

- Commemorating Cde Chris Hani
- Freedom Day

Umsebenzi

May 2024 Voice of the South African Communist Party

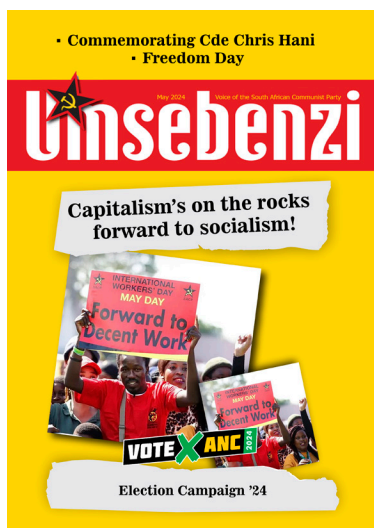
**Capitalism's on the rocks
forward to socialism!**



Election Campaign '24

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May 2024



Editor-in-Chief
Solly Mapaila

Editor
Yunus Carrim

Deputy Editor
Buti Manamela

Jenny Schreiner
Alex Mashilo
Nomarashiya Caluza
Yershen Pillay
Zola Sapheta
Andries Nel
Mzwandile Thakudi
Dibolelo Mahlatsi

Sub Editor
Mark Waller

Production
Arthur Sani

Staff Support
Hlengiwe Nkonyane

SACP, Cosatu House
110 Jorissen Street
Cnr Simmonds
Braamfontein 2017

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Defend and advance workers' achievements and struggle

Extracts from the SACP's May Day statement*



The South African Communist Party (SACP) proudly stands in solidarity with workers across South Africa and the world. We commemorate the 138th anniversary of the workers' struggle in Chicago, United States. On this day, in 1886, workers fought for an eight-hour working day.

They faced a brutal response from the US state. Their courage and sacrifices inspired working people worldwide. Their struggle became a lasting tradition celebrated as International Workers' Day, also known as May Day.

Defending and advancing workers' achievements

Before 1994, organised work-

ers through non-racial trade unions played a crucial role in fighting for workers' rights, such as the right to organise and participate in collective bargaining. This progressive movement fought against the racist and sexist job reservation system to achieve equal treatment in the workplace. The workers continued the struggle after April 1994, achieving significant milestones.

The trade union movement has empowered workers by providing them with a collective voice and platform to express their concerns and fight for their rights.

Workers have been able to challenge exploitative working conditions, push for better treatment, resist labour exploitation and refuse dangerous work.

The trade union movement played a crucial role in advocating for legislation that protects workers' rights, such as the right to organise, strike and bargain collectively.

Empowering workers and protecting democratic and trade union rights has provided a platform for workers to engage in class struggle against capitalist exploitation, racial and gender oppression.

By building the trade union movement, workers have been able to

challenge the dominant capitalist ideology. They have established an alternative narrative that prioritises their wellbeing and rights.

By prioritising political education, workers have strengthened the working class in the struggle against capitalism.

Thanks to the trade union movement, workers have fostered working-class solidarity and weakened the divisive tactics of capitalism that seek to pit workers against each other.

It is important to continue to protect these achievements to empower workers to negotiate for better wages, benefits and improved working conditions, challenging the unequal distribution of wealth and power in society.

The achievements of the trade union movement and workers since 1994 must not be taken for granted.

The most sustainable path forward is to unite and intensify the struggle to build socialism.

Vote ANC to defend and advance workers' achievements and struggle

The SACP calls on the working class and the poor to vote for the ANC in the upcoming elections, on

29 May 2024. We say this for the following reasons:

- The ANC, along with the SACP and the Cosatu-led trade union movement, has actively worked hard to achieve, establish, protect, and promote democracy in South Africa.
- We have made significant improvements in the lives of South Africans, particularly the workers and poor, by providing essential goods and services such as housing, electricity, clean water, education, health-care, and social grants.
- We have also championed a progressive constitution, which is against discrimination and upholds workers' rights.
- The ANC is committed to addressing the problem of unemployment, especially among young people by creating and sustaining 2.5 million work opportunities through public employment programmes over the next five years.
- The ANC has implemented policies to uplift the poor and marginalised communities such as social grants,

free basic services, affordable and free housing programmes, the national minimum wage and Unemployment Insurance Fund benefits.

- The ANC plans to introduce a basic income grant, which is an important step towards a universal basic income grant that the working class has been fighting for. This grant will provide income support to the unemployed and vulnerable workers.

- The ANC has prioritised the expansion of education and skills development, and has now planned to open new universities and colleges in the next five years.

- The ANC's plans include implementing the National Health Insurance as law to ensure quality healthcare for all, regardless of their income status. The ANC has shown leadership in global peace efforts

On this International Workers' Day, we urge all workers to stand strong and united. Let us defend and advance the gains of the workers' movement.

Let us go all out and vote for ANC and continue the struggle for a socialist future!

**The full statement is available on <https://www.sacp.org.za/>*

We will continue his example

Extracts from the statement delivered by SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila on the 31st annual commemoration of Cde Chris Hani's assassination, 10 April 2024



Cde Chris Hani stood for the poor and all victims of colonial and apartheid oppression

Today marks the 31st anniversary of the tragic assassination of Chris Hani on 10 April 1993. The assassination was planned to stop our country's transition from apartheid to democracy.

Above all else, the assassins opposed an advance to a socialist society. In their own words, they targeted Hani because he was a communist. Hani was a revered working-class leader. He certainly had a great leadership role to play in a democratic South Africa, which

he dedicated his life to achieve.

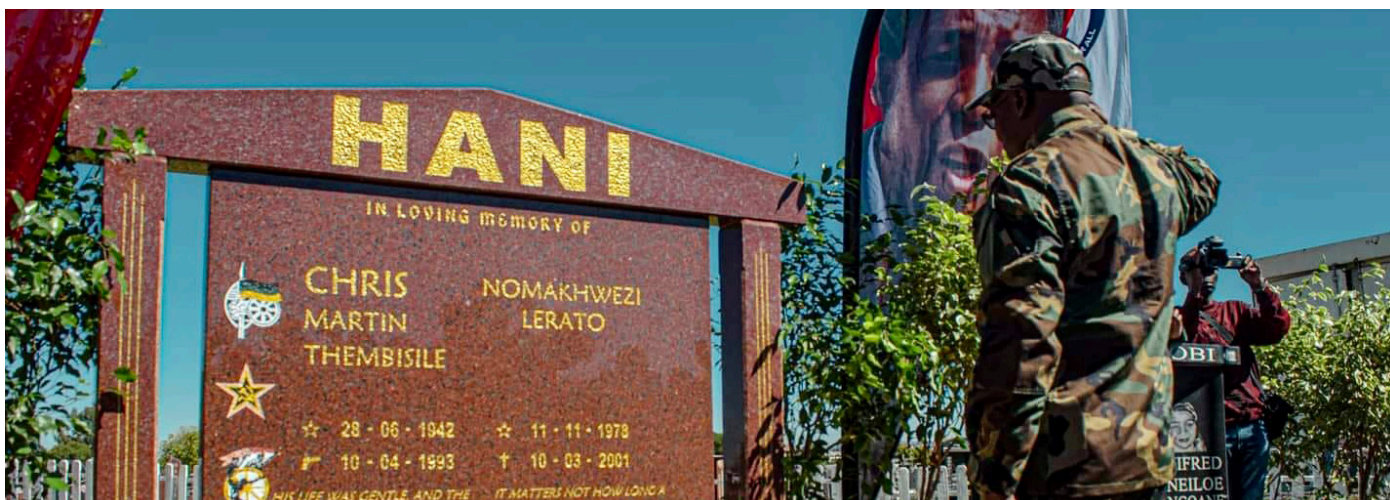
As the SACP, we have consistently been with the Hani family in the fight for justice in his case for the past 31 years. We were with the family during the assassins' trial. The assassins were convicted. They were sentenced to death. Because of the right to life that Chris Hani, as a communist, dedicated his life to achieve, their capital punishment was later commuted to life imprisonment.

