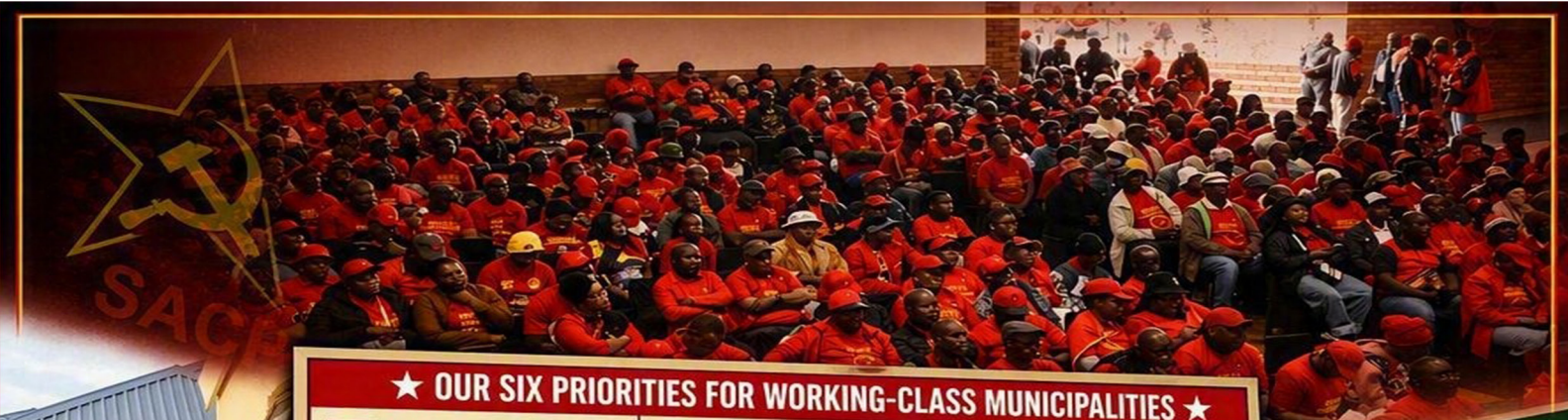


UMSEBENZ!

ONLINE



★ OUR SIX PRIORITIES FOR WORKING-CLASS MUNICIPALITIES ★

1 RELIABLE PUBLIC SERVICES, PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE AND PROMPT REPAIRS



- Water that flows. Lights that work. Streets that are cared for.
- Ward-by-ward audits of water & sanitation.
- Rapid response teams for leaks & sewer spills.
- Fair, pro-poor tariffs for water & electricity.
- End punitive disconnections.
- Proper maintenance of roads in townships & villages.

2 DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS WHERE PEOPLE LIVE



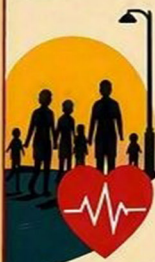
- Municipal Decent Work Plans linked to community needs.
- Prioritise youth employment, skills & co-operatives.
- Support worker, consumer & agricultural co-operatives.
- Protect informal traders & platform workers.
- Build affordable, safe & reliable public transport.

3 LAND, HOMES AND FOOD FOR SOCIAL NEED, NOT PRIVATE PROFIT

- Audit, protect & put public land to work for homes, food production, co-operatives & community facilities.
- Well-located social & affordable housing.
- Upgrade informal settlements with the people.
- End the bucket system.
- Support local food systems, gardens & agricultural co-operatives.



4 SAFE, CARING AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



- Democratic community safety forums.
- Street & area lighting, safe public spaces & youth programmes.
- End gender-based violence and violence against children.
- Strengthen clinics, mental health & primary healthcare.

5 DEMOCRATIC, ACCOUNTABLE AND PEOPLE-CENTRED GOVERNANCE



- Councillors must be accessible & accountable.
- Communities must shape budgets & plans.
- Zero tolerance for corruption & tender capture.
- Take back our municipalities!

6 A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY



- Equality for women, youth, persons with disabilities & all.
- Quality education, ECD & libraries.
- Celebrate our culture, heritage & creativity.
- Build unity, non-racism & solidarity.



SACP 2026 LGE

MANIFESTO LAUNCHED!



1 COUNCIL OF THE LEFT:
NOW WE MUST ORGANISE!

2 SOLIDARITY:
CUBA, IRAN,
PALESTINE



3 PUBLIC CARE IN CRISIS



PEOPLE FIRST! ★ NOT PROFIT! ★ SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE!

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Donate to the SACP to boost the struggle for socialism:
<https://donate.sACP.org.za/>

EDITORIAL

Towards whom does public power lean?



The Road Diggers by the South African artist George Pemba.

On 4 November, for the first time since 1994, the ballot paper will carry the name of the South African Communist Party.

That sentence should be read slowly.

For thirty-two years, working-class people have gone to the polls and found no party on the ballot that said openly what it was: a party of the working class, organised around a socialist programme, accountable to workers and the poor rather than to capital. As the Party's manifesto puts it in this edition, electoral politics has repeatedly presented working-class people with choices without presenting the working-class programme. That absence was never neutral. It created political space for others to present their interests as the interests of society as a whole.

That space is now contested.

This edition of Umsebenzi Online carries the SACP's election manifesto, launched alongside the Party's 105th anniversary. It also carries the constitution of the Council of the Left in Boksburg on 21 August, Cde Pius Vilakati on what the Conference of the Left means for Africa, Cde Thabile Lenkwane on the blockade of Cuba, Cde Aviwe Mohapi on the collapse of imperialism's "peace" with Iran and on youth, STEM and technological sovereignty, Cde Tsholofelo Maseko on menstrual leave, Cde Dineo Majavu on the crisis of public care work, Dr Sizwe Nyenyiso on the limits of clean audits, Cde Sphe Yalo against the unbundling of Eskom, and a report on the attempt to write the Bonteheuwel Military Wing out of the record of the liberation struggle. It is a full edition. But it has one centre of gravity, and readers should be told plainly what it is.

Every party contesting this election says municipalities must work. That is not a programme. It is a description of the problem.

The ANC launched in Diepsloot with a call to build together, promising stable, capable and accountable municipalities with zero tolerance for corruption. The DA launched in Newtown promising to get towns working, and framed its offer as the most implementable in its history — clean water, upgraded roads, reliable electricity, safer communities. The EFF launched in Thohoyandou promising to insource security, cleaning, waste and maintenance, to scrap tenders, to direct a minimum of 80% of municipal procurement locally, and to extend free basic services to grant recipients, the unemployed and the elderly. One commentator, reviewing the DA document, said there was nothing surprising in it. Another observed that voters were tiring of ideology and wanted to know only whether municipalities can be made to work.

“The SACP did not survive that century to become a commentator on other people’s politics.”

We do not accept that framing, and this is the heart of the matter.

The question of whether municipalities work is not a technical question. It is a class question. A municipality that sells well-located public land to private developers while working-class families are pushed to the margins of the city is not a failing municipality — it is a municipality working precisely as capital requires. A municipality that outsources refuse removal to a politically connected contractor while its own workers lack equipment is not incapable. It is making a class choice. Every budget makes choices. Every land allocation makes choices. The manifesto puts the test in one line that should be on every SACP poster: towards whom does public power lean?

Read against that test, the manifestos separate quickly.

The ANC’s difficulty is not the quality of its

promises. It is that it governs nationally in a coalition with the Democratic Alliance while asking working-class voters to believe that municipal collapse will be reversed by the same political arrangement that presides over it. The DA’s difficulty is the opposite and more fundamental: it offers competent administration of the existing distribution of property and power. Clean water and repaired roads are necessary. They are not transformation.

A city can be efficiently run and still be a machine for keeping the poor at its edges — and Cape Town’s disposal of public land makes that concrete rather than theoretical. The EFF’s manifesto is the closest to ours in content, and we say so without hesitation: insourcing, scrapping tenders, free basic services and municipal land access are demands the SACP shares and has long fought for. The difference is not in the shopping list. It is that the SACP does not present these as gifts a party will deliver to the people from the council chamber. We present them as what organised working-class power can win and defend, in the chamber and outside it, between elections and not only at them.

That is what distinguishes this manifesto from all the others on the ballot.

Its six priorities — reliable public services rebuilt through public capacity rather than privatisation; the right to decent work; land, homes and food for social need rather than private profit; safe and caring communities; municipalities free of tender corruption; and councillors who seek mandates and report back — are not administrative undertakings. They are a socialist programme at municipal scale. The manifesto says so directly, and answers the obvious challenge in advance: some will ask, is this really socialism? Yes — because socialism means extending democratic power over the conditions of life.

And it names the thing most parties will not touch: The tender system must be scrapped, not managed. Public provision and in-sourcing must become the norm. When public money flows to tender networks while municipal workers lack tools and young people lack work, that is not development but class accumulation through public resources — a kind of legalised crime. Dr Nyenyiso’s article in this edition sharpens the point from another

direction: a municipality can achieve a clean audit while its residents live with sewage spills and failing water. Compliance is not governance. The Auditor-General's approval is not the same thing as the people's approval.

The manifesto's sixth priority is the one we ask readers to weigh most carefully, because it is the one that cannot be borrowed by anybody else. Democracy cannot mean voting once every five years and then disappearing from political life. That is not what the Freedom Charter meant when it declared that the people shall govern. The SACP is standing for ward assemblies, participatory budgeting, community oversight, and councillors who seek mandates, report back, disclose their interests and remain accountable. A council seat, the manifesto says, must be a post of struggle and service, not a career or a business opportunity.

A vote for the SACP is not a vote to become a spectator. It is a vote to organise.

We should also be honest about scale. The SACP will not win most municipalities on 4 November. That is not the measure. The measure is whether the working class enters this election with its own voice, its own programme and its own candidates — and whether what is built during this campaign survives it. This is where the rest of the edition speaks to the manifesto. The Council of the Left, constituted in Boksburg on 21 August, has already committed to defeating the anti-poor amendments to the Prevention of Illegal Evictions Act and to defending the Expropriation Act against the DA, AfriForum and the Free Market Foundation in the courts and in the streets.

Cde Yalo's argument against unbundling Eskom is the same fight at national scale: public assets held in public hands for public purpose. Cde Majavu's account of the care crisis and Cde Maseko's case

for menstrual leave describe conditions no clean audit will ever capture. Cde Mohapi's argument for technological sovereignty asks who will own the industries the next generation works in.

"The ballot is a front of struggle. It is not the end of struggle"

Internationally, the same principle holds. Cde Lenkwane exposes the oldest trick of the blockade: strangle an economy, then present its suffering as proof that socialism failed. Washington admitted the strategy in 1960 and has pursued it for sixty-six years. Cde Mohapi shows imperialism's collapsed "peace" with Iran to be war conducted by other means. And the attempt to reclassify the Bonteheuwel Military Wing out of MK reminds us that even memory is contested terrain — that a state can write soldiers of the liberation struggle out of the record with a database.

One hundred and five years. Banned, driven underground, its members imprisoned, exiled and killed, the SACP organised workers when capitalism and apartheid worked to divide them. It did not survive that century in order to become a commentator on other people's politics.

On 4 November, the working class can vote for itself.

Register. Organise. Campaign. Take the manifesto door to door, and when the election is over, keep the branch that built the campaign. This is our contract, our programme and our weapon.

Vote SACP on 4 November! Forward to organised people's power! Forward to socialism!

SACP ELECTION MANIFESTO – VOTE SACP 4 NOV 2026

This is our contract. This is our programme. This is our weapon. Take it. Organise with it. Defend it. Vote for it.

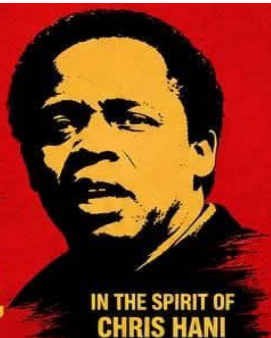


SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

2026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION MANIFESTO

**BUILD PEOPLE'S POWER WHERE WE LIVE
FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK, WATER, ELECTRICITY,
ROADS, LAND AND SAFETY FOR ALL**

 **A municipality that works. A councillor who answers to you.
A community with the power to shape its future.**



**IN THE SPIRIT OF
CHRIS HANI
THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!**

OUR CONTRACT WITH YOU

Every day, millions of South Africans do everything asked of them and still cannot live with dignity. This is not the democracy our people fought for.

The SACP is contesting the 2026 local government elections independently because the working class needs its own political voice, its own candidates and its own programme. We are here to build people's power and turn municipalities into instruments that serve workers and the poor.

A vote can elect a councillor. Only an organised people can change the balance of power.

★ **OUR SIX PRIORITIES FOR WORKING-CLASS MUNICIPALITIES** ★

1 RELIABLE PUBLIC SERVICES, PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE AND PROMPT REPAIRS  • Water that flows. Lights that work. Streets that are cared for. • Ward-by-ward audits of water & sanitation. • Rapid response teams for leaks & sewer spills. • Fair, pro-poor tariffs for water & electricity. • End punitive disconnections. • Proper maintenance of roads in townships & villages.	2 DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS WHERE PEOPLE LIVE  • Municipal Decent Work Plans linked to community needs. • Prioritise youth employment, skills & co-operatives. • Support worker, consumer & agricultural co-operatives. • Protect informal traders & platform workers. • Build affordable, safe & reliable public transport.	3 LAND, HOMES AND FOOD FOR SOCIAL NEED, NOT PRIVATE PROFIT  • Audit, protect & put public land to work for homes, food production, co-operatives & community facilities. • Well-located social & affordable housing. • Upgrade informal settlements with the people. • End the bucket system. • Support local food systems, gardens & agricultural co-operatives.
4 SAFE, CARING AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES  • Democratic community safety forums. • Street & area lighting, safe public spaces & youth programmes. • End gender-based violence and violence against children. • Strengthen clinics, mental health & primary healthcare.	5 DEMOCRATIC, ACCOUNTABLE AND PEOPLE-CENTRED GOVERNANCE  • Councillors must be accessible & accountable. • Communities must shape budgets & plans. • Zero tolerance for corruption & tender capture. • Take back our municipalities!	6 A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY  • Equality for women, youth, persons with disabilities & all. • Quality education, ECD & libraries. • Celebrate our culture, heritage & creativity. • Build unity, non-racialism & solidarity.

**“ WE ARE NOT HERE TO ADD POLITICIANS TO COUNCILS.
WE ARE HERE TO BUILD PEOPLE'S POWER! ”**

VOTE SACP 

**ON 04 NOVEMBER 2026
IN ALL BALLOTS!**

WARD COUNCILLOR • LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

**PEOPLE FIRST!
NOT PROFIT!
SOCIALISM IS
THE FUTURE!**



★ **FORWARD WITH SOCIALISM!** | **ORGANISE! ★ MOBILISE! ★ VOTE SACP!** | **THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES – THE VICTORY IS CERTAIN!** ★

The following is an extract from the SACP statement issued on the 105th anniversary of the Party and the launch of its election manifesto for the 4 November Local Government Elections

A new electoral front to advance the NDR in the new era

For the first time since the historic democratic breakthrough of 1994, the SACP is contesting elections directly and independently under its own name. This is an important step. It is not a substitute for Alliance reconfiguration. It is not a withdrawal from the national democratic revolution. It is not a departure from the broader struggle for socialism. It is a necessary contribution to all three.

The SACP will now not only exercise its hard-won democratic right to vote but also stand for election. We are doing so because the working class needs to move beyond a class in itself to become a class for itself, a class with its own political voice, its own programme and its own candidates in elections and other processes and to fix the collapsing municipalities.

For too long, electoral politics has often presented working-class people with choices without sufficiently presenting the working-class programme. Especially the absence of scientific socialist politics and alternatives, inseparable from its connection with the national democratic revolution, has disadvantaged the working class in electoral contests.

The absence of a visible socialist electoral struggle creates political space for other forces, needless to mention the whole series of right-wing and anti-Freedom Charter neoliberal forces, to present their interests as if they were the interests of society as a whole. We are not leaving that space uncontested. Our electoral intervention is therefore a new front in the struggle.

We are taking the struggle for people's power (socialism) into the council chamber, into communities and into the electoral arena, while continuing the struggle in workplaces, trade unions, civil society and every other arena in which class forces confront one another. A vote



SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila at the Party's 105th anniversary commemoration and the launch of its Local Government Elections manifesto, Tshwane University of Technology Soshanguve Campus, 16 August.

for the SACP is not a vote to become a spectator and mere critic and commentator of politics. It is a vote to organise and impact decision-making for the working class for basic needs.

Build people's power where we live

Our manifesto puts people first, particularly the workers and poor who constitute the majority of our society. People want to realise their right to work in practice.

People want water that flows. They want electricity they can afford. People want proper roads in rural areas. They want roads without potholes in both rural and urban areas. People want reliable refuse removal, functioning sanitation and properly maintained public facilities. They want decent healthcare. They want safe streets. They want their

children to have a guaranteed better future and want them to go to school in a free and conducive environment.

People want land for homes and food. They want municipalities that answer to them. And they want to know what happens to every rand of public money. These are not unreasonable demands. They are elementary requirements of a dignified life.

The SACP manifesto therefore advances six interconnected priorities



First: Reliable public services, preventative maintenance and prompt repairs.

We reject the idea that failures in the provision of public services must lead to privatisation. These failures are, among other factors, a result of privatisation, outsourcing, corruption and other neo-liberal policies. We will rebuild public capacity, employ and equip municipal workers and bring essential work back into public provision wherever feasible.



Photo: Asraf Hendricks/
GroundUp

Second: The right to work, decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

Every person who is willing and able to work must have access to decent, productive and socially useful work. Work must provide dignity and livelihood, not precarious survival.

Municipalities must use public employment, insourcing, land, infrastructure, apprenticeships, experiential training, internships, co-operatives and municipal public enterprises to expand decent work.



Third: Land, homes and food for social need, not private profit.

Land must serve

human needs: life.

Public land must be released for housing, food production, cooperatives and community facilities. Hunger in a country capable of producing abundant food is a political failure. Land cannot be treated as a commodity when our people need it to live. Private ownership must not stand above public interest. Where land is required to meet the needs of the people, including in the metros and cities, the state must have the power to acquire it, including through expropriation in the public interest.

We must use municipal power to dismantle apartheid spatial planning, not reproduce it under new conditions.

The Constitution itself does not place private property above the public interest. Section 25 expressly provides that no provision of the section may impede the state from taking legislative and other measures to achieve equitable access to land, water and other natural resources. The Constitution therefore provides a basis for, and does not prohibit, transformative measures to address the profound inequalities in land ownership and access created by colonialism and apartheid.

“The working class needs to move beyond a class in itself to become a class for itself...”

We must transform land ownership and redistribute land to redress the historical and continuing consequences of racial and gender discrimination. This struggle must reach every municipality and include support for productive land use in any sector of the economy to fight unemployment, poverty and inequality.

It cannot be right for a municipality, as the Cape Metro has done, to sell well-located public land to private owners while working-class families remain excluded from land, pushed to the margins of our cities and towns, and cramped in squatter camps. This must stop in every municipality across South Africa. Public land must not be converted into private wealth while our people are denied

spatial justice. That is why we must reject, with the contempt it deserves, the call for the actual privatisation of municipalities by some parties.



Photo: MambaOnline

Fourth: Safe, caring and healthy communities.

Safety cannot be reduced to slogans.

We need functioning public services, accountable policing, organised communities, youth development, safe public spaces and effective action against criminal syndicates, drug dealing, stock theft, extortion, infrastructure vandalism and looting and other crimes.



Fifth: Municipalities free from tender corruption and capture.

We say without hesitation that the

corrupt tender system must be scrapped. Every rand must be traceable. Every contract must be accountable. Public provision and in-sourcing must be the norm or the new normal where municipalities have the capacity to do the work.

When public money goes to the corrupt tender networks and mafias while municipal workers lack tools, equipment and resources, and young people lack work, wealth is transferred from the people to the few. That is not development. It is class accumulation through public resources. It is a kind of legalised crime.



Sixth, councillors who answer to the people and people who have a real say

Democracy cannot mean voting once

every five years and then disappearing from political life. This is not what the Freedom Charter meant when it declared, "The People Shall Govern!"

The people's government cannot be reduced to periodic elections in which people choose

representatives and are then expected to withdraw from public life while decisions are made without them. Nor can the people's government be reduced to governance through tenders and consultants, through capitalist entrepreneurs and consultants who increasingly become substitutes for the state's own capacity, expertise and democratic accountability.

"The People Shall Govern" means that the people must have a meaningful and organised say in the decisions that affect their lives. It means democratic participation must continue between elections. Workers and communities must participate in determining priorities, shaping plans, allocating resources, monitoring implementation and holding public representatives and officials accountable.

We cannot claim that the people govern when communities are consulted only after decisions have already been made or cannot be changed in what is called "consultation". When public representatives do not seek mandates and do not report back to the people or when consultants, entrepreneurs and their foreign-controlled establishments are brought in to make decisions that properly belong to democratically accountable public institutions.

The SACP understands people's power as organised people's power. It is not a government on behalf of the people without the people. It is a government with and for the people and accountable to the people. This is what we mean when we say, "The people shall govern".

"The absence of a visible socialist electoral struggle creates political space for other forces"

For the working class, democracy must not end at the workplace gate or at the ballot box. Democracy must increasingly be connected to economic democracy, to democratic control over land, means of production, public resources, the wealth produced, its distribution, and the institutions through which society reproduces itself.

We want ward assemblies, democratic

"We reject the idea that failures in the provision of public services must lead to privatisation."

participatory budgeting, community oversight, active worker organisation and councillors who seek mandates and report back regularly, disclose their interests and remain accountable to the people. A council seat must be a post of struggle and service, not a career or a business opportunity.

This is a socialist programme in practice

Some will ask, is this really socialism? Yes. Because socialism means extending democratic power over the conditions of life. Socialism means that public ownership must have a public purpose. It means building collective rather than narrow individual solutions. Socialism means public ownership and provision, community control and participatory democracy, collective worker ownership, co-operatives and real people's power in decision-making processes and in economic production. It means putting production at the service of human need. Socialism means building the power of the working class and doing away with the power of private monopolies over human needs. It means building the organised capacity of the working class to become a class for itself, conscious of its interests and capable of acting upon them.

"Every person who is willing and able to work must have access to decent, productive and socially useful work."

We are aware that a municipality cannot build socialism by itself. But every municipality can contribute to the class struggle. Every budget makes choices. Every land allocation makes choices. Every decision makes choices. These choices are political and class choices. They always lean to a class; the workers and the poor belong

to the working class. Now that political power in South Africa has been returned to the ruling class, which is monopoly capital, the working class must wake up and smell the coffee and vote for itself as a class.

Our councillors must always be guided by working-class interests and always question: Towards whom does public power lean? Towards private accumulation or social need? Towards tender parasites or public capacity? Towards the few or the many? Towards passive citizenship or organised people's power?

We choose the working class. We choose the people. We choose to defend the NDR and deepen the path to socialism.

A new chapter has been opened for the working class in South Africa

The SACP is 105 years old. We carry forward the legacy of generations of communists who fought when the odds were overwhelmingly against them. They organised workers when capitalism, racially articulated and through patriarchy, sought to divide them. They fought apartheid when repression was brutal. They went underground when the Communist Party was banned. They helped build the liberation movement, the trade union movement and the advance to a democratic South Africa.

"Land must serve human needs: life."

While we have lost others to death, through natural attrition, martyrdom and other circumstances, others remain among us, living side by side with the generations that followed them.

We honour them and that history not by looking backwards but by making history ourselves, advancing forward, taking our cue from the best of their revolutionary and democratic practices.

Today we launch this manifesto as a working-class platform for a new stage of struggle in the new era. We are not promising miracles. We stand for organisation, revolutionary discipline, honest public service and struggle. We are saying to

workers and the poor, organise as a class. Organise in the workplace. Organise in the community. Organise in the ward. Organise around the right to work for all, water, electricity, roads, land, food, housing, healthcare, safety and public services.

“Safety cannot be reduced to slogans.”

Build people’s power where you live. Take public institutions back from tenderisation, corruption, capture and private profiteering. Build the capacity of the local state to serve society. Build a people’s economy. Strengthen the organised working class. Advance the NDR in the new era and deepen the struggle for socialism.

“We say without hesitation that the corrupt tender system must be scrapped.”

Elections and the ballot are but one front of the broader political struggle. These are not the whole of the class struggle. Our candidates must be organisers, educators and servants of the people. Our councillors must remain accountable. Our communities must remain organised.

And the Communist Party must remain a Marxist-Leninist working-class Party, rooted among the people and guided by the obtaining material conditions of the people: scientific socialism. The capitalist system tells us that what is profitable must come first. We say people must always come first before profit. We stand for public need as second to none. We build working-class power and solidarity. We say organise and struggle now because the poor cannot postpone hunger or thirst and endure sickness any longer.

“Democracy cannot mean voting once every five years and then disappearing from political life.”

After 105 years, the Communist Party remains committed to the revolutionary proposition that

another South Africa is possible and necessary. A South Africa where the wealth created by working people serves society. A South Africa where no person who wants to work is condemned to unemployment. A South Africa where no child goes hungry while land lies idle. A South Africa where water flows, electricity works, roads are maintained, schooling is available for all for free, and healthcare is accessible and free. A South Africa where public power belongs to the people. A South Africa advancing from political democracy towards social and economic emancipation.

“Some will ask, is this really socialism? Yes. Because socialism means extending democratic power over the conditions of life. Some will ask, is this really socialism? Yes. Because socialism means extending democratic power over the conditions of life..”

That is the road to socialism. That is the meaning of this manifesto. That is the task before us. This is the SACP 2026 Local Government Election Manifesto.

Build people’s power where we live, for the right to work, land, food, roads and safety

This is our contract. This is our programme. This is our weapon. Take it. Organise with it. Defend it. Vote for it. The working class must speak in its own name. The working class must fight in its own name. The working class must win in its own name and not be tricked by representatives of the ruling class chanting revolutionary slogans.

VOTE SACP ON 4 NOVEMBER 2026!

Forward to people’s power!
Socialism is the future: build it now!
Down with Capitalism!
Forward to Socialism!

SACP 105TH ANNIVERSARY

A Party that never abandoned the working class



SACP leaders and activists celebrating the 105th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of South Africa. In the centre, from left, Cde Madala Masuku, First Deputy General Secretary; Cde Joyce Moloi-Moropa, National Treasurer; Cde Solly Mapaila, SACP General Secretary.

From the SACP statement issued on 16 August to mark the 105th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of South Africa in Cape Town, 30 July – 1 August 1921.

This is not simply an anniversary celebration. It is a moment of remembrance but also of political determination, of a new era in our class struggle. We celebrate 105 years of unbroke-

ken militant revolutionary working struggle for national liberation, people's power and socialism. But also 105 years of communist organisation and frontline sacrifice in the liberation struggle.

We do so by recommitting ourselves to the working-class struggles that gave birth to our Party. These struggles continue to define its purpose: the mother of all struggles, the struggle to end all forms

of human exploitation, oppression, inequality and the transfer of wealth, economic and social power to the people to build a prosperous, non-sexist, non-racial, democratic and socialist South Africa. That struggle is called socialism.

From its earliest years, the Communist Party fought to unite workers across racial divisions and played a pioneering role in advancing non-racialism and organising workers. It became an important force in building the liberation movement, the progressive trade union movement and the liberation Alliance, pursuing the revolution to end British colonialism and imperialism as well as pursuing the struggle against national oppression and ending racism.

Its objective was to create a non-racial society and fight capitalist exploitation and control of our economy for imperial purposes, end class exploitation and create a classless society – an equal society – and fight against patriarchal power relations and gender oppression and create a non-sexist society, the totality of national liberation. We simplify this as the revolutionary tools of race, class, gender and anti-imperial struggles. It quickly rooted itself among black workers. By the late 1920s, most of its members were African. It pioneered the call for black majority rule.

The CPSA was the first organisation to be banned by the apartheid regime in April 1950. In anticipation of the banning order, it dissolved itself but did

not surrender. It continued its work with a three-person Central Committee and Political Bureau led by the General Secretary Moses Kotane with Walter Sisulu and Michael Hermel. This committee was mandated to take all decisions in the best interest of the working class and to task reliable comrades and reorganise.

The Party then reconstituted itself underground in 1953 as the South African Communist Party – the SACP.

In 1961, together with the ANC, the SACP launched uMkhonto we Sizwe. Through exile, underground work, imprisonment and death, the Party remained unbroken. It produced leaders of the calibre of Moses Kotane, JB Marks, Yusuf Dadoo, Joe Slovo, Moses Mabhida, John Nkadimeng, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Josie Mpama, Josie Palmer, Dan Tloome, Mama Nomaka Epainette Mbeki, Ruth First, Lilian Ngoyi, and the martyrs of our collective struggle, the symbol of centuries of the collective pain of our people, and the martyr of our struggle Martin Thembisile ‘Christopher’ Hani, whose cowardly assassination by the right-wing forces finally gave us April 27, 1994, as a day to vote for the government of our choice.

That is the Party whose birthday we mark. A Party that never abandoned the working class. A Party that still carries the responsibility to organise the working class as a class for itself.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

SACP maps road from the ballot box to working-class power



The SACP has not walked away from the Alliance but firmly remains part of it while pursuing its reconfiguration.” SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila briefing the media following the Central Committee’s 13th Plenary of the 15th Party Congress, held in Johannesburg from 28 to 30 August 2026.

UMSEBENZI ONLINE

The SACP has set out an ambitious political programme combining its historic independent electoral contest with a wider campaign against unemployment, failing public services, crime, corruption and the continuing concentration of economic power.

The Party’s Central Committee, meeting at COSATU House in Braamfontein from 28 to 30 August, convened at a defining point in the SACP’s 105-year history. It followed the launch of the Party’s 2026 Local Government Election Manifesto and came as preparations intensified for the 4 November municipal elections.

At the centre of the deliberations was a political question extending beyond the elections: how to rebuild working-class political power in a South Africa where political democracy has not yet translated into economic emancipation for millions of people.

The Central Committee confirmed that the SACP had submitted its candidate lists to the Independent Electoral Commission on time and will field 4,418 ward candidates, alongside proportional representation candidates across the country.

The lists extend beyond Party membership and include community activists and people drawn from faith-based and traditional communities — part of an attempt to build a broader popular movement around the electoral campaign. SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila, addressing the media after the Central Committee, said the Party’s decision to contest independently should not be confused with abandoning the Alliance.

“The SACP has not walked away from the Alliance but firmly remains part of it while pursuing its reconfiguration.”

Cde Mapaila said the Party was exercising its “political, ideological and organisational independence”, while seeking to rebuild working-class representation.

That distinction assumes particular significance as the SACP contests elections in its own name following more than two decades of unsuccessful attempts to achieve the reconfiguration of the Alliance.

Structural crisis

But the Central Committee sought to place the electoral decision within the material conditions confronting South Africans.

Official unemployment reached 33.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2026, with approximately 8.5 million people unemployed. The expanded unemployment rate was about 44 per cent, affecting roughly 13 million people. Women remain disproportionately affected, while youth unemployment continues at crisis levels.

“The SACP submitted its candidate lists to the Independent Electoral Commission on time and will field 4,418 ward candidates, alongside proportional representation candidates across the country.”

For the SACP, these numbers are not simply indicators of poor economic performance. They point to a structural crisis rooted in de-industrialisation, unequal patterns of ownership and an economic model unable to create work and livelihoods on the scale required.

The Party consequently called for reindustrialisation, an expanded public economy, strategic public ownership and major investment in electricity, water, roads, rail, ports, telecommunications and digital infrastructure.

These national economic questions are being

connected directly to the municipal campaign.

People’s municipalities

The SACP manifesto advances what it calls “People’s Municipalities” — municipalities capable of providing reliable services, creating decent work and enabling communities to exercise greater control over local development.

Cde Mapaila told the press briefing that the election campaign would be used to fight the corrupt tender system, privatisation and unnecessary outsourcing.

“The Central Committee called for the reconstruction of policing, crime intelligence, investigative and prosecutorial capacity, while warning against xenophobic attempts to blame foreign nationals for South Africa’s social crisis.”

“Public employment, co-operatives, land and participatory budgeting are important measures through which communities can gain greater control over the conditions of their lives.”

The Party is advocating greater insourcing, properly resourced municipal workers, participatory planning, local production and councillors directly accountable to communities.

Crime and the deteriorating criminal justice system also featured prominently. The Central Committee called for the reconstruction of policing, crime intelligence, investigative and prosecutorial capacity, while warning against xenophobic attempts to blame foreign nationals for South Africa’s social crisis.

It argued that any sustainable response to crime must confront its relationship with unemployment, poverty, inequality and the weakening of state institutions.

Left unity

The Central Committee also welcomed the growing effort to build broader Left unity following the May Conference of the Left, which brought together more than 114 political, trade union, community, youth, women's and other progressive formations. The SACP has since been elected convenor of the Council of the Left.

Taken together, the decisions point to an electoral strategy seeking to achieve more than representation in municipal councils.

The Party has described the election campaign as “a new front of class struggle” — an opportunity to organise workers and communities, confront corruption, rebuild democratic participation and strengthen a broader socialist movement.

For the SACP, therefore, 4 November is not an end point. The larger test is whether the electoral contest can help build lasting organisation and shift the balance of political and economic power towards the working class.



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LEFT UNITY IN ACTION

Council of the Left constituted: Now We Must Organise



The inaugural meeting of the Council of the Left took place on Friday, 21 August 2026, at Birchwood Hotel, bringing together representatives of political organisations, trade unions, social movements, community organisations and other progressive formations that participated in the Conference of the Left held in May this year.

UMSEBENZI ONLINE

On Friday, 21 August 2026, the inaugural meeting of the Council of the Left took place in Boksburg, bringing together political organisations, trade unions, social movements and community formations that had participated in May's Conference of the Left.

The meeting formally constituted the Council and began translating that conference's Declaration and Programme of Action into organisation, campaigning and collective action.

The inaugural meeting committed to an immediate programme of struggle focused on:

- Joining the mass campaign to reject and defeat the anti-poor Prevention of Illegal Evictions Act Amendment Bill
- Defending the Expropriation Act against attacks from the DA, Afriforum, Die Vaderland Stigting and the Free Market Foundation, through court action and mass mobilisation
- Mobilising for the Equitable Access to Land Bill to become effective law for land redistribution and security of tenure
- Using the coming Budget days to campaign for fiscal resources to meet basic needs and address the cost of living
- Mobilising for Parliament to debate and adopt a Cuba Solidarity Bill, alongside continued material support for the Cuban people

Coordinating platform

The statement makes clear what the Council is not: not a new political party, not an umbrella body, and not a leadership structure standing above existing organisations. Instead, it describes itself as a political and coordinating platform through which different left formations can build unity in action while keeping their own independence, identities and mandates.

Its success, says the statement, won't be measured by meetings held or statements issued, but by whether it makes workers and poor communities better organised and more capable of shifting the balance of forces in society.

"Unity, the statement stresses, will be built through common struggle rather than declarations."

Mass actions needed

On land and housing, the Council frames the PIE Amendment Bill as turning a social crisis into a criminal justice problem, rooted in unresolved apartheid spatial geography, failed land reform and a housing market that excludes the poor. It commits to opposing arbitrary eviction while pushing the national conversation toward deeper questions of land ownership and redistribution.

Linked to this, the Council calls for mass action to defend the Expropriation Act at upcoming court dates (15–16 October and 7–9 December) and backs the Equitable Access to Land Bill, which it wants to see become a serious instrument for large-scale redistribution rather than a narrow administrative tool — citing the Constitutional Court's Tafelberg judgment as reinforcing this direction.

On the economy, the Council rejects the idea that falling inflation equates to relief for households, arguing that cumulative cost increases in food, transport and electricity remain embedded in family budgets regardless of the headline CPI figure. It calls for a confrontation with austerity, arguing South Africa cannot cut its way out of

unemployment and inequality, and frames the budget as an inherently political document — "who pays, who benefits."

Ahead of the Medium-Term Budget (end of October) and the 2027/28 Budget (February 2027), the Council commits to building a working-class alternative to austerity, including greater public investment, rebuilt state and municipal capacity, expanded public employment, and progressive taxation of wealth and corporate profits.

Build a 'mass-rooted Left'

A list of further demands includes zero-rating essential goods, action against profiteering, movement toward a Universal Basic Income Grant, improved social grants, affordable transport and electricity, filled public-service vacancies, and state-led industrialisation.

The statement also reaffirms international solidarity and anti-imperialism, repeating the commitment to a Cuba Solidarity Bill and material support for Cuba.

"The future will not be given to us. It must be organised"

Closing on the theme of building a "mass-rooted Left," the statement argues South Africa's problem isn't a shortage of organisations, manifestos or leaders, but weak organised working-class power in workplaces and communities.

It sets out a theory of change: struggles over evictions, expropriation, austerity, the cost of living and privatisation must each become part of rebuilding broader movements — for land and housing, for redistribution, for public services, for democratic public provision.

Unity, the statement stresses, will be built through common struggle rather than declarations, and land redistribution and economic transformation will require organised social power, not legislation or argument alone: "The future will not be given to us. It must be organised."

LEFT UNITY IN ACTION

Conference of the Left – an inspiration to the African people against imperialism



The Conference of the Left positioned itself as a force against imperialism.

Key points

- Conference of the Left (29–31 May) had a strongly internationalist character
- SA's freedom is tied to regional working-class liberation, not just national struggle
- Mozambique and Swaziland/Eswatini are frontline cases of imperialist destabilisation
- ALNEF must develop into a continental counter to neocolonialism

The importance and influence of the South African Tripartite Alliance in the continent is now acknowledged across the world, as it made an historical contribution to the liberation of the African people and, to that extent, still remains an inspiration for the African people's aspirations for liberation beyond neocolonialism.

It is for this reason that the Conference of the Left, held 29-31 May this year, whilst primarily led and organised by the South African Communist Party (SACP), joined by other South African political organisations, should not be seen merely as a purely South African occasion but an international one.

Internationalist character

The Conference of the Left did not mince its words, as it affirmed its progressive internationalism and



PIUS VILAKATI

The importance of the unity of the African peoples is profoundly acknowledged across the working-class movement. This is also acknowledged by the African liberation movements.

radical Pan-Africanism as its strategic principles. It characterised its struggle as part of “a wider world struggle against capitalism, neocolonialism, imperialism, racism, patriarchy, war, occupation, sanctions and economic domination.”

Accordingly, as the Conference stood for peace, against war and militarism, and against imperialist aggression, it stands to reason that the Conference’s outlook must represent the liberation prospects of the African peoples.

“A free and democratic South Africa will not survive without the freedom of the rest of the region.”

The Conference attracted participation from progressive organisations and individuals from Zambia, Swaziland, Mozambique, South America, and Asia, among others. These forces presented the practical internationalist understanding of the Conference.

Drawing inspiration from the understanding, as Marx and Engels understood as far back as 1847, that the “relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labour and internal intercourse...” and also that “the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse”, the question of cross-border alliances becomes urgent.

In other words, a free and democratic South Africa will not survive without the freedom of the rest of the region. Freedom, in this respect, refers to working-class freedom.

Urgent need to build African working-class solidarity

It is therefore crucial for the Conference of the Left to exert influence on the rest of the African continent as it expands.

Correctly so, the Conference of the Left positioned itself as a force against imperialism. It has

positioned the working-class struggle for peace in South Africa as inseparable from the struggle against imperialism, occupation, sanctions, resource plunder and the domination of weaker nations by powerful ones.

This is because Africa remains trapped in systems of dependency created and reproduced by imperialism: debt dependency, unequal trade, extractive export structures, foreign control of strategic resources, currency vulnerability, illicit financial flows, and dependence on institutions that discipline sovereign development.

Expand the operation of the Conference of the Left

As stated by the Conference, the task is not isolation from the world. Delinking from imperialist dependency must mean deepening integration within Africa and the Global South.

The most immediate task, however, must be to protect African sovereignty, as we face intensified imperialist aggression – not least the “white genocide” narrative manufactured by the US Trump administration. Additionally, we should also take inspiration from the anti-imperialist actions taking place in the Sahel region.

Accordingly, the practical fight against imperialism cannot merely be constrained within national borders. In this regard, the Conference of the Left did not mince its words in standing up against xenophobia. Many of those forces which sought to divide the African people have been exposed as puppets of imperialism.

“The most immediate task must be to protect African sovereignty, as we face intensified imperialist aggression.”

Turn national struggles into international revolutionary tasks

As the Conference stated that it does not seek to isolate itself from the world, it is important to

inspire the working-class forces within the region to strengthen themselves towards total liberation.

progressive South Africa, for that might mean the ruin of the entire revolutionary cause in Africa.

Imperialist forces have for a long time worked to destabilise the people of Mozambique – who have endured decades of imperialist aggression. Recently, the Mozambicans endured further attacks following the discovery of offshore multi-billion-dollar natural

gas. The Conference must strengthen its relations with progressive forces such as Frelimo to safeguard the Mozambican people's interests in light of these developments.

On the other hand, the Communist Party of Swaziland, along with other Swazi progressive forces, continues to defend the people against the imperialist onslaught by Taiwan as a proxy for US imperialism. Our revolutionary forces must work together to prevent an encirclement of a

Eventually, we must unite our forces to build the African Left Networking Forum (ALNEF) and allow ALNEF to grow to be what it should be – a revolutionary force for the total emancipation of our African continent, free from neocolonialism.

“The practical fight against imperialism cannot merely be constrained within national borders.”

Let us unite to build, as the Conference pronounced, our continent's and the Global South's economic integration based on industrialisation, food sovereignty, public control over strategic resources, regional value chains, shared infrastructure, technology transfer, and cooperation among workers, peasants, women, youth and progressive states.

Cde Pius Vilakati is the International Secretary of the Communist Party of Swaziland.

PEOPLE'S RED CARAVAN

A day inside the People's Red Caravan



SACP leaders and local community members during the PRC at Hlokozi, Zamafuthi Village, Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal, in February.

Key points

- Fifth PRC activation in Hlokozi/Zamafuthi (Harry Gwala District) delivered ID, SASSA, health, farming and infrastructure support over seven days
- Large-scale planting (20,000+ seedlings, beans, potatoes, avocados) plus crèche repairs, poultry and beekeeping projects
- Open debate on unfinished infrastructure, policing gaps, and whether the week is a foundation or just a flourish
- Concrete wins: documented case for a mobile clinic, new disability organisation registered, school roofing completed
- Closed with a march and handover, ending on the open question of what the community sustains after the Caravan leaves



THULILE KUMALO

A look back at when the PRC took place at Hlokozi, Zamafuthi Village, Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal, in mid-February.

The dew had not yet burned off the maize fields when the first sounds of the day reached the SACP's red tent: hoes striking soil, a woman calling her neighbour's name across a fence line, a bakkie grinding up the dirt track toward Ntapha Hall.

This was the fifth activation of the People's Red Caravan (PRC), the SACP's roving, week-long campaign of grassroots self-reliance, forty kilometres outside Ixopo in a cluster of homesteads most maps barely register. Hlokozi and Zamafuthi sit in the Harry Gwala District — the ground Cde Gwala organised on, decades before democracy, for a dignity that had still not fully arrived. Around

2,700 people live there, in households where nearly half were headed by women and roughly one in five by children. Some thirty households have had no electricity or basic services at all.

The tent

By mid-morning the tent was doing three things at once. Home Affairs officials processed old green ID books into smart cards, chased late birth registrations, and untangled cases of stolen identity, while SASSA workers took grant applications nearby. Outside, a queue for the mobile clinic snaked past a table where volunteers handed out toiletry bags and donated shoes.

Comrades in gumboots

Past the hall, teams spent three days ploughing and planting — twenty thousand spinach seedlings, close to a hectare and a half under beans, hundreds of potato plants, and dozens of avocado saplings. A volunteer roofing crew repaired the crèche, a poultry structure went up for four hundred already-secured chickens, and someone started a beehive.

Not everyone there was SACP. A cluster of unemployed graduates, some travelled from as far as Lesotho, joined the food-security stream not looking for jobs but talking about becoming shareholders in cooperatives instead. “We are not waiting for change — we are building it,” one volunteer said, and the line was repeated through the day like it had already become shorthand for the week.

The argument under the tent poles

Not everything was agreement. In the infrastructure stream there was frustration about how much would not get finished in seven days — a community hall needing water and power restored, ablution blocks at Luswazi Secondary School still waiting on capital investment, roads that endangered schoolchildren and slowed ambulances. Given the scope of need against a week’s resources, some of it was always going to stay unfinished.

There was a harder argument in the safety stream too. Meetings with the Izinduna, the

traditional leaders, turned to crime and gender-based violence, and to letters being drafted to the provincial police commissioner and premier about policing that was not showing up. Someone raised reviving the Community Policing Forum; someone else said what was needed was street committees with real teeth. No one resolved it by evening; it was carried into the next day’s agenda.

Underneath it all ran the debate that follows every PRC activation: was a week of red T-shirts and planted seedlings a foundation, or a flourish? The measure was not what got planted that week, but whether the district structure would still show up in March, June, and the next planting season, once the brass band had gone home.

What a victory looked like here

At Hlokozi Clinic, a small win surfaced without ceremony: a field assessment confirmed what residents had said for years — that the nearest reliable health services were nearly seven kilometres off, and what was needed was a mobile clinic, not another data point in a report. Not a delivered service, but a documented, undeniable case for one.

A new organisation, Mpelonhle-Mpilonde, was also registered before the week was out — a structure for people living with disabilities, born out of conversations in the health stream once it became clear how many households were affected. It came not from a head office but from people deciding the gap was theirs to close.

On the last afternoon, roofing and renovation work at Luswazi Secondary School got a final coat before handover — exactly what would keep a classroom dry through the next rainy season.

The march

On the seventh day, the tools went down and the tent filled for the last time. About 160 people — mostly mothers, many in the SACP’s red, children weaving between the adults, elders watching from the edges — formed up behind a brass band and marched to Ntapha Hall for the handover meeting, the band playing the Internationale over hills that had heard a great many things in their time, but perhaps not quite that.

Inside, the tallies were read out: seedlings in the ground, a hall with water and power again, IDs processed, cooperatives on paper waiting to become cooperatives in practice. There was applause, and a sober note from the district leadership acknowledging the glitches, the half-done projects, and the resource limits no seven days could out-organise. Nobody pretended the week was finished.

By the next morning the tent was down, and the visiting comrades' bakkies were gone from the

yard. What remained was the test the organisers kept naming out loud: whether the branch and the district could keep this going without the red flags and the brass band — whether the people of Hlokozi and Zamafuthi, as one organiser put it, would take over the shaping of their own lives now that the Caravan had moved on.

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

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Cuba: They make the economy scream, then declare socialism a failure



THABILE LENKWANE

There is a familiar dishonesty in how the crisis in Cuba is being presented. We are shown blackouts, food shortages, collapsing infrastructure and growing public frustration, and then told that socialism has finally failed.

What is deliberately concealed is the imperialist hand tightening around the Cuban economy. Cuba is not merely experiencing an internal economic collapse; it is being subjected to an economic, commercial and financial blockade by the US. The purpose is not to correct Cuban policy or advance democracy. It is to make the country ungovernable, deepen the suffering of ordinary Cubans and turn that suffering against the Revolution.

Washington admitted this as early as 1960. US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Lester Mallory observed that the Cuban Revolution enjoyed popular support and that there was no effective internal opposition capable of overthrowing it.

He therefore recommended weakening Cuba's economy by denying it money and supplies, reducing wages and producing "hunger" and "desperation" to bring about the overthrow of the government.

This was not an accidental consequence of US policy; it was the policy. More than six decades later, the method remains largely unchanged: make the economy scream and then blame the Cuban government for the sound.

Key points

- Cuba's crisis is framed as blockade-induced, not proof socialism failed
- US strategy dates back to 1960s: engineer hunger to spark regime change
- Blockade works through control of banking, shipping and insurance, not just trade bans
- Cuba is experiencing the same imperialist formula as Iraq, Venezuela and Iran

Stranglehold

This is why we must speak of a blockade, not simply an embargo. The US is not only refusing to trade with Cuba; it uses its control over the dollar, international banking, shipping, insurance and payment systems to obstruct other countries from trading with Cuba. Foreign banks fear processing Cuban transactions. Companies risk exclusion from the US market. Ships struggle to obtain insurance, while suppliers demand difficult payment arrangements because dealing with Cuba carries the threat of US punishment. Even where food and medicine are supposedly exempted, Cuba still requires banks, credit, transport and foreign currency to acquire them.

"The purpose is to make the country ungovernable, deepen the suffering of ordinary Cubans and turn that suffering against the Revolution."

The so-called free market is therefore free only for countries that submit to the authority of global capital.

Lenin described imperialism as the domination of monopoly and finance capital, producing the "financial strangulation" of most of humanity by a handful of powerful capitalist states. Cuba gives concrete meaning to this warning. Imperialism does not always arrive with soldiers and colonial flags. It can arrive through a frozen bank account, a blocked payment, an uninsured tanker or a spare part that cannot be purchased.

Cuba's electricity crisis must be understood within these conditions. The country has an ageing electricity grid, but maintaining it requires fuel, machinery, technology and credit. By threatening countries that supply Cuba with oil, Washington is interfering with hospitals, water systems, transport, schools and food production. United Nations experts have appropriately described this as "energy starvation".

The blockade is not aimed only at Cuba's economy;

it is aimed at the political consciousness of the Cuban people. When electricity disappears, food becomes unaffordable and public institutions struggle to function, citizens naturally direct their anger towards the government they encounter daily.

Imperial terror

The foreign power producing or intensifying these conditions remains physically absent. Washington manufactures the hardship while Havana is forced to carry the blame. This is the real political objective identified by Mallory: to convert economic deprivation into public disaffection and public disaffection into regime change. In simple terms, Washington creates the scarcity, the Cuban state receives the anger, and imperialism harvests the political outcome.

There is an element of economic terror in this strategy. Terrorism is commonly associated with the deliberate creation of civilian fear and insecurity to achieve a political outcome. What, then, should we call a policy that knowingly deprives a population of fuel, transport, medicine and economic security to force political change?

The violence of the blockade is less visible than direct military aggression, but it enters homes through darkness, hunger and the inability to obtain essential goods. Nicholas Mulder, in *The Economic Weapon*, shows that sanctions developed as instruments capable of destroying economic life without formally declaring war. Their apparent peacefulness hides their brutality: the buildings may remain standing while the conditions required to sustain human life are systematically dismantled.

"Imperialism does not always arrive with soldiers and colonial flags."

Thomas Piketty argues that inequality is neither natural nor accidental; every unequal order requires an ideology to justify itself. Capitalism must explain why a minority may accumulate extraordinary wealth while millions are denied a dignified life. Imperialism performs this function

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PATRIA O MUERTE VENCEREMOS

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internationally by dividing the world between states permitted to exercise power and those expected to obey. However, Piketty's account must be carried further through Marxist development thinkers.

Enforcing underdevelopment

Samir Amin showed that global capitalism is structured around a dominant centre and an exploited periphery, with resources and value flowing towards the centre. Walter Rodney taught us that underdevelopment is not simply an internal condition: countries are actively underdeveloped through colonial extraction,

"Identify a country's vulnerabilities, isolate it from trade and finance, intensify shortages, encourage internal anger and then present regime change as the solution."

domination and unequal exchange. The blockade actively underdevelops Cuba and then presents the resulting underdevelopment as evidence of Cuban incompetence.

We have witnessed this machinery elsewhere. In Iraq, sanctions devastated civilian economic life before the 2003 invasion. In Venezuela, Washington targeted oil revenue, banking and international payments, deliberately exploiting domestic weaknesses to undermine the Bolivarian project. Iran continues to face restrictions on oil, shipping, banking and access to its own reserves.

“Cuba is punished because its revolution removed resources from foreign capital and asserted the right to determine its own future. ”

The formula is unmistakable: identify a country's vulnerabilities, isolate it from trade and finance, intensify shortages, encourage internal anger and then present regime change as the solution. Sanctions and military force are not opposites; they are different instruments within the same imperialist strategy.

Beyond sloganising

This does not place Cuba beyond criticism. Bureaucracy, inefficiency, weak agricultural production and delayed reforms must be

confronted. Socialism cannot survive on slogans while workers carry the burden of institutional weaknesses. However, Cuban contradictions cannot be separated from the siege under which they occur. Cuba's real offence is not a lack of US-approved “democracy” – Washington readily embraces dictatorships and monarchies that protect its interests. Cuba is punished because its revolution removed resources from foreign capital and asserted the right to determine its own future.

For South Africans, solidarity with Cuba is not ceremonial: Cuba stood with Angola's liberation forces against the apartheid army. We must now demand an end to the blockade and build trade, energy and payment systems beyond Washington's control. Cuba is not proof that socialism has failed, but it is proof of how far capitalism will go to prevent an alternative from being allowed to succeed.

Cde Thabile Lenkwane is the National Spokesperson of the YCLSA.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Iran: Imperialism's 'peace' is war by other means



Oppose imperialist aggression, stand in solidarity with peoples resisting domination, and reject the false symmetry peddled by liberal media!

Key points

- June US-Iran MoU has effectively collapsed due to US non-compliance
- Conflict boils down to imperialist aggression against regional, anti-zionist resistance
- 'Peace' under imperialism is only ever a tactical pause, not resolution
- Working class must reject false symmetry and back anti-imperialist struggle

As of mid-August, the interim Memorandum of Understanding signed in June between Washington and Tehran has effectively collapsed. President Trump declared the pact "over" in early July; Iranian officials insist there is no ceasefire period to extend because the US violated its commitments within days of the agreement.

Mediated messages continue through Pakistan, Qatar and Oman, yet both sides remain locked in strikes and counter-strikes over the Strait of Hormuz. What bourgeois commentators call a failed "peace process" is the inevitable outcome of imperialist aggression meeting a regional power that resists subordination.

Origins and unravelling of the conflict

The war began with coordinated US-Israeli strikes on 28 February 2026, disrupting energy markets and exacting a heavy toll on Iranian infrastructure



AVIWE RAPELANG MOHAPI

The latest developments in the US-Israel war against Iran expose once more the insoluble contradictions of imperialism in its epoch of decline.

and society. The June MoU promised an “immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts”, with sanctions relief, reopening of Hormuz, and a 60-day window for a permanent settlement.

Within weeks, it unravelled amid mutual accusations, renewed US strikes, Iranian responses, and Trump’s public repudiation. Iranian sources state there has been “absolutely no progress” on Washington returning to the framework, and the Strait remains contested.

“Wars of this character are not accidents of diplomacy but the violent expression of capital’s need to redivide the world when peaceful domination fails.”

The asymmetry of the confrontation: imperialism versus resistance

This is not a symmetrical dispute between two equivalent states. The US remains the principal imperialist power, its foreign policy driven by monopoly capital, the military-industrial complex, energy conglomerates, and the imperative of preserving unipolar hegemony in West Asia.

Control of oil routes and the weakening of any force challenging Israeli dominance and US basing rights form the core of US policy. The nuclear issue has long served as convenient cover; the real stakes are subordination and preventing a multipolar order in which Iran asserts sovereignty.

Iran is not a socialist state. Its theocratic form reflects a bourgeois-nationalist formation born of the 1979 revolution’s incomplete rupture with imperialism. Yet its resistance to decades of sanctions and now open military aggression places it on the anti-imperialist side of the principal contradiction of our time – the struggle between imperialism and the oppressed nations.

Wars of this character are not accidents of failed diplomacy but the violent expression of capital’s

need to redivide the world when peaceful domination fails.

The temporary character of imperialist “peace”

The rapid collapse of the June ceasefire illustrates the tactical, temporary character of all imperialist “peace”. Bourgeois diplomacy does not abolish the drive toward war; it merely manages its intensity. The US regime, like its predecessors, oscillates between maximum pressure and transactional bargaining because both serve the same end: extracting concessions while retaining the capacity for renewed force. Temporary lulls may reduce human suffering, yet they leave intact the sanctions regime and Israel’s capacity for escalation. Genuine peace cannot emerge from such arrangements.

Geopolitical dimensions and the multipolar transition

The broader picture confirms the inter-imperialist and anti-systemic dimensions of the conflict. Israel’s role as a forward detachment of Western imperialism and the Gulf monarchies’ subordinate position point to a contested multipolar transition. China’s and Russia’s restrained postures reflect their own calculations, yet prolonged US entanglement accelerates the erosion of American unipolar pretensions.

“The US regime, like its predecessors, oscillates between maximum pressure and transactional bargaining.”

The duty of the international working class is clear: oppose imperialist aggression, stand in solidarity with peoples resisting domination, and reject the false symmetry peddled by liberal media.

Lessons for the Global South and the working class Within South Africa and the broader Global South, the lessons are immediate. The same imperialist system bombing Iranian cities and closing shipping lanes enforces structural adjustment, extracts minerals, and backs reactionary forces against

"The duty of the international working class is clear: oppose imperialist aggression, stand in solidarity with peoples resisting domination, and reject the false symmetry peddled by liberal media."

popular movements in the Global South.

South Africa's tradition of anti-imperialist internationalism demands we reject both the aggressor's propaganda and any romanticisation of non-socialist states, while insisting that only the organised working class, fighting for socialism, can abolish the economic roots of war.

No lasting peace under imperialism

The current impasse over the failed MoU is not a diplomatic failure to be lamented in the abstract; it is evidence that imperialism cannot offer stable peace. Temporary ceasefires may create useful breathing space but must never be mistaken for resolution of the underlying contradiction.

As long as monopoly capital requires control of energy, markets and strategic geography, the guns will fall silent only to be reloaded. The task of Marxist-Leninists is to expose this reality, