programme.
- The PRC is pushing the Housing, Health and Hunger (HHH) campaign.
- NHI implementation is central to the HHH health pillar.
- The PRC must be a fixed part of the popular organisation, using Cde Hani’s revolutionary legacy.

**RENEVA FOURIE**

**The People’s Red Caravan is all about Chris Hani’s idea of a vanguard party that’s connected to everyday working-class life.**

**A**pril, Chris Hani Month, calls upon the SACP and the broader working-class movement to deepen both reflection and action. We commemorate Comrade Chris Hani, our former General Secretary, whose life was defined by dis-

ciplined revolutionary practice, unwavering commitment to the working class, and a profound belief in the transformative power of organised mass struggle. His assassination on 10 April 1993 was a counter-revolutionary act aimed at derailing the democratic breakthrough.

His legacy endures in the living struggles of the people and in the organisational work of the Party.

The SACP's People's Red Caravan stands as a concrete expression of Cde Chris's legacy. Launched in June 2025 in Motlhaba Village in the North West Province, followed by activations in Matibidi Village in Mpumalanga, Mqhekezweni Village in the Eastern Cape, Ganspan in the Northern Cape, and Hlokozi Village in Moses Mabhida (KwaZulu-Natal), the People's Red Caravan is a nationwide programme grounded in practical engagement. It demonstrates in action what building socialism from below entails in the current phase of our struggle. In this sense, it is also an expression of socialism with South African characteristics, rooted in the specific historical, social and economic conditions of our country and shaped by the lived realities of our people.

### Mass vanguard

At its core, the People's Red Caravan affirms Hani's conception of a vanguard party with a mass character. The Party must be rooted in the daily experiences of the working class and the poor. The Red Caravan is a process of working with communities through sustained presence, engaging households and local structures, and confronting lived realities through collective organisation. This is the practical expression of a communist party that lives among the people and learns through struggle, advancing a form of socialist practice that emerges organically from South African conditions.

The programme also advances the strategic orientation of the Housing, Health, Hunger (HHH) campaign, which Cde Chris championed. These pillars remain central to the material conditions of the working class. The People's Red Caravan carries forward this tradition by focusing on food security, food sovereignty, community safety, access to healthcare, education, infrastructure development

and the right to work. These sites of struggle form the basis upon which popular power is built and sustained, while giving concrete form to a socialism that is grounded in local realities and collective needs.

### The struggle for National Health Insurance

In this context, the question of health demands focused attention. The struggle to implement the National Health Insurance is a decisive component in advancing the gains of the democratic revolution. It is integral to realising healthcare as a public good accessible to all, particularly the working class and the poor, who continue to face systemic barriers to quality care.

The Party must intensify mobilisation for the roll-out of National Health Insurance, linking it directly to the Health pillar of the HHH campaign. Through the People's Red Caravan, communities are engaged not only in addressing immediate health challenges but also in building the political consciousness necessary to advance universal healthcare as a fundamental right within a socialist trajectory shaped by South African conditions.

*“The People's Red Caravan is a nationwide programme grounded in practical engagement.”*

The People's Red Caravan further reflects Hani's emphasis on self-reliance as a critical dimension of socialist construction. The programme promotes community-based initiatives in food production and local development, grounded in collective effort and solidarity. This work strengthens the capacity of communities to address hunger and poverty through organised means, reinforcing the principle that transformation is driven by the agency of the working class itself. In doing so, it advances a practical and locally grounded expression of socialism with South African characteristics.

Equally significant is the Red Caravan's contribution to building working-class unity. Hani con-

sistently advanced the need for cohesion within the liberation movement and the broader progressive forces. The People's Red Caravan creates spaces for collective participation, fostering unity at the community level and reinforcing the role of the Party as an organiser of the working class across different sectors.

*“The struggle to implement the National Health Insurance is a decisive component in advancing the gains of the democratic revolution.”*

The People's Red Caravan is the contemporary expression of the HHH campaign. It translates Chris Hani's revolutionary approach into present conditions, advancing a practice rooted in the struggles of the people and directed towards socialist transformation. It is also a clear expression of socialism with South African characteristics in practice.

**Entrench and deepen the PRC**

The challenge before the Party is to ensure that this mode of work becomes sustained and deeply embedded. The People's Red Caravan must continue to develop as a long-term programme of social mobilisation, building enduring structures of popular organisation and advancing the socialist project systematically. This requires organisational discipline, political clarity and consistent engagement rooted in the concrete conditions of our society.

In commemorating Chris Hani, the Party must continue to build, expand and consolidate this work. Through the People's Red Caravan, his legacy remains an active force in the ongoing struggle for socialism.

***Cde Fourie is a member of the Central Committee and Politburo***

**CHRIS HANI MONTH – PEOPLE’S RED CARAVAN**

# The flame that capital could not extinguish



*Portrait of Chris Hani by the Indian artist Ramchandran Viswanathan.*

**Key points**

- Cde Hani was a committed Marxist-Leninist who saw national liberation and class struggle as inseparable — for him, the NDR was only the first stage toward socialism.
- The 1994 breakthrough won political rights but monopoly capital strategically surrendered political power while retaining control of mines, banks, farms and industry.
- GEAR replaced the RDP in 1996, entrenching neoliberalism.
- The NDR has stalled: 32 years on – unemployment, poverty and landlessness still ravage working-class communities.
- We mustn't Alliance but radically reconfigure it for working-class hegemony, land expropriation, strategic nationalisation and a developmental state serving workers, not capital.

a committed Marxist-Leninist who saw national liberation and class struggle as inseparable. In his final interview, he explained why he joined the SACP: “The appeal of socialism was extremely great... workers create wealth but in the final analysis they get nothing.”

*“True freedom, he argued, must be judged by deep socio-economic transformation, not merely by the race of those holding political office.”*

For Hani, the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) was only the first stage toward socialism. He insisted the struggle must continue beyond national democracy: “The struggle should continue beyond the stage of national democratic for socialism.” True freedom, he argued, must be judged by deep socio-economic transformation, not merely by the race of those holding political office.

**AVIWE RAPELANG MOHAPI**

**Thirty-three years after his brutal assassination, the revolutionary spirit of Comrade Chris Hani erupted once more as we commemorate one of South Africa’s greatest revolutionaries.**

**O**n 10 April, in Mpumalanga’s Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, his undying legacy blazed brightly, reminding a new generation that the flame of working-class resistance cannot be extinguished by bullets or by capital.

Cosatu First Deputy President, Cde Mike Shingange, urged the burying of petty egos and the rebuilding of genuine Alliance unity. SACP Deputy National Chairperson Cde Thulas Nxesi apologised to the Hani family for recent organisational failures and reaffirmed the SACP’s commitment to reconfigure, not weaken, the Alliance – with working-class interests at the centre of power.

As Freedom Day approaches, we revisit Comrade Chris Hani’s life and ideas for a sharp class analysis of South Africa’s democratic transition.

**A true revolutionary**

Chris Hani was more than a liberation hero. He was

**Liliesleaf Farm and the struggle**

Cde Hani and other leaders waged the armed struggle, turning the site into a revolutionary nerve centre of defiance. The farm embodied the unbreakable alliance of ANC, SACP and the working class in the battle to destroy ‘Colonialism of a Special Type’.

Hani rose to become MK Chief of Staff, combining military courage with sharp ideological clarity. He refused to separate armed action from political education, teaching cadres that the battle against apartheid was also a battle against capitalist exploitation.

**What was won in 1994**

The 1994 democratic breakthrough was a historic victory. Under Hani’s generation, the black working class and poor defeated the apartheid regime. They secured universal suffrage, formal equality, and the right to organise openly. These achievements must never be underestimated.

*“Progress should be measured not by BEE scorecards or GDP figures, but by whether the black working class is gaining real control over the means of production.”*

### **What capital conceded and retained**

However, a clear class analysis reveals the limits of 1994. Monopoly capital, pressured by mass struggle, sanctions and MK operations, strategically retreated. It surrendered political power but retained control of the economic base – the mines, banks, commercial farms and key industries.

The call for nationalisation of monopoly industry was abandoned. The Reconstruction and Development Programme was replaced by the neoliberal GEAR strategy in 1996. Privatisation, labour flexibility and “investor confidence” became dominant. Capital shifted from overt racial domination to a deracialised neoliberal system that coopted a small black elite while keeping the black working class super-exploited.

### **NDR in theory and practice**

In Marxist-Leninist theory, the NDR aims to create a national democratic state led by the working class in alliance with the peasantry and progressive forces. Its goal is to dismantle imperialism’s grip and monopoly capital to clear the road to socialism.

In practice, the NDR has stalled. Thirty-two years after democracy, South Africa remains the world’s

most unequal society. Unemployment, poverty and landlessness still ravage working-class communities. Hani’s warning remains prophetic: “Our biggest enemy would be what we do in the field of socio-economic restructuring.”

### **Reconfiguring the Alliance for the second phase**

As Cde Nxesi stressed, the task is not to abandon the Alliance but to radically reconfigure it. This requires restoring working-class hegemony, deepening internal democracy, and advancing the second, more radical phase of the NDR. Key steps include expropriation of land without compensation, nationalisation of strategic sectors where needed, and building a capable developmental state that serves workers and the poor rather than white monopoly capital and international finance.

### **Hani’s call to today’s revolutionaries**

Chris Hani taught us that real freedom demands working-class control of the economy, not just political positions. He called for vibrant grassroots democracy, strong unions and socialist consciousness. Progress should be measured not by BEE scorecards or GDP figures, but by whether the black working class is gaining real control over the means of production.

Hani’s flame continues to illuminate the path. The NDR must be rescued from neoliberal capture and firmly directed toward socialism.

Long live Cde Chris Hani! The struggle continues!

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

**FREEDOM DAY – THE NDR**

# A class analysis of the democratic transition in South Africa



*Day of Freedom April 1994' beadwork by Jane Makhubele.*

**What's the issue?**

- SA's massive inequality remains: the wealthiest 20% has 60% of the national income.
- The negotiated transition entrenched the constitutional protection of private property.
- Gains were made in water, housing and education access, but these still fall short of Chris Hani's vision.

**LUKHANYO "BHANDA" MTSHINGANA**

**Despite the NDR, economic power remains in the hands of white monopoly capital.**

Chris Thembisile Martin Chris Hani famously said: "Socialism is not about big concepts and heavy theory, Socialism is about decent shelter for those who are homeless, it is about water for those who have no safe drinking water. It is about health care; it is about a life of dignity for the old, it is about overcoming the huge divide between urban and rural areas, it is about a decent education for all our people, Socialism is about rolling back the tyranny of the market."

Unfortunately, Chris Hani did not live to see his dream of socialism in South Africa as he was assassinated outside his home in Dawn Park at Boksburg on 10 April 1993 by Janusz Walus, a far-right white supremacist and anti-communist.

## Deepening the NDR

The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is a two-phase revolutionary theory where the first is expressed as a goal to achieve total national independence through the dismantling of apartheid and the development of democracy. Step two deals with the societal change to build socialism.

The NDR bonded the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Lenin in “The State and Revolution” (1917) explains that socialism cannot be implemented in a singular way, as countries are different in the challenges they face. He argues against the idea of a single rigid model of the construction of socialism. The NDR, as a class-struggle doctrine, should be tested on how it will achieve socialism by promoting a national developmental state that includes different classes.

*“The NDR, as a class-struggle doctrine, should be tested on how it will achieve socialism.”*

In South Africa, the oppressor was described through the lens of monopoly capital when it comes to key sectors of the economy. We need to ask ourselves as this generation if the plan was to eliminate capital or deracialise it and lead it towards a development purpose.

The NDR’s theoretical proposition was a state driven approach, redistributive approach when it comes to land reform and achieving of an industrial strategy through a mixed economy.

It has been 32 years since our country obtained freedom from apartheid rule and saw the ANC take power with its Alliance partners, the SACP and Cosatu, and the mass democratic movement as a whole, where the country saw the first black president in Cde Nelson Mandela.

## Combatting inequality

After 32 years, the country continues to suffer from inequality, as per World Bank estimates, as it continues to be one of the most unequal countries with a Gini coefficient of 63% (0.63) with the wealthiest who form 20% of the population capturing 60% of the county’s income while 40% attributed to the poor just surviving on just over 10%.

The economic power remains heavily concentrated with large businesses taking up to 76% of the market share, with 95% of small-medium enterprises sharing or contributing only 24% to the total business in the country. Ordinary black South Africans still struggle to make it to the mainstream economy due to the existence of uneven sectoral transformation in the country.

### Unresolved monopoly capital crisis

From a class point of view, the working class in the country succeeded in the defeat of apartheid and dealt with the oppressive political and legal systems that came with the regime, but economic power remains elusive. The black working class got the right to contest political power, as well as the rights to protest, strike, and organise as individuals and unions, and to form social movements.

The negotiated state of South Africa shows evidence of strong constitutional protection of private property for monopoly capital, overwhelmingly male and white, and betrayal of the concept of large-scale nationalisation, which has led to reassurances for investors and continued capital accumulation for the elite.

It is clear that our political democracy, while bringing forth some important advances, has contributed to the forestalling of a socialist revolution, while capitalist property relations remain strictly maintained by the previous owners.

The executive suit was surrendered, capital was restructured by financialisation, globalisation and the co-opting of a black elite via Black Economic Empowerment policies, and this shows that democracy has not presented a systemic threat

to the system, which continues to exclude the majority. These conditions compelled the SACP to contest elections independently to increase the voices of the working class and the poor in this terrain.

There are, however, some successes that have been seen; access to clean water and sanitation has been improved in the country, access to education, especially in the tertiary sector, increased through assistance from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, housing, and an increased black middle class who participate in the economy.

*“Democracy has not presented a systemic threat to the system that continues to exclude the majority.”*

***Cde Lukhanyo “Bhanda” Mtshingana is a PhD student at Peking University, China, in National Development Studies, majoring in theoretical economics, and an Eastern Cape PEC member of YCLSA***

**FREEDOM DAY – WOMEN IN STRUGGLE**

# The quiet violence of being protected only on paper: the democratic deficits SA women live with



*Perhaps that is where democracy lives for women. Not in its outcomes, but in the exhausting, defiant act of continuing to demand it.*

## **Key points**

- A simple hit-and-run in the centre of Johannesburg shows how women are treated every day.
- Taxi ranks are a contradiction for women in South Africa: economically important but unsafe.

- Women rely on these public spaces, which are not well regulated, because they have no other choice.
- The rules are there, but there's no one to make sure they're followed, and no one takes responsibility when things go wrong.
- Refusing to accept injustice is a political act: demanding that democracy be applied evenly.

**SARAH MOKWEBO**

**On one ordinary afternoon in the Johannesburg CBD, a few days into Freedom Month, a taxi driver hit my car and drove away. He abruptly changed lanes without indicating, without even a glance at the cars around him, and continued driving.**

**N**o pause. No acknowledgment.

And not even shock or dismay from any of the people who saw it happen.

In disbelief, I began hooting and driving after him to make him aware of what had just happened, acting on instinct before sense could catch up.

And then, somewhere in the middle of that chase, reality dawned on me. I was a woman – *isifebe*, perhaps he would have called me – alone, following a taxi driver through the CBD.

He could stop. Get out his taxi. Hit me – or even worse. And if he did, nothing would happen to him. He would get away with it for exactly the same reasons he had already driven away: because the conditions that produce impunity do not change between one incident and the next.

He did not drive away in fear. He drove away in certainty – the certainty that nothing would happen to him, because too often nothing ever does.

So, I let him go. I took a picture of his taxi instead.

In that moment, I was not just dealing with a minor car accident. I was experiencing something deeper; something so normalised that women have learnt to absorb it without pause. A quiet, daily reality: a country where the rules exist, but enforcement and accountability do not.

**Normalised violence**

That same taxi that hit my car and drove away was likely heading to a taxi rank, a public space that has

become shorthand for “danger”. One of the very spaces where this kind of behaviour is normalised, absorbed, and repeated without consequence.

Taxi ranks occupy a particular place in the national imagination when it comes to women’s safety. They are sites of harassment, of intimidation, of the kind of everyday violence women learn to navigate with precision. Spaces where the absence of consistent law enforcement is not an abstract policy failure, but as personal threat. Safety becomes an individual responsibility in what is meant to be a shared, regulated public environment.

*“I was not just dealing with a minor car accident. I was experiencing something deeper; something so normalised that women have learnt to absorb it without pause.”*

And yet this is only one side of the story. Because that same space – unpredictable, under-regulated and often unsafe – is also where thousands of women make a living. The taxi rank is also one of the most important sites of women’s economic life in this country. For many, it is not simply a place of risk; it is a place of survival.

It is where informal economies thrive, where livelihoods are built from early mornings and long days. Women sell food, braid hair, run small stalls and create networks of survival within an environment that does not reliably protect them. Others pass through daily, relying on taxis as the most accessible and affordable means of getting to work, school and opportunity in a context where affordable alternatives are limited or non-existent.

**Scant accountability**

This is the contradiction at the heart of it: women are not choosing these spaces because they are safe. They are choosing them because they are

necessary. The taxi rank becomes both a site of economic participation and a site of exposure to harm, a place that sustains and endangers them, often at the same time. This is the story of what it means to be a woman in this country, and what it means to live inside a democracy that does not fully reach you.

And in that contradiction lies something deeper about the quality of democracy. It is not only about whether public spaces exist, but about whether they are governed in a way that makes them safe, predictable, and just. Because when a space as central as a taxi rank operates with inconsistent accountability, it sends a quiet but powerful message: access does not guarantee protection, and participation does not guarantee dignity.

As I was writing this, days after the incident, I was still questioning whether to report the accident to the police or to the taxi association. I have lived long enough in this country to know that the like-

lihood of that driver being found and held to account is close to zero.

And yet, there is a part of me that cannot let it go.

Not because I believe the system will deliver, but because I refuse to stop believing that it should. If it goes nowhere, at least the record will exist. At least someone will know that I tried. That small act of insisting, of refusing to absorb it and move on, is itself a political act: a quiet fight for my country, as a woman demanding that democracy be applied evenly to everyone.

*“That small act of insisting, of refusing to absorb it and move on, is itself a political act: a quiet fight for my country, as a woman demanding that democracy be applied evenly to everyone.”*

And perhaps that is where democracy lives for women. Not in its outcomes, but in the exhausting, defiant act of continuing to demand it, even when experience has already taught you that it may never come.

***Sarah Mokwebo is a feminist and member of the 6th National Committee of the YCLSA***

**FREEDOM DAY – WOMEN IN STRUGGLE**

# Cosatu feminist school and gender conference spotlight class, race and gender struggle



*Participants at the Cosatu feminism school and gender conference spoke out about gender-based violence and femicide, demanding. They demanded radical interventions to defend women and protect female workers. Archive photo.*

**Key points**

- Women leaders gathered for Cosatu’s feminist school and gender conference in late March, centring care workers.
- Women perform the majority of unpaid care work globally and in South Africa.
- Graphic cases of gender-based violence show that femicide and GBV remain a crisis

demanding radical state intervention, not incremental reform.

- Capitalism, reinforced by patriarchy, structurally reproduces women’s oppression across economic, social and cultural dimensions.
- Women’s emancipation is inseparable from the socialist struggle.

**THULILE KUMALO**

**T**owards the end of March, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) hosted two crucial events in the calendar of the working class: the annual feminist school (23-25 March), drawing over 90 women leaders, and the second national gender conference (26-27 March).

The gatherings reviewed the historical role of women revolutionaries in South Africa’s struggles against colonialism and apartheid. They celebrated the gains made since the 1994 democratic breakthrough while acknowledging the significant challenges that remain.

**Celebrating care workers**

Under the theme “Celebrating the recognition, respect, and rights of care workers”, the feminist school amplified the voices of those who sustain families, communities, and the economy, though their labour often unpaid or undervalued.

*“The conference highlighted the physical and mental suffering of millions of South African women and children, as well as those under occupation in Palestine and Western Sahara.”*

Drawing on Cosatu’s *HerStories* programme, veteran women leaders from the 1990s – including Tiny Mabena, Refiloe Ndzuta, and Patricia Nyman – shared experiences that highlighted care workers as the backbone of society.

The programme profiles the lives of women trade unionists and activists over the last four decades, showing how informal care work, factory organising, and community mobilising have always been intertwined.

Participants, including domestic workers, nurses, and early childhood educators, recounted lived experiences of exploitation, workplace harassment, and unpaid overtime, among others. Discussions noted that women perform 65% of unpaid care work globally and in South Africa. Calls were made for policy reforms, such as extending the national minimum wage to cover informal sectors.

The school connected these struggles to broader socialist-feminist politics, emphasising the intersection of class and race bases of gender oppression and that women’s liberation cannot be separated from the emancipation of the entire working class.

**Women and the labour movement**

Women have always been central to building workers’ power while also remaining under-recognised and under-represented. Women organisers have developed specific skills and tactics to bring women into the movement, especially in informal, precarious, and heavily feminised sectors like domestic work, care work, and textile manufacturing.

ANC Women’s League Secretary General, Cde Nokuthula Nqaba, addressed the school, calling for unity, international solidarity, and radical intervention to defend women and children from war, occupation, and gender-based violence. She condemned abuses in Palestine, Western Sahara, Venezuela, and Ukraine, and criticised violations of international law.

**Key issues included:**

- Gender-based violence and sexual harassment, with calls to implement ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206.
- Rights of care economy workers.
- Gender dimensions of climate change, especially affecting workers with disabilities.
- Engendering collective bargaining, including parental rights and maternity protection.
- Full implementation of Cosatu’s gender policies to build organisational power.

## Building working-class unity

The gender conference was held under the theme “Build working-class unity for economic liberation towards socialism”. It highlighted the physical and mental suffering of millions of South African women and children, as well as those under occupation in Palestine and Western Sahara.

Delegates strongly condemned gender-based violence and femicide. They demanded radical interventions to defend women and protect female workers, noting that women and children bear the brunt of war and conflict.

Locally, the conference reflected on individual cases, including:

- The brutal sexual assault of a 20-year-old woman from Tambazana Village, Eastern Cape, which left her with severe injuries and loss of eyesight.
- The fatal shooting of a female legal professional in the Johannesburg CBD on her way to work.
- The stabbing of a 23-year-old woman by her ex-boyfriend at her workplace in Protea Glen.

These cases represent only a fraction of gender-based violence and femicide cases. The conference called for increased political representation of women in local government.

## No socialism without women’s emancipation

In a message to the conference, SACP Central Committee member Cde Mabuse Mpe reaffirmed that the total emancipation of women is an integral and inseparable component of the struggle for socialism.

Capitalism, reinforced by patriarchy, continues to generate and reproduce structural oppression that excludes women in multiple and interconnected ways economically, socially, and culturally – positioning men as superior and women as subordinate. Patriarchy manifests itself in the denial of reproductive rights, marginalisation in the economy, exclusion from leadership, and confinement to undervalued and unpaid domestic labour.

Cde Mpe emphasised that the National Democratic Revolution must consciously advance women’s interests through equity, equality, and access to fair opportunities in the workplace and across all sectors of society. He called for equipping women cadres with the theoretical and organisational tools necessary to confront the material basis of patriarchy towards advancing the socialist struggle.

*“The National Democratic Revolution must consciously advance women’s interests through equity, equality, and access to fair opportunities in the workplace and across all sectors of society..”*

## Honouring human rights and moving forward

Cosatu First Deputy President, Cde Mike Shingange, noted that the human rights chapter in the constitution was written with the blood of comrades; current rights are the fruits of their sacrifice.

He warned participants to stay on guard as current rights face threats. He called this generation of activists, workers, leaders, and revolutionaries to defend these rights and protect future generations.

To deal with violence against women, the conference emphasised the need to:

- Establish gender-based forums in every workplace as early-detection and victim-handling mechanisms.
- Intensify campaigns for women-friendly and victim-centred police stations to prevent re-traumatisation during reporting.
- Train professionals to better handle GBV cases.
- Implement workplace pledges against GBV for both men and women.



Overall, both gatherings emphasised the interconnectedness of class, race and gender struggles. True liberation demands a relentless fight against capitalism. This needs working-class unity and the emancipation of women as an inseparable part of the struggle for socialism.

*Cde Thulile Kumalo is the National Gender Coordinator for the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union. She writes in her personal capacity*

**FREEDOM DAY – INTERNATIONALISM**

**A commemoration of solidarity and internationalism**



*International solidarity against apartheid: 150,000 people marched from east, west and south London to Trafalgar Square on 2 November 1985 to demand British sanctions against South Africa. In the picture are ANC President Oliver Tambo, Anti-Apartheid Movement President Trevor Huddleston and US civil rights activist Jesse Jackson. Photo AAM archive.*

**Key points**

- South Africa’s 1994 democratic breakthrough wasn’t achieved alone.
- Global solidarity – through boycotts, sanctions and the UN saying apartheid was a crime against humanity – was key to getting rid of white minority rule.
- Internationalism isn’t just about ethics, it’s also a strategic necessity.
- The liberation of one group of people is inseparable from the liberation of all oppressed groups.
- South Africa must stand with Cuba, Venezuela and Palestine, all of whom are facing imperialist pressure.
- There are ongoing struggles in Sudan, Western Sahara and Swaziland that South

Africa needs to be involved in.

- We must apply the lessons of our own liberation to show solidarity with the continent and the rest of the world.

**HLENGIWE NKONYANE AND TENANILE MNGOMEZULU**

**As South Africa marks 32 years since its historic democratic breakthrough on 27 April 1994, it is essential to reflect on the profound debt South Africa owes to the international community.**

**F**reedom Day is not merely a celebration; it is a solemn reminder of the sacrifices made by liberation movements and nations that stood

shoulder to shoulder with South Africa in their struggle against apartheid.

### Historical context

The 1994 elections marked a watershed moment, allowing all South Africans, regardless of race, to exercise their right to vote for the first time. This moment was not just a triumph over institutionalised racial segregation; it was a testament to the collective will of the oppressed and their allies.

*“The United Nations General Assembly’s declaration of apartheid as a crime against humanity mobilised support across the world.”*

The transition from apartheid to democracy was greatly influenced by sustained international pressure. The global community played a pivotal role in dismantling the apparatus of oppression through boycotts, sanctions, and diplomatic isolation of the apartheid regime. The United Nations General Assembly’s declaration of apartheid as a crime against humanity mobilised support across the world, highlighting the interconnectedness of struggles for liberation.

### Commemorating the frontline states

In the liberation struggle, the frontline states, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, and Botswana, played a quintessential role. They provided military bases for freedom fighters, donated land, and offered essential support in the fight against apartheid. Their sacrifices were instrumental in applying pressure on the apartheid regime and advocating for democracy. This act of solidarity is a powerful reminder of the importance of collective action in the face of oppression.

Their unwavering support, often at great risk to their own stability, embodies the spirit of internationalism.

### Global solidarity today

Today, South Africa carries the torch of solidarity, and it is essential that we support other nations facing similar struggles. In the Global South, South Africa must advocate for the rights of the people of Cuba, Venezuela, and Palestine, who continue to fight against imperialism and oppression.

- Cuba is a beacon of hope and resilience, having withstood decades of embargo and sanctions. We must strengthen diplomatic ties and offer our solidarity in the face of external pressures.
- Venezuela, grappling with economic hardships exacerbated by foreign intervention, deserves our unwavering support. We must advocate for respect for their sovereignty and promote dialogue over conflict.
- The situation in Palestine demands urgent attention. South Africa’s own history of apartheid uniquely positions us to empathise with their struggle and advocate for their rights on international platforms.

### Ongoing conflicts in Africa

As we reflect on South Africa’s legacy, it is crucial to highlight some ongoing conflicts on the continent that require attention and action:

- Sudan has been embroiled in conflict for decades, with civil unrest and violence leading to humanitarian crises. The international community, including African nations, must push for inclusive dialogue and reconciliation to restore peace and stability.
- In Western Sahara, the struggle for self-determination continues, as the Sahrawi people seek recognition and independence. South Africa must advocate for the rights of the Sahrawi people at international forums, calling for an end to the occupation and supporting their right to self-determination.
- Swaziland faces political repression and calls for democratic reforms. It is essential for South Africa to engage with regional organisations to promote dialogue and support the pro-democracy movements within Swaziland.

In these contexts, South Africa must play a pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation and

solidarity, drawing upon the lessons learned from its own struggle against apartheid.

**Legacy of solidarity**

The legacy of our freedom is deeply rooted in the principles of solidarity and internationalism. As Nelson Mandela famously stated, “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.” This sentiment captures the essence of our struggle; a recognition that the fight against oppression transcends borders and that true liberation is a shared endeavour.

*“South Africa must play a pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation and solidarity, drawing upon the lessons learned from its own struggle against apartheid.”*

**Continuing the fight for equality**

As we celebrate this significant milestone, let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles of solidarity and internationalism that underpin our struggle. Let us remember that our freedom was achieved through collective action and that our ongoing fight for justice requires the same unity and determination.

Let us carry forward the legacy of our struggle; an unyielding commitment to solidarity and internationalism that not only honours our past but also shapes our future.

*“Marxism-Leninism emphasises that internationalism is not merely an ethical standpoint but a strategic necessity for the proletariat.”*

Marxism-Leninism emphasises that internationalism is not merely an ethical standpoint but a strategic necessity for the proletariat. It teaches us that the liberation of one nation is intrinsically connected to the liberation of all oppressed peoples. Solidarity in action, therefore, is not just a moral obligation; it is a fundamental aspect of our revolutionary struggle.

***Hlengiwe Nkonyane is an SACP activist in Gauteng***

***Tenanile Mngomezulu is an SACP activist in the Linda Jabane District in Johannesburg***

**SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA**

**SA must step up to the plate on Cuba\***



*Cuban solidarity protest outside the US Consulate in Sandton, Johannesburg, on the 65th anniversary of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. Photo: SACP/FB*

**Key points**

- The US oil blockade and decades-long economic embargo are deliberately targeting Cuba’s socialist government, creating a severe humanitarian crisis.
- Mass solidarity protests were held outside US consulates in South Africa, 17 April.
- Trump has openly threatened to “take” Cuba, while Secretary of State Marco Rubio is the real architect of US-Cuba policy.
- Brazil, Mexico and Spain have launched a call for dialogue and respect for Cuban sovereignty. South Africa must join them.
- South Africa must stand with Cuba, given Cuba’s decisive role in ending apartheid and supporting southern African liberation.

**RONNIE KASRILS  
MARK WALLER**

**Progressive nations must defend the island nation’s sovereignty against US actions.**

**B**oisterous protests outside US consulates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban on April 17 — the anniversary of the abortive CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 — urged US President Donald Trump’s administration to lift its debilitating oil blockade of Cuba.

The blockade, alongside the decades-long economic embargo, aims to cripple the country and bring down its socialist government.

The protests drew a wide coalition of civil society organisations, political parties and trade unions, dovetailing with solidarity actions for Palestine Prisoners Day and calls to end the illegal US-Israeli war on Iran, a conflict inflicting carnage while spurring a global economic crisis.

Besieged by the blockade and a decades-long embargo, Cuba urgently needs food and humanitarian aid. The hands-on response from coalitions in South Africa, such as Cuba Solidarity Now, and from many organisations and governments worldwide, is determined.

Solidarity shipments of food, medicines and solar equipment have been reaching Havana, and at the end of March Russia broke the blockade, delivering more than 700,000 tons of oil under naval escort, with a second consignment on the way.

*“These fake news attacks on South Africa echo the rhetoric Trump deployed against Venezuela and Iran in the run-up to hard economic or military action.”*

Trump has repeatedly hinted at invading Cuba. In March he told reporters: “I do believe I’ll be having the honour of taking Cuba. It’s a big honour, whether I free it, take it. I think I can do anything I want with it.” Earlier this month he said the US “may stop by Cuba” once the war on Iran is over.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has vowed to repel any occupation, and mass protests resound with the enduring rallying call of the revolution: Patria o Muerte! Venceremos! (Homeland or death. We will win!)

In contrast to Trump’s capricious narcissism, the Cuban government urges dialogue and diplomacy to deal with the problems the US has with the country.

**SA must join the three-nation declaration**

On April 18 the leaders of Brazil, Mexico and Spain, attending the In Defence of Democracy summit in Barcelona, issued a declaration expressing “deep concern over the serious humanitarian crisis facing the Cuban people, and call for the adoption of the measures necessary to alleviate this situation and to avoid actions that worsen living conditions or run contrary to international law”.

The declaration calls for respect for “territorial integrity, sovereign equality and peaceful settlement of disputes” and for “sincere, respectful

dialogue in accordance with international law”. Without naming the US, it implicitly warned against outside interference: “The goal must be to find a lasting solution to the current situation and to ensure the Cuban people themselves decide their future in full freedom.”

South Africa was also represented at the Barcelona summit. President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered a passionate defence of the country’s International Court of Justice genocide case against Israel, drawing loud applause, but he remained conspicuously silent on Cuba. He did not add his name to the declaration. Why?

**US repeats genocide lies**

On the same day as the solidarity protests here, April 17, Trump addressed a rally in Phoenix. “We stopped Third World migration,” he crowed. “We suspended all refugee settlement except for persecuted South Africans. There’s a very horrible thing going on in South Africa. It’s a genocide. It’s a horrible thing. And we made it possible for these people to come to our country. They kill people if they’re white.”

These fake news attacks on South Africa echo the rhetoric Trump deployed against Venezuela and Iran in the run-up to hard economic or military action. “It has to be stopped,” he said of South Africa at last year’s World Economic Forum.

*“The threadbare anti-communism deployed to justify abandoning Cuba cuts little ice, as the real nature of US and Western imperial swagger stands increasingly exposed as arrant banditry.”*

The writing is on the wall, and it would be foolish to look away. The interconnected threads of imperilled progressive values, national sovereignty and internationalism must be pulled together and tightened.

The Cuba-South Africa link is a particular thorn in the side of the US right. Cuba's internationalism was instrumental in the struggle against apartheid and the success of liberation movements across

mind or MAGA delusions. But the method in his madness is systemic. Those behind him are anything but crazed. Secretary of state Marco Rubio — architect of the assault on Venezuela and

a prominent voice among the "Miami Mafia" lobby of Cuban exiles — is the power behind the throne on Cuba policy.

Trump's attention may weave this way and that, but Rubio has long set his sights on toppling Havana's socialist government and reinstating a capitalist regime. He publicly claims the Cuban system is decrepit, corrupt and collapsing. If so, why bother blockading the island to throttle its economy?



southern Africa and beyond — an internationalism sustained in its subsequent humanitarian work worldwide.

The threadbare anti-communism deployed to justify abandoning Cuba cuts little ice, as the real nature of US and Western imperial swagger stands increasingly exposed as arrant banditry. Washington has seized Venezuela's oil for itself and cut all shipments to Cuba, compounding the blockade.

### **Cuba's struggle is our struggle**

Too much attention is paid to Trump's weird ways, often laughed off as the ravings of an enfeebled

South Africa has a clear responsibility to join Brazil, Mexico and Spain. Not merely out of sentiment, though Cuba's role in winning our freedom warrants it. Progressive countries must stand together. Their sovereignty, values and futures depend on it.

***Cde Ronnie Kasrils is an SACP, ANC and MK veteran, a former Minister and an author  
Cde Mark Waller assists with the production of UoL and the African Communist***

\*This article was first published in Business Day, 22 April.



On  
Palestinian  
Prisoners'  
Day

Global Action to  
**Stop Israeli Plan  
To Execute  
Palestinian Hostages**



**SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE**

# Legalising the killing of prisoners – a turning point in Israel’s detention system



*Palestinians participate in a demonstration on the eve of Palestinian Prisoners’ Day, in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The lives of key figures such as Marwan Barghouti (shown in the poster) and Ahmad Sa’adat are now at risk.*

**Key points**

- Israel has formally legalised the execution of Palestinian detainees in law.
- Military court conviction rates consistently exceed 95%, rendering “trial” meaningless.
- There is already indefinite imprisonment without charge or trial.
- Since October 2023, systematic torture, rape and medical neglect have been documented.

- The law converts mass imprisonment into a formalised pipeline to execution.
- Palestinian leaders Barghouti and Sa’adat face risks echoing Mandela’s imprisonment.
- International silence is not incidental — impunity is deliberately being relied upon.
- Parliaments worldwide must impose sanctions and isolate Israel’s legislative body.
- and supporting southern African liberation.

**HANAN JARRAR**

**Israel has crossed a line it has long approached but never formally declared: legalising the killing of prisoners.**

**B**y passing a law permitting the execution of Palestinian detainees, what they once carried out in the shadows with impunity now stands codified in law. In a system where Palestinian conviction rates in military courts are consistently reported by human rights organisations and legal experts to exceed 95%, often reaching as high as 99%, the death penalty is not a measure of justice, but a guarantee of death.

To understand the gravity of this moment, one must first understand the scale and function of imprisonment in the Palestinian context. Detention has never been merely a legal measure; it has been a central instrument of control. One in five Palestinians (20%) has been arrested or detained by Israeli authorities since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. This system of mass incarceration falls most heavily on Palestinian men, with estimates indicating that nearly two in every five (40%) have been arrested and charged over the course of their lives. An entire generation marked by detention.

**No due process**

At the heart of this system lies administrative detention, a practice that allows individuals to be held without charge or trial, often on secret evidence, for renewable periods of six months. In reality, this means indefinite imprisonment without due process. Under the current trajectory, and in the shadow of this new inhumane law, such detention risks being extended in prison time, and in consequence, transforming from prolonged incarceration into the possibility of state-sanctioned execution.

Since October 2023, conditions within Israeli prisons have deteriorated dramatically. The findings of Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, point to widespread and systematic abuses against Palestinian men

and women in Israeli prisons: rape, torture, sexual violence, humiliation, solitary confinement without access to family, and deliberate medical neglect. These violations form part of a broader pattern made possible by sustained international inaction. Impunity is not incidental; it is enabling.

*“Rape, torture, sexual violence, humiliation, solitary confinement without access to family, and deliberate medical neglect – these violations form part of a broader pattern made possible by sustained international inaction.”*

Therefore, the newly approved law must not be understood as something abnormal, but as a continuation. For years, proposals to formalise the execution of Palestinian prisoners have circulated within the Israeli parliament, repeatedly amended, repeatedly delayed. The intent has not changed; it is the timing that has. At a moment when global attention is diverted by expanding regional tensions and shifting geopolitical priorities through the US-Israeli war against Iran, this far-right government has seized the opportunity to advance a measure that would have once provoked immediate international outrage. The silence is not accidental. It is being relied upon.

**Zionist impunity**

Palestinians know too well that execution has never been confined to courtrooms. Field executions, extrajudicial killings carried out with impunity, have long been a feature of life under occupation. What this law does is remove any remaining ambiguity. It provides legal cover for what has

*“For those in South Africa and across the African continent, this moment should resonate deeply.”*

already been practised, the systematisation of murder within governance structures.

For those in South Africa and across the African continent, this moment should resonate deeply. The use of detention and imprisonment to suppress resistance is nothing new. Under apartheid, political prisoners were jailed, and executions were carried out by the state between 1961 and 1989. Yet South Africa ultimately chose a different path, abolishing the death penalty in 1995 as part of its commitment to human dignity and constitutional justice.

*“This law converts imprisonment into a pipeline to execution, governed by a discriminatory and politicised system.”*

Today, a new shift is occurring: the law is being repurposed to authorise the destruction of life rather than protect it.

Figures such as Marwan Barghouti and Ahmad Sa’adat, widely regarded as central voices in Palestinian political life, now face a risk that echoes beyond their individual cases. Their standing, comparable in many respects to that of Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and other South African freedom fighters during the struggle against apartheid, underscores what is truly at stake. This is not only about prisoners. It is about leadership, resistance, and the future of a people.

More than 9,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in Israeli detention. This law

places them under a new and immediate threat. It converts imprisonment into a pipeline to execution, governed by a discriminatory and politicised system.

### **International complicity**

Such a measure could not have been adopted in a vacuum. It is the product of a broader failure of international institutions that have not held Israel accountable, and of governments that have chosen silence over principle. The credibility of the international legal system is now on trial as much as the lives of those it has failed to protect.

The response must therefore be clear and decisive. Parliaments across the world must urgently reconsider their relations with the Israeli parliament. This includes imposing sanctions on its members, suspending its participation in international parliamentary bodies, and supporting efforts to isolate an institution that has moved to legitimise racism and killing under the guise of law.

The State of Palestine calls for the boycott of this legislative body as a necessary step to uphold the most basic principles of international law and human dignity.

History will not remember this moment for the arguments made in defence of such a law. It will remember who acted, and who remained silent, as the legalisation of death took its place on the statute books.

***Cde Hanan Jarrar is the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho and Malawi***

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

# Palestinian Prisoners' Day 2026



*Palestinian prisoners face abuse, neglect, torture and now execution by the Zionist settler entity. Photo: Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor*

**Key points**

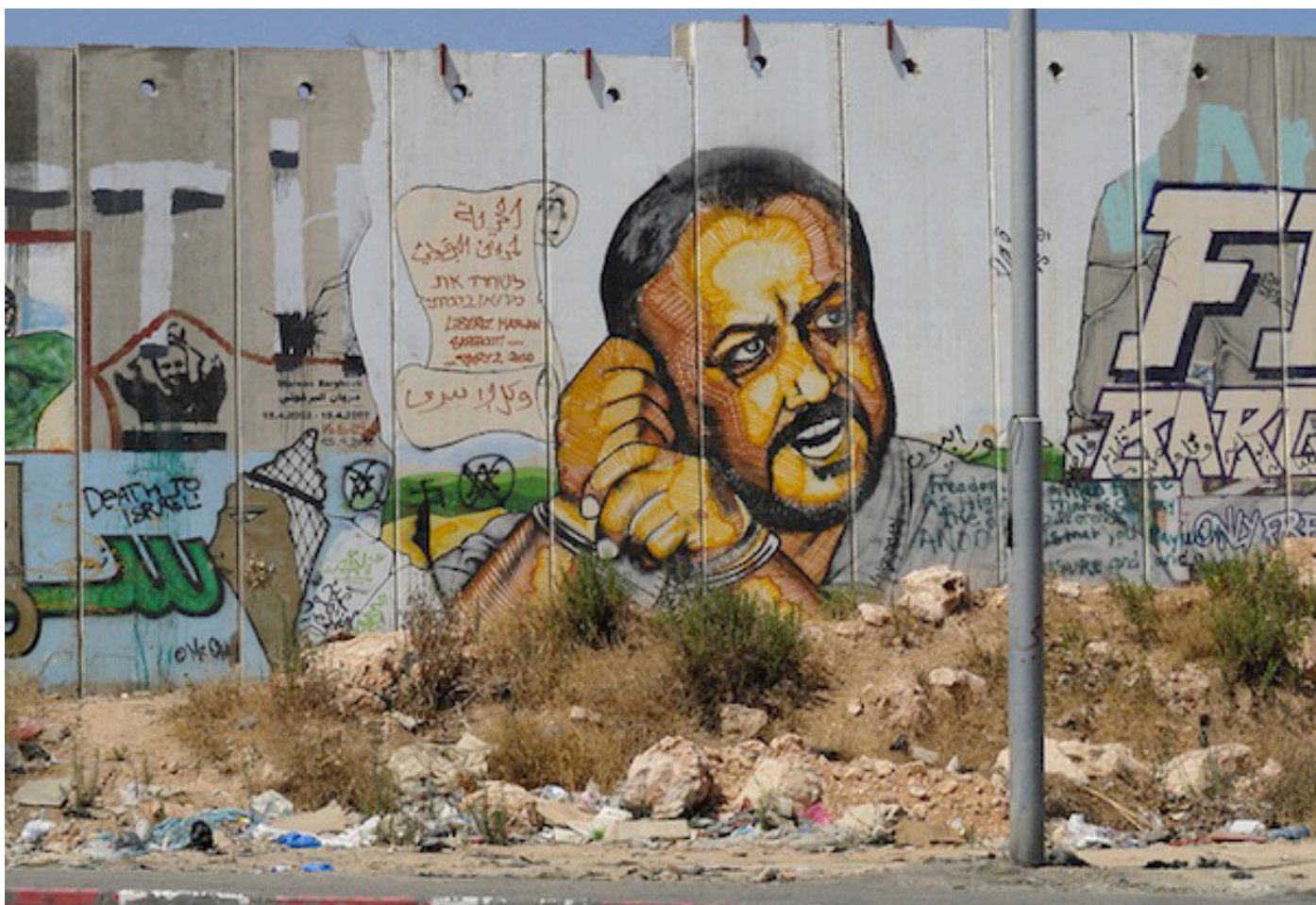
- One in five Palestinians has been detained since 1967's occupation.
- Nearly 40% of Palestinian men have been arrested in their lifetime.
- Systematic torture, rape, solitary confinement and medical neglect are documented.
- A new law now openly codifies the execution of Palestinian detainees.
- Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti has been beaten, denied medical care and dog-mauled.
- Imprisonment functions as a deliberate tool of erasure, not merely punishment.

**On Palestinian Prisoners' Day, 17 April, Palestinians marked a lived reality that sits inside nearly every family, every town, every memory of resistance.**

Palestinian prisoners are sons, daughters, leaders, and learners held within a system defined by prolonged detention without charges, isolation, and violence in Israeli jails.

Reports continue to document harsh conditions: widespread and systematic abuses against Palestinian men and women in Israeli prisons; rape, torture, sexual violence, humiliation, solitary confinement without access to family, and deliberate medical neglect. In recent months, these conditions have worsened, with testimonies pointing to a pattern where imprisonment is about breaking the body and the will.

This year, Prisoners' Day is marked under the shadow of a dangerous political shift, the passing of a law permitting the execution of Palestinian detainees, which Israel once carried out in secret with impunity, now stands codified in law. The very existence of such a law signals an escalation from imprisonment to the open legitimisation of



*West Bank mural of imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti (SP Foto/CC BY NC-ND 2.0)*

execution. It reflects a system moving beyond control, toward elimination.

One in five Palestinians (20%) has been arrested or detained by Israeli authorities since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. This system of mass incarceration falls most heavily on Palestinian men, with estimates indicating that nearly two in every five (40%) have been arrested and charged over the course of their lives. An entire generation marked by detention.

### **Prisoner abuses and neglect**

This lived reality is embodied in the experience of Marwan Barghouti, a prisoner, but also a symbol. This week, his legal team detailed a series of escalating assaults: beaten severely on 8 April in Ganot Prison, denied medical care while bleeding from the head; attacked during transfers; and earlier, forced to the ground and mauled by a military dog

inside his cell. These incidents are part of a sustained pattern, years of solitary confinement, repeated beatings, and deliberate neglect.

Barghouti's case is not only about one man. It exposes the broader reality faced by thousands. When a figure of his prominence can be subjected to such treatment, it raises a question about the fate of those whose names are not known.

For Palestinians, this day is not only about solidarity with prisoners but also about confronting a system that continues to expand its reach and severity. It is about insisting that these lives are neither invisible nor expendable.

And it is about a simple, urgent demand: freedom, dignity, and the end of a system that has turned imprisonment into a tool of erasure.

*Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa*

عاشت الصداقة بين  
الشعبين  
الفلسطيني  
والكوبي

Viva la amistad  
entre los pueblos  
Palestino  
y Cubano



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