We stood with the Hani family against the assassins' appeal against conviction and the sentence. We were with the family against the assassins' application to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for amnesty. Their appeal in the courts was unsuccessful, based on the evidence against them. The TRC denied them amnesty, the reason being that they failed to make full disclosure of the truth.

This is one of the reasons we still want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is for this same reason, among others, that we stood with the family until the end against every application that the assassins made for parole. It is for the same reason that we initiated a signature campaign for an inquest into all the circumstances of the assassination of Chris Hani.

Let us recall. The murder weapon used in the assassination of Chris Hani was taken from military armoury. Who took it? Whose hands was it conveyed through, one by one, towards its destination where the gun was used to commit the assassination?

These are some of the many questions that must be answered through an inquest to hold every person who had prior knowledge or role in the assassination accountable.



SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila salutes at the grave of Cde Chris Hani at the 31st-anniversary commemoration event, Boksburg, Ekurhuleni, 10 April



At the 31st-anniversary commemoration of Cde Chris Hani, 10 April: from the left SACP National Chairperson Cde Blade Nzimande, Cde Limpho Hani, SACP GS Cde Solly Mapaila

Like Chris Hani, we remain loyal to the South African National Democratic Revolution, which improved the lives of millions of our people after our hard-won democratic transition from apartheid.

Today, millions of our people experience an improved standard of living. This has led to increasing numbers of the people building themselves better homes.

Before April 1994, the overwhelming majority of our people were deprived of access to household electrification, piped water, other water supply alternatives, as well as social and economic infrastructure development, such as roads in

their areas, especially villages, as well as clinics and other healthcare facilities and services as Chris Hani once said. This ugly picture has changed remarkably under the ANC-led government.

We have now advanced to near-universal access to household electrification. We just need to build greater electricity generation and transmission capacity, so that South Africa can end load shedding sustainably and have greater power supply capacity going forward than going backwards. Notable progress has also emerged from the expansion of access to

water, although we still have a lot of work to do.

Access to education has remarkably expanded. Educational attainments among our people, with the youth being the majority, have massively increased. We now have graduates in fields where our people were prohibited under the systems of colonial and apartheid oppression, white privilege, and racial and sexist job reservation.

By 2023, South Africa's social grant system benefitted 27.3 million beneficiaries. Included in this number are approximately 18.83 million social grants recipients and around 8.5 million Social Relief of Distress Grant recipients.

In addition, we need to go all out to defend Chris Hani's liberation movement against sellouts and the entire spectrum of counter revolution from right-wing and liberal forces and their colonial masters. The immediate step we are facing is to campaign for a decisive electoral victory of the ANC and ensure that the ANC-led government implements the commitments that the ANC has endorsed in the 2024 election manifesto.

If implemented, the commitments will further expand access to water, education, and skills training and build more economic and social infrastructure. The commitments include the transformation of the financial sector, including ownership, through building a state banking sector, a public retail banking system, and supporting cooperative banks to emerge and thrive. The macroeconomic and industrial policy commitments in the manifesto will contribute in no small measure to large-scale employment creation to reduce unemployment radically.

Chris Hani stood for the poor and all victims of colonial and apartheid oppression, discrimination and exploitation – black and white. He attached great importance not

to any other socialism but to scientific socialism, which he would still emphasise deserves to replace the exploitative capitalist system and to live and advance to a communist society.

To him, socialism was not an affair of a theoretical elite. It was a cause that the working class and other revolutionary and progressive sections of society had to fight for. In simple terms, he said socialism is about, among others:

- Work for the unemployed, with decent pay;
- Homes for the homeless;
- Land for the landless;
- Hope for the youth;
- A life of dignity for all, not

least the elderly;

- Free and quality healthcare for all;
- Free quality education for all;

“*To Hani, socialism was not an affair of a theoretical elite. It was a cause of the working class...*”

Our answer to the memory of our General Secretary has been, and must continue to be, collective, mass-based and grass-root mobilisation and participation in transformation and development.

HANI THE TRUE REVOLUTIONARY – ZUMA THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY

Chris Hani’s adherence to revolutionary discipline differs fundamentally from Jacob Zuma’s conduct, which is tantamount to a counter-revolutionary and treasonous behaviour. Let us recall. The first recall of a president of the republic under the ANC-led government occurred in 2008. It was after Zuma became the president of the ANC in 2007. That was the recall of President Thabo Mbeki. A faction led by the core of individuals who campaigned for Mbeki against Zuma broke away to form their own party.

Zuma called order against those who formed the breakaway for betraying the ANC and the discipline they were required to up-

hold. Now, the same man has stolen the name and identity of the MK to form his own party and contest the forthcoming elections against the ANC – the same organisation which made him the president of the republic.

Zuma insisted that there was no state capture. He resisted the establishment of the commission [into state capture], even after the former Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, prescribed it as a remedial action. It was not until the ANC’s 54 th National Conference in 2017 endorsed the call for the establishment of the commission that it was es-

tablished – under the direction of the new leadership of the ANC led by President Cyril Ramaphosa. We do not want another chance for the fugitives from justice, the Guptas, to bounce back.

Nevertheless, the Zuma brand has passed its sell-by date, except for a tiny minority who do not mind promoting the cult of personality. The fact is that millions of South Africans remain unhappy about the state capture and industrial scale looting that took place with the fugitives from justice, his friends the Guptas, at the helm. No reasonable South African wants to see a return to that rot, including through the ballot.

Full statement is available on <https://www.sacp.org.za>

A communist for today and always

The revolutionary life and example of Cde Chris Hani are more relevant now than ever as we seek to defend our democratic gains, writes O J Fourie



Cde Chris Hani - "What I fear is that the liberators emerge as elitists who drive around in Mercedes Benzes and use the resources of this country to live in palaces and to gather riches".

10 April marked the 31st anniversary of the assassination of Cde Chris Hani, who was cowardly eliminated outside his home in Dawn Park, Boksburg.

Cde Chris's life was a life dedicated to the struggle for liberation.

In 1959, Cde Chris went to Fort Hare University to further his studies, determined to become better than what the apartheid regime wanted him to be - a black man good for nothing except to further the economic aims of whites. It was at Fort Hare that he first became openly involved in the struggle because of the liberal nature of the university, which emphasised academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

It was also here that he first came into contact with Marxist theory as

a scientific tool to analyse the development of society and thus to engage more meaningfully in the struggle. He studied Marxism diligently and began to fully appreciate the extent of the brutality of racial oppression and capitalist exploitation.

Cde Chris joined the underground SACP in 1961, inspired by such giants of our revolution as Cdes Govan Mbeki, JB Marks, Braam Fischer, Moses Kotane and Ray Simons. Knowing that freedom would not come as a gift, he joined uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1962 to fight for it. He rose to become ANC NEC and MK Chief of Staff.

In 1969, Cde Chris and six other comrades delivered a land-

mark memorandum that led to the historic ANC conference in Morogoro, Tanzania, now known as the Hani Memorandum. The memorandum criticised the ANC leadership, stating that the ANC leadership abroad had in every sense become professional politicians rather than professional revolutionaries. The epochal ANC Morogoro Conference adopted four key pillars of struggle: mass mobilisation, international solidarity, underground and armed struggle. The conference also established the Revolutionary Council under the leadership of the then ANC President Oliver Tambo.

Cde Chris once famously stated, during an interview, "What I fear is that the liberators emerge as elitists who drive around in Mercedes Benzes and use the resourc-

es of this country to live in palaces and to gather riches". He went on to explain that "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."

In April 1990, Cde Chris returned to South Africa with a provisional amnesty from the apartheid government as it moved towards a negotiated settlement. He immediately began touring the country to educate people about the political process that was taking place and to raise their socialist consciousness.

In December 1991, Cde Chris was elected General Secretary of the SACP and gave up his position as MK Chief of Staff to concentrate on the grassroots development of the party. He was quite clear that the apartheid era was coming to an end and saw the need to strengthen the position of the left within the Tripartite Alliance in order to advance the interests of the workers in the post-apartheid era.

Cde Chris embodied the Alliance: a committed revolutionary, a disciplined soldier and a selfless communist. He believed in full emancipation, both politically and economically. As he stated: "We in the SACP do not hide our belief that political freedom without social reconstruction will be meaningless. There needs to be a new growth path which creates wealth more efficiently than the present economic policies, but also ensures that such wealth is used to better the lives

not only of a few, but for all."

Cde Chris was committed to the unity of the South African people, regardless of political affiliation. He stated at the opening of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa): "For the peace process to succeed demands from all who are committed to democracy, the greatest possible unity. I want to say to organisations which have not traditionally formed part of the ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance or even the mass democratic movement that this is not the time to emphasise our differences. It is our job to build on the highest level of unity we can develop to take ourselves forward not to narrow sectarian goals but the broad democratic system that is in all of our interests."

While Cde Chris was always willing to bridge the gap between nationalism and Marxism, he understood that both were integral to an existing historical reality. Marxism had to be applied to concrete revolutionary conditions and practices. He gave concrete form to this idea by formulating and constructing practical programmes that mobilised the working class and the oppressed.

Cde Chris launched and led the SACP's "Triple H" (Health, Housing and Hunger) campaign in the early 1990s because of the interconnected nature of these challenges. It is their relevance in our current circumstances that has led the party to revive and elaborate on them as part of the annual

Red October campaign: "Health, Housing, Hunger and Water Programme" (Triple H and W).

Cde Chris was murdered by a fascist, Janusz Waluś, who was working with a senior member of the South African Conservative Party in a plot to assassinate a number of liberation fighters in order to spark a civil war along racial lines and sabotage negotiations to end apartheid. Their plot failed as the massive wave of protest at Cde Chris's death was directed towards boosting the peace process.

Cde Chris never tasted the fruits of the democracy and freedom he fought for all his life. Thirty-one years ago, the counter-revolutionary forces thought they would stop the dawn of democracy when they assassinated him, but they failed.

Today the counter-revolutionary forces are at work again, trying to stifle and reverse the gains of our hard-won democracy. But we must defeat them at the ballot box on 29 May 2024.

Our votes for the ANC will ensure that the gains of the past 30 years continue. Our votes for the ANC will ensure that we deepen our democracy and continue to take responsibility for our freedom. Our votes for the ANC will ensure that we never forget Cde Chris.

Cde Chris was committed to the struggle against apartheid. Today we must be committed to continuing the fight against poverty, unemployment and inequality. If Cde Chris had been elected as a public representative, he would have made sure that all the people in his constituency got what

CHRIS HANI
31st ANNUAL
COMMEMORATION

LIMPOPO PROVINCE

"We still want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth"

13 APRIL 2024
@10:00 AM

Ephraim Mogale Stadium
Phagameng Township,
Modimolle

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Thulas Nxesi
Deputy National Chairperson

VOTE  **X**

LET'S DO MORE, TOGETHER

Poster for one of the many SACP annual commemoration events for Cde Chris Hani

Cde Fourie is an SACP member and works in Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in the Presidency

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they deserved instead of trying to further his own career. Being a public representative is about putting your life in the service of the people.

It is a position of privilege, not because you get a title or a position, but because it puts you in a position of service to your fellow South Africans.

President Nelson Mandela said the following at Cde Chris's funeral on 19 April 1993, which is as relevant today as it was 31 years ago:

"The struggle is far from over. You are our soldiers of peace, our army for the elections that will transform this country. Go back to your homes, your regions, and organise as never before. Together, we are invincible. That is how we will pay the greatest tribute we can to Chris Hani freedom in South Africa. Let Chris Hani live on through all of us."

30 years of democracy and freedom - but the struggle is far from over

Extracts from the SACP statement marking Freedom Day, 27 April

Wednesday, 27 April 1994, marked our victory in the protracted battle against the oppressive regime consolidated in our land by imperialist Britain and white minority supremacists in 1910 from its preceding Cape, Orange River, Natal and Transvaal colonial state formations.

We are celebrating our hard-won April 1994 democratic breakthrough without losing sight of the fact that, despite the commendable progress benefiting millions of our people, not all the goals of the Freedom Charter have been fully realised.

The struggle continues to dismantle the entire legacy of racial and gender oppression, transform and develop South Africa to achieve all the goals of the Freedom Charter, and advance towards a socialist society in which the exploitation of one person by another and all forms of oppression will be eliminated. This is our central message on the 30th anniversary of our hard-won democratic dispensation.

The unrepentant beneficiaries of oppression are happily wallowing in the wealth inherited from it, sparing no effort to safeguard this legacy of oppression. Their parties are still backed by the imperialist regimes and serve as conduits for domestic transmission of imperialist agendas, including, but not lim-



ited to, imperialist foreign policy articulations.

These parties, like under apartheid, have established political connections with parties that are either led by former Bantustan leaders or have their roots in the apartheid policy of Bantustans. In addition to their support for these two categories of parties, the imperialists are now propping up new popcorn electoral parties.

A decisive victory for the ANC on 29 May

The SACP calls upon the working class, both women and men, and the youth, as well as students, peasants, progressive middle-class sections and everyone supporting democratic transformation and development:

Let us go to the voting booths on 29 May and cast a resounding vote for a decisive ANC electoral victory on all ballot paper.

Let us strive for maximum patriotic unity to safeguard our democratic achievements towards greater heights.

Let us unite to expand democratisation and dismantle the centuries-old legacy of colonial and apartheid-era capitalist expropriation, racial and gender oppression.

The ANC's election manifesto, drafted in consultation with alliance partners, is anchored in a progressive thrust. This includes the following commitments for implementation in the next five years:

- Expansion of public employment programmes to create and sustain at least 2.5 million work opportunities in the delivery of public goods and services.
- Implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) to ensure quality healthcare for all. Following working class struggles, now the parliament has passed the NHI Bill and the president is considering signing it into law.
- Alignment of monetary, fis-

- cal and trade policy, along with advancing the transformation of the financial sector, to meet basic needs and pursue industrialisation.
- Use of financial sector transformation to move towards a public banking sector, by creating state development and sector-specific banks aligned with industrial policy goals, and by building a public retail banking system to serve the people's financial needs.
- More investment in a large-scale social and economic infrastructure.
- Increased levels of exports to global and continental destinations, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area and the BRICS Plus international relations and co-operation, among others.
- Acceleration of land redistribution to reduce asset inequality, protect security of tenure, improve agricultural production and food security, promote rural and urban development, and enable greater access to housing.
- Establishment of a sovereign wealth fund to support broader social transformation and development.
- Measures to overcome the rising cost of living, among others, by strengthening income support through existing social grants and using the Social Relief of Distress grant as a foundation to phase in a basic income support grant. This, in our view, should serve as a step towards the much-needed universal basic income grant.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Our struggle is not a mere national struggle. It is an international struggle against an international system. A vote for the ANC on 29 May is a vote for our democratic national sovereignty and the continuation of the international solidarity struggle.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our democratic breakthrough, let us remember that there are millions of people across the world who need our international solidarity, in the same way as we ourselves needed international solidarity in our struggle against apartheid and its preceding articulations of colonial oppression.

The SACP stands firm with the people of Pales-

tine for the freedom of historical Palestine and against the genocide by the apartheid Israeli settler state. We reiterate our support for the ANC-led government's referral of the Israeli regime to the International Court of Justice.

It is against South Africa's courageous justice-seeking action for the Palestinian people, active membership of the BRICS Plus international cooperation and rejection of imperialist co-optation in situations such as the NATO-provoked war in Ukraine that the hardcore within the collective-imperialist West seeks "regime change" in South Africa, including on the electoral front, against the ANC.

We reiterate our solidarity with the people and government of Cuba against imperialist aggression and call for an immediate lifting of the illegal blockade of Cuba and occupation of Guantanamo Bay by the US.

We stand with the people of Swaziland in their struggle for democracy and the people of Western Sahara for national self-determination and against occupation by Morocco.

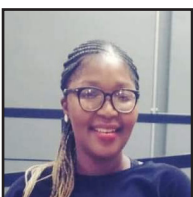
The full SACP statement is available at <https://www.sacp.org.za/content/statement-30th-anniversary-our-april-1994-democratic-breakthrough>

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Three decades of ANC governance – progress, challenges, and unmet commitments

Palesa Motshoene *assesses the ANC's performance in key areas of society. How does it measure up to its election promises, and what more needs to be done?*



It has been 30 years since the ANC took political power, the same year earmarked for the seventh national elections since

the end of apartheid rule. Since then, the ANC has made numerous election commitments in a variety of sectors. It is crucial to highlight that the ANC's performance in meeting these goals has varied over time, with challenges along the way, including claims of corruption, inefficiency, and policy failures, and criticisms of it.

An in-depth analysis of the policies, initiatives, and results of the previ-

ous three decades is necessary to evaluate the ANC's performance in fulfilling its electoral pledges.

Economic Development and Job Creation

Policies: The ANC has adopted several economic policies, such as plans for infrastructure investment, industrialisation techniques, and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE).

Programmes: Initiatives that create employment, such as the Expanded Public Works

Programme (EPWP), have been introduced.

Outcomes: Despite advancements in economic growth and creation of jobs, high rates of unemployment—particularly among young people—remain. With a concentration of wealth among a select few, inequality is still a serious problem.

Education

Policies: To increase access to education, the ANC has implemented free education in public schools, and an expanded school infrastructure.



SACP Gauteng Red Brigade volunteers, led by Provincial Secretary Cde Jacob Mamabolo, meet community members in Alra Park, Ekurhuleni. The commercial media would have us believe that the ANC-led government has achieved nothing since 1994. A key part of the '24 election campaign work by SACP Red Brigades is engaging with communities on what has been achieved and what still needs to be done.

Programmes: The Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) and the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).

Outcomes: Even though there have been improvements in access to education, there are still concerns about quality, dropout rates, standard of teaching and learning objectives, with marked differences between urban and rural schools.

Healthcare

Policies: The National Health Insurance (NHI) programme is an initiative the ANC has put in place

to increase access to health-care.

Programmes: The introduction of HIV/AIDS treatment programmes and the provision of primary healthcare services through hospitals and clinics.

Outcomes: Although there has been progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, issues with the healthcare system, staffing shortages, and unequal access to high-quality care, particularly in rural areas, remain a challenge.

Housing and Basic services

Policies: The ANC has put in place housing policies and initiatives to give low-income communities access to housing and basic services such as electricity and water.

Programmes: Initiatives such as the National Housing Subsidy Scheme and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) have been introduced.

Outcomes: Millions of people have benefited from housing and basic services thanks to the ANC's achievements, but issues with the backlog, informal settlements, and sustainable urban growth still need to be addressed.

Land Reform

Policies: Programmes for land redistribution and restitution have been introduced by the ANC as part of its land reform agenda.

Programmes: There are initiatives like the Land Claims Commission and the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD).

Outcomes: Progress in land reform has been slow, with challenges including bureaucratic hurdles, lack of funding, and disputes over land ownership. Land reform has not adequately addressed historical inequalities or provided effective support to emerging farmers.

Crime and safety

Policies: The ANC has implemented crime prevention strategies and strengthened law enforcement agencies

Programmes: There are now programmes in place such as the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) and community policing forums

Outcomes: While there have been improvements in some areas, the crime rates remain high, particularly violent crime. Challenges include police corruption, inefficiency, and inadequate resources for crime prevention and victim support.

Social welfare

Policies: The ANC has increased its social welfare programmes, which include pensions, child support grants, and social aid for vulnerable populations.

Programmes: The Old Age Pension system and the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) programme are in place.

Outcomes: The reduction of poverty has been greatly aided by social assistance programmes, but there are still issues with reaching all eligible beneficiaries, fixing administrative inefficiencies, and guaranteeing long-term funding.

Infrastructure development

Policies: Infrastructure development has been given top priority by the ANC through several plans and initiatives.

Programmes: Infrastructure projects in the fields of electricity, water, telecommunications, and transportation are currently ongoing.

Outcomes: Infrastructure has improved, but there are still issues to be resolved, such as delays, cost overruns, and procurement process corruption.

Corruption and Governance
Policies: The ANC has pushed accountability and openness in government while enacting anti-corruption policies.

Programmes: Institutions like the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), National Prosecution Authority (NPA) and the Public Protector (PP) have been established to combat corruption.

Outcomes: Corruption is still a major problem within the ANC and government institutions, despite the efforts. Public trust is weakened, and governance is undermined by high-profile corruption scandals, a lack of accountability, and lax enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

“ Challenges: entrenched inequalities, governance problems, corruption, inefficiencies in the provision of services, slow progress to tackle structural socio-economic concerns

Environmental Protection
Policies: Through laws and regulations, the ANC has begun to place a high priority on sustainable development and environmental protection.

Programmes: Initiatives have been introduced, such as the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP). The program backs South Africa’s 2018 pledges under the Paris Agreement, which it made after helping to achieve certain climate change goals.

Outcomes: Even while there has been success in many areas, there are still issues with pollution, climate change, and environmental deterioration. Adequate enforcement mechanisms and competing development agendas are two common challenges encountered during the implementation of environmental policies.

In conclusion, the ANC has made progress in several areas, but it still faces considerable obstacles in fulfilling its electoral commitments. Entrenched inequalities, problems with governance, corruption, inefficiencies in the provision of services, and the sluggish progress in resolving structural socio-economic concerns are some of these challenges. More work must be done to overcome these obstacles and guarantee significant gains in everyone’s quality of life in South Africa.

Cde Motshoene is a former publications manager at the YCLSA and an MCom candidate in business management at the University of Johannesburg

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We need a decisive ANC victory to drive the interests of the working class and poor

Buti Manamela reports from the Red Brigade election campaign trail on fears of what would happen if right-wing, populist parties realise their dream of derailing the ANC



Cde Buti Manamela and a potential voter in Concordia Ward 1, Nama Khoi Sub-Region, Springbok, Basis February District, Northern Cape

It's a chilly, dusky Saturday afternoon in Samora Machel settlement, and some of the children are happily running around the local jungle gym, while others are riding carts they made from recycled crates and car tyres. They are oblivious to the landmine sewage spill that has been part of their no longer dusty but "smelly" streets.

The local counsellor tells me that the spill and the uncollected and hazardous waste that flows into the nearby lagoon have been a permanent feature of the township.

"The DA government simply refuses to fix this", he declares.

Established a few kilometres shy of the Cape Town International Airport some few years before the release of Nelson Mandela from Robben Island, this enclave of Greater Phillippi is a congregation of anyone born anywhere between the Cape and Cairo, and whose aspirations of prosperity promised by the Democratic Alliance have been dashed.

We have been walking around here doing doo-to-door, campaigning with the SACP's Red Brigade, for an overwhelming ANC victory and a good performance in the Western Cape.

Across the main street of Samora Machel is a chain of stalls selling everything from okra to inhloko, bundles of recycled clothes waiting to be hung and sold to the locals, and here and there a local grill, the smoke of which mixes with the stench from the sewerage spill.

The residents here do not take these elections lightly. For some, the fear of a coalition government at a national level remains a major threat, as local politics in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni (two of the country's largest regions in terms of economy and population) have shown signs of immaturity, with political parties unwilling to work together.

This is what many are advocating, to reduce the ANC majority and gang up against it in Parliament to take over government. Both the Economic Freedom Fighters and the Democratic Alliance have not minced their words when speaking of this.

The greater danger is that the national democratic revolution and the gains garnered since 1994 would be reversed, as the SACP General Secretary, Solly Mapaila pointed out at the national launch of the party's Chris Hani Red Brigade in Rustenburg in early March. He is right. The DA has already made it clear that they will reverse public employment programmes in the name of reducing the size of the state, cut social security interventions, do away with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and Black Economic Empowerment.

Not to be outdone, Herman Masha-

ba of Action SA turned his populist rhetoric on the national minimum wage, declaring that they (if elected) will do away with it and allow employers to unilaterally determine wages.

It is also an election shaped by a reactionary media cartel that is hell-bent on fulfilling its prophecy of a reduced ANC majority (and possibly out of power) fulfilled. This cartel is fuelled by narrow neoliberal interests whose agenda is to tighten austerity measures, stall land redistribution, privatise major state-owned companies and abolish social grants.

The importance of these elections also goes further, as both the sovereignty and unitary nature of the state are under threat, with the DA inviting foreign intervention in the elections while supporting calls for a federal state (giving more powers to the provinces).

They are scared, with their leader almost to the point of begging the other political parties not to contest them (especially their so-called "Coloured" vote) in the Western Cape.

For the SACP, the ANC, despite its glaring weaknesses, is the only worthwhile political force advancing the needs, interests and aspirations of the working class and the poor. Communists have gone out across the country, as in Samora Machel, to volunteer and campaign for a sweeping ANC victory. Our voting district-based branches have been at the forefront of recruiting volunteers, running blitzes, organising commemorative events, visiting people in their homes, spreading the SACP message and doing valuable community work.

Hundreds of communists should continue to do election work (firstly) as part of asserting the independence of the SACP and (secondly) as part of the ANC-led Alliance elections programme.

Samora Machel is not the only township in such squalor, and if we are to change the face of hundreds of these communities, it will be through an SACP campaign that moves beyond these elections and takes up the issues that arise here as part of the overall programme of mobilising communities, the working class and the poor, for a socialist future.

Cde Manamela is an SACP Central Committee member and Deputy Editor of Umsebenzi

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Beyond narrow electoral campaigning

Barry James Mitchell *examines the need to make election campaigning a coherent part of invigorating and deepening the NDR*



YCLSA and SACP Red Brigade election volunteers visiting Greater Lusaka Mogale Sub District, Krugersdorp



In just under a month, South Africans eligible to vote will make their mark on three ballot papers. These are unprecedented times for our thirty-year-old democracy, a democracy that is not immune to the influence of the current tectonic shifts in geopolitics.

Democracy is derived from the ancient Greek word “demokratia”, dêmos, meaning “people” and krátos, meaning “power”. “Amandla Awethu” or “People’s Power”, is the essence of the meaning. Of course, its application is far from the direct participation of the people in power, nor was it in ancient Greece, where only male city-state citizens over a certain age and belonging to the ruling elite class could vote representatives into power.

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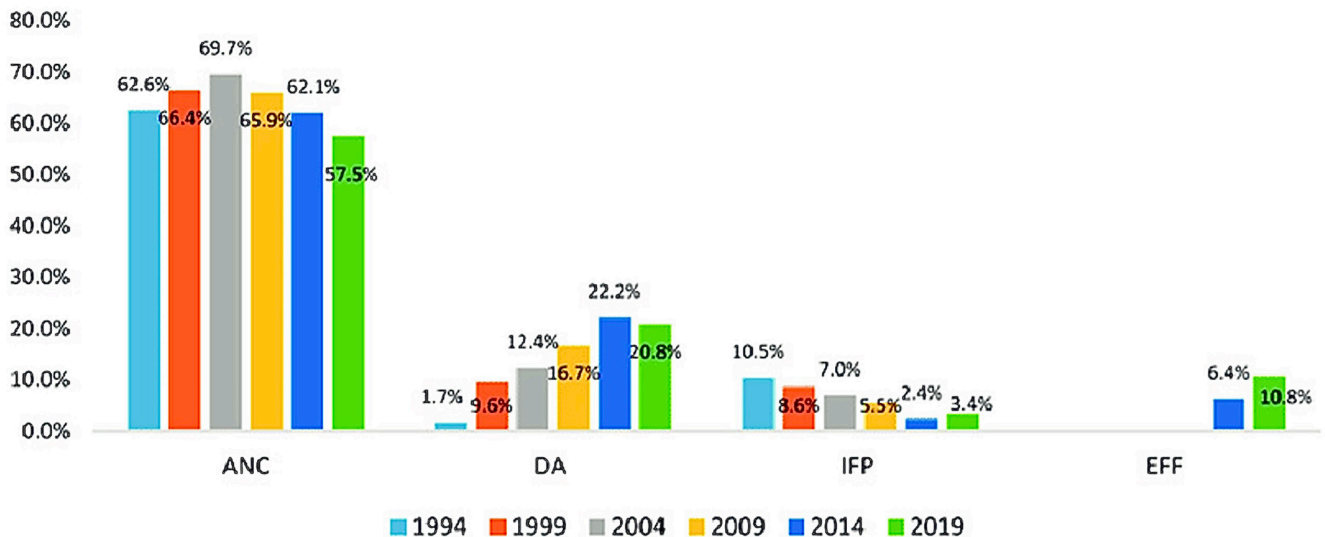
Our 1994 democratic breakthrough did not necessarily lead to people’s power

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Contemporary notions of democracy have been hegemonised by particular conceptions, the application and often imposition of Western liberal democracy. More often than not, this form of democracy comprises of two dominant parties, usually representing centre-right and centre-left ideological spectrums (although the shift to the right is more pronounced in recent times), competing parties mobilise billions of Rands for campaigns and power predict-

ably shifts from one party to the other after one or two election cycles, often making both vying for power virtually indistinguishable in terms of their policy positions. In the US it is the Democrats and the Republicans, in the UK it is the Conservatives and the Labour Party.

South Africa inherited many elements of the Westminster parliamentary system. Our 1994 democratic breakthrough did not necessarily lead to people’s power. Instead, our system permits eligible voters (all South Africans over the age of 18) to vote for a political party that uses its internal political mechanisms (list conferences) to nominate and elect representatives to serve in parliament. This process is not so straightforward as you can see in the table below.



National election results 1994-2019 Source: ResearchGate

Since 1994, the ANC has ranged from the low to upper 60%, and in 2004 the ANC achieved just under 70%. These results would decline in subsequent elections with 2019 (57%) being the lowest result achieved in all six national elections.

The upcoming elections have garnered much speculation and interest, with the punting of a possible coalition government, multi-party arrangements and negotiations and the emergence of regionalists, populists and newcomers on the block. There are 350 political parties vying for their share of the seats in the National Assembly and provincial legislatures. There is also the introduction of independents (third ballot), which brings a new dynamic.

In 1999, voter turnout reached an astonishing 89%, but there has been a sharp decline in subsequent national general elections (66% in 2019). Turnout is measured in terms of the total number of registered voters, but a deeper assessment by calculating the number of people as a proportion of the voting-age population (citizens aged 18 or over at the time of the election) reveals the widening gap between registered and unregistered voters, an increase in the number

of discouraged, uninterested and apathetic voters. This figure was 86% in 1994, 72% in 1999, 58% in 2004, 60% in 2009, 57% in 2014 and 49% in 2019.

One of the problems with speculating and polling such a complicated electoral system is that the data sets used for market research rarely survey more than 3000 people; they are usually conducted by telephone and are heavily biased towards urban, middle-class perspectives. The dominant ideas in society are often predetermined by the dominant class in society. The ANC has fully embraced western liberal democratic campaigning methods to the detriment of our traditional methods of mobilisation and campaigning.

1994 saw the demobilisation of popular platforms for people's democratic participation. Building hegemony in society should mean being seen in our communities, not just during election campaigns. An election campaign should be about more than 'drive-bys'

of communities by convoys of fancy cars emblazoned with the ANC logo, and should be about addressing the real issues facing communities. Our door-to-door programmes must be used to report back on the many issues that communities have previously raised and how they have been addressed.

Our tactics and strategy need to change to mitigate the non-representative, elitist and unnatural tendencies of our campaigning methods. The SACP is not a narrow-electoralist political party. Our strategy is currently based on saving the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) from a complete derailment. The upcoming election is but one tactic to achieve this. The Party has a massive responsibility ahead.

The Party has the vanguard role of representing the interests and aspirations of workers and the poor; this can take the form of a revitalised Know and Act in Your Neighbourhood campaign. Our surveys conducted by Red Brigades in the Western Cape during previous elections used an adapted canvass sheet; it included vital socio-eco-

conomic questions for each household. This data was collated, and our programme and campaign were influenced by the views expressed during our Know and Act in your Neighbourhood campaign. The Party, in this instance, built hegemony through genuine mechanisms of people's participation in our democracy.

Cde Mitchell is an SACP Central Committee member and Nehawu Parliamentary Officer

Guide for Chris Hani Brigade Election Volunteers

The SACP's Chris Hani Brigade Elections Volunteer are an integral part of the overall ANC-led Election Campaign. They are the face of both the SACP and the Alliance, and may make or break whether a voter will vote for the ANC or not. Each Voting District SACP branch is expected to recruit a minimum of ten volunteers.

It is therefore important that all communists who will be doing door to door are trained and adhere to these guidelines.

- How to behave with voters: Discuss do's and don'ts of conduct with voters. Make sure volunteers act respectfully and do not embarrass the ANC-led alliance.
- What are the most important problems in the area? Go through the key problems affecting people and ensure volunteers understand what the ANC-led government has achieved or plans to fix the problem.
- What are our policies on key issues: All volunteers should know the basics of ANC policies on issues like economic development, jobs, youth employment, crime and corruption, education, health, HIV and Aids, housing and land. Use the difficult questions section in your training to ensure they understand the answers to typical questions. Identify

other important policy areas in your area and cover them as well.

- The SACP election message and ANC Election Manifesto: Explain the key parts of the manifesto and message to all volunteers.
- How to use the house cards/street sheets: Teach volunteers to use the record-keeping system.
- Basic voter education for first-time voters: Teach volunteers to do voter education.
- Use role plays where people act out the roles of voters and ANC volunteers.

Debrief: Hold regular meetings after door-to-door work for canvassers to discuss voters' concerns and questions. Discuss the best way of answering difficult questions that come up. Try to deploy people to the same area each time so that they get to know the voters and can follow up properly on any questions voters have. Raise whatever service delivery challenges with relevant government structures and ask for explanation on why there are these challenges, and give feedback.

Door-to-door records: Remember, we need to keep records of our door-to-door work so that we can use the results. This information will be helpful in defining SACP Campaign work and targeted interventions even post elections.

Adapted from the ANC Election Manual

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What has happened to land redistribution?

Land redistribution is proceeding too slowly and is underfunded,
writes Alfred Dikole Seitebaleng



South African capitalism has historically defined land as a commodity for the benefit of white settlers. This was institutionalised immediately when the racist tyranny promulgated the Land Act of 1913. Subsequently, black people, as the rightful owners of the land, put the struggle for land as a key component of the national liberation struggle under the tutelage of the ANC.

The 1994 democratic electoral breakthrough ushered in a new institutionalised template and framework that gave the democratic state a legal mandate to champion land distribution within the framework of the new South African constitution.

Land distribution is considered a type of land tenure system and a plan to change the terms and conditions of land deals so that they recognise local land rights and transfer land rights to their rightful owners. Land distribution is at the centre of economic development.

The efficiency of land distribution was not carefully considered by both state and non-state institutions that are responsible for land. Although land is an instrument of social justice that seeks to eradi-



cate exploitative relations between the rich owning classes and poor toiling masses who work the land, an overall assessment of the land distribution programme shows that it has been inefficient.

Some of the challenges leading to inefficiency include corruption amongst state officials, bureaucratic hurdles, nepotism, lack of funding, crime and deteriorating infrastructure, and the lack of capacity of the state to monitor land redistribution.

The decaying farming infrastructure is also one of the contributing factors to the fail-

ure of land redistribution beneficiaries. Therefore, upgrading infrastructure is paramount.

The targeted redistribution of land has been costed around R5 billion, with only R4 billion having been spent. The government must do budget reprioritisation to accelerate land reform. The slow pace of land redistribution also fails to address housing backlogs, as well as giving municipalities access to more land for public infrastructure.

These challenges have deepened inequality in land ownership. Due to their capitalist, racist and oppressive history, white landowners have been resisting transformation in terms of land ownership.

They continue to overlook land distribution programmes by adhering to the principle of willing buyer and willing seller, using tricks such as dividing the land into their households and properties to evade expropriation.

We also need to distinguish between land distribution, agrarian reform, and land restitution. The former is a government effort to radically change the patterns of land ownership. It includes empowering farmworkers, transforming them into farmers and landowners, thus reducing in-



Poultry farming cooperative in Kanana, Orkney. The wider imperative of land reform includes empowering farm-workers, transforming them into farmers and landowners, thus reducing inequality.

equality.

Agrarian reform is another form of redistribution of agricultural resources confined to the distribution of land, where relative changes like credit, taxation, rents, and cooperatives take place.

On the other hand, land restitution seeks to provide the disadvantaged and the poor with access to land for residential and productive purposes. Its scope includes the urban and rural poor, labour tenants, farm workers, and new entrants to farming. The working class in urban areas faces land hunger, creating squatter camps filled with unemployed and hungry communities living in unserved land. Land redistribution plays a critical role in placing the responsibility on state institutions to fulfil these objectives.

Between 1994 and 2019, only 8% of white-owned farmland has been redistributed to the Black majority of our country. This makes it evident that we are not doing much in this area.

Thus, the ANC had to adopt a resolution at its last National Conference to fast-track land redistribution. The land expropriation bill is one of the important pieces of legislation that gives the government the right to expropriate land and pay owners the valuation determined by an adjudication process, a huge leap from willing buyer and willing seller.

Land reform in the country remains underfunded and will likely remain unchanged unless there is political will otherwise. The next five years will be critical in this regard.

Cde Dikole is the SACP's Second Deputy Provincial Secretary, Moses Kotane Province

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Racial redress needed for economic democracy

*Tackling the heavily racialised nature of capitalism in SA is crucial to meaningful social-economic transformation, writes **Khwezi Mabasa***



Unequal scene: a drone's eye view of inequality in Johannesburg Photo: Johnny Miller



This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the country's transition to a democratic political system that seeks to uphold fundamental rights for all. These freedoms are enshrined in the South African Constitution and span several areas of human development. Opinions are divided on whether the country has made sufficient progress in ensuring that citizens experience the benefits of democracy.

Critics argue that there has been minimal socio-economic and political transformation since the transition period of the 1990s, while some citizens acknowledge the transformative impact of government policies on their lives. The current pre-election political context has intensified this debate, par-

ticularly in the socio-economic and governance areas.

One of the most contentious issues in the election manifesto debates is race-based socio-economic redress legislation and its impact on economic development. The Democratic Alliance, Action SA and other liberal commentators argue that these legislative measures hinder economic development in a number of ways. They also associate racial reparations policies with corruption and unproductive rent-seeking, with specific reference to the State Capture Report or other prominent procurement-related criminal investigations.

These perspectives remind us of the perverse effects of cor-

ruption on policy implementation, as well as some of the shortcomings of South Africa's current racial reparations legislation. However, it is illogical to argue that race or racial redress should be completely removed from economic development strategies to allow markets to function freely. This proposal overlooks the following key political and socio-economic realities.

First, racial capitalism in South Africa developed on the basis of constructed race, class and gender inequalities in various socio-economic structures. State and non-market institutional power was crucial in embedding these inequalities throughout society. As a result, access to exploited African cheap labour, dispossessed land, minerals and other global commons sustained racial capitalism

in SA for decades. Contributions to Marxist political economy in the 20th century outlined this complementary relationship between authoritarianism and racial capitalism well. A market-based approach with minimal redress measures is not sufficient to address persistent racial inequalities. It overlooks the crucial role of state legislation and non-market institutions in entrenching racial capitalism.

Secondly, South Africa will not achieve economic development without addressing racialised inequality. Both researched and policy-making literature emphasise this point, drawing from experiences across the globe. Even the market-friendly World Bank and International Monetary Fund concede that intersectional inequality (race, class and gender) is the fundamental structural fault line in SA's economy.

Socio-economic disparities stifle demand across the economy, limit access to public goods and lower human development levels. All these negative outcomes associated with persistent race-based inequalities co-exist with historic disparities, which still shape the post-apartheid economy. This necessitates a shift in how the country approaches socio-economic redress. However, these reforms cannot be based on neoliberal policy prescriptions articulated in the DA and Action SA election manifestos.

South Africa needs to link racial re-

dress with broader economic reorganisation strategies, which fundamentally transform income redistribution, ownership patterns, apartheid spatial development and market structures in the economy. We must go beyond the finance-led Minerals-Energy-Complex (MEC) that has formed the basis of racialised capitalism for centuries. Economic transformation that prioritises racial demographic changes within the limits of existing MEC structures has failed. Past attempts at racial redress are based on a legitimate political objective, yet these policy measures have not decreased inequality substantially.

The problem lies in the delink between these policy interventions and economy-wide restructuring, which changes the overall class structure associated with racialised capitalism. In other words, racial redress is imperative, but it must be based on a political economy logic that challenges neoliberalism while exploring different ways to structure the country's economy. Some examples include connecting racial redress with strengthening public goods, decreasing wage gaps, supporting the care economy and fiscal justice, and exploring contemporary anti-neoliberal economic models.

Lastly, corruption and rent-seeking market failures are characteristics of the general capitalist system. The assertion that these features are peculiar or inherent in racial redress policies is flawed. Political economy literature from both developed and developing economies illustrates how these two phenomena exist in different policy contexts. Thus, black economic empowerment, affirmative action and other forms of set-asides cannot be perceived as outlier causes of corruption. Rent-seeking-related corruption is prevalent and systemic in different capitalist political economies. The real issue is to ensure that interventionist redress policy measures or economic rents are not exploited for non-developmental ends.

The criticism levelled against racial redress from both liberal and conservative advocates is not legitimate. It is drawn from generalisations about corrupt-laden redress policies and underlying biases towards market-led development. This perspective, in the South African context, reinforces racialised socio-economic inequality in different ways. Racial redress is still important for democratising the economy and addressing inequalities, but it must be embedded in wider strategies aimed at fundamentally restructuring the economy.

Cde Mabasa is the economic and social policy lead at Friedrich Ebert Stiftung South Africa and a part-time sociology lecturer at the University of Pretoria. His work focuses on labour studies, political economy and racial capitalism

Safety in communities - you can make a difference

How can we cut crime in our communities? One way is to get involved in Community Policing Forums, writes Sivuyile Ntamehlo



SAPS officers training Community Policing Forum members - community involvement is essential to better crime fighting



In its election manifesto, the ANC-led Alliance commits to fighting crime and corruption, including gender-based violence, drugs and substance abuse. It also commits to a comprehensive approach to crime, emphasising the important role of communities in preventing crime and gender-based violence by adequately resourcing Community Policing Forums (CPFs). This priority is informed by extensive consultation with communities, civil society and private and public sector organisations. As a result of this engagement, the ANC has made this priority one of the key commitments in its manifesto.

Underlying violence in South Africa, as elsewhere, are socio-economic

factors, including unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, drug and alcohol abuse, illegal firearms and their availability. These socio-economic elements have a negative impact on the country's economic performance, and in order to systematically address crime and violence, we need a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

When the SACP Red Brigades from the Joe Slovo District (Northern Cape) visited Ward 03 in Nonzwakazi, De Aar, people complained about the high level of drug use, especially among young unemployed men, and said that this contributed to, among other things, the high

rate of house break-ins where their valuables were stolen. They also pointed out that the stolen goods are sold within the same community, meaning that some community members are aware of these acts but do not inform or cooperate with law enforcement.

To reduce this fear, relevant stakeholders must advocate and mobilise for active community participation in CPFs and street committees working with law enforcement agencies. It cannot be overemphasised that the issue of policing and community safety cannot be left to police officers alone; the whole of society must be involved.

Through these community structures, together with the private and public sectors, we will be able to educate communities about restric-

tive and harmful norms, values, and practices and provide educational programmes for parents, youth, and children, using multiple media such as technology and mobile applications in schools and service delivery sites.

The ANC-led Alliance's manifesto also commits to investing more adequate resources in the fight against crime, which will be accelerated with the full implementation of the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy 2022.

This strategy must be resourced and supported by all stakeholders. It takes into account the full context and cumulative impact of risk factors for crime and violence on a person's life, including individual, community and structural, environmental, developmental, cultur-

al and social dimensions. It recognises the immediate and secondary factors that make individuals vulnerable to violence (from the moment of conception). The socio-ecological model adopted in the strategy recognises that violence is the result of a combination of factors that put people at risk or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence.

Government intervention to address the high cost of living (through a comprehensive social security system) is key to addressing the socio-economic elements that underpin crime in our communities. The phasing in of a Basic Income Support Grant for the unemployed will go a long way in

assisting the unemployed (mainly young people) and may lead to a reduction in the use of drugs and alcohol.

To be effective and achieve sustainable results, law enforcement efforts must be supported by strategies that address the root causes of crime. Crime prevention is a key component of efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth and human development and to ensure that the most vulnerable in society feel free and safe from crime and corruption and the conditions that breed them!

Cde Ntamehlo is the SACP District Secretary of the Joe Slovo District, Northern Cape Province and former Provincial Chairperson of the YCLSA

Get involved in and know your community

Community Policing Forums (CPFs) bring the police and the community together, helping to bridge the gap between the public and the police to solve problems and challenges related to crime.

Supporting and empowering CPFs and CPF Youth Desks play a vital role in supporting crime prevention strategies and

tackling crime in our communities, as well as assisting and guiding the police in addressing a variety of issues and challenges in their local policing area.

To find out more about your local CPF, simply contact your local police station and ask for the date, time and venue of the next CPF meeting.

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Boosting domestic production and jobs would cut food costs

Castro Motau examines the average cost of the family food basket in South Africa for the last five years and current efforts to improve the situation



The ANC has rightly made the cost of living one of its priorities for the next five years, an issue that the SACP has been campaigning on for years. Most political parties contesting the 2024 elections have mentioned this issue but offer very thorny solutions to the problem at hand.

This is a crisis of capitalism, deepened by wars that have radically affected the cost of food and food production. Between 2019 and 2023, South Africa faced a wide range of economic challenges, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions. These factors have had a significant impact on the cost of the food basket for households across South Africa.

Five-year overview

In 2019, the average cost of the food basket for a family of four was about R800 per month. This was a period of sluggish economic growth and high unemployment. The average cost of the food basket was subject to various influences, such as severe droughts affecting maize and wheat prices and fluctuations in currency values affecting imports (Smith, 2019). For exam-

ple, the price of a 10kg bag of rice fluctuated between R120 and R150 due to exchange rate fluctuations.

By 2020, it had risen to around R850 per month due to supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 presented unprecedented challenges globally, and South Africa was no exception.

“*Price controls on key food items aim to prevent excessive price increases and ensure affordability for consumers*”

Strict quarantine measures disrupted the food supply chain, leading to temporary price spikes for essentials such as maize meal and cooking oil. With job losses and reduced incomes, households found it increasingly difficult to afford basic necessities (Jones, 2020). For example, the price

of a 5kg bag of maize meal rose from around R50 to R70 at the pandemic's peak.

By 2021, the average cost had risen further to around R900 per month amid inflationary pressures. South Africa focused on economic recovery efforts, but inflation began to rise. The cost of the food basket remained a concern, particularly for low-income households. Meat prices were volatile due to supply chain disruptions, with the price of a kilogram of beef fluctuating between R80 and R120 throughout the year. In addition, rising fuel costs affected transport costs, which further affected food prices.

By 2022, it stabilised slightly at R880 per month as the economy transitioned. South Africa was in a period of economic transition. Efforts to stabilise the economy led to some price stabilisation within the food basket. However, localised factors such as drought affected potato prices, with a 10kg bag ranging from R60 to R90. Government interventions to support agricultural production also played a role in shaping price trends.

In 2023, costs fluctuated between R850 and R900 per month as recovery efforts continued. Our



Members of unions affiliated with the Cosatu on the march in Cape Town last year as part of a nationwide action protesting the cost of living, corruption and low pay Photo: Ashraf Hendricks, GroundUp

country continued on the road to economic recovery, but challenges remained. The cost of the food basket remained a major concern for many households. For example, the price of a litre of cooking oil fluctuated between R25 and R40 due to changes in global oil prices. Government social assistance programmes were critical in helping vulnerable households access affordable food.

Improvements in 2024

By 2024, the average cost of the food basket for a family of four was about R1 200 per month. Building

on the challenges of the past five years, policymakers and stakeholders implemented several measures to improve the affordability and accessibility of the food basket in 2024. State intervention has targeted price controls on key food items to prevent excessive price increases and ensure affordability for consumers. It has also provided subsidies for key items such as maize meal, cooking oil, and bread, reducing their prices and easing the financial burden on consumers. Increased investment in local agriculture has also been

made to boost production, reduce dependence on imports, and stabilise the prices of staple foods.

The expansion of social protection initiatives has provided additional support to vulnerable households, ensuring their access to nutritious and affordable food. But to reduce the cost of living, the ANC-led government must introduce policies that mitigate externalities such as the rise in import prices for oil, maize and other staples by stimulating local production, creating jobs and hopefully increasing household incomes.

Cde Motau is an alumnus of the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute and Young African Leaders Initiative, a researcher on African Development Economies and a member of the ANC and SACP

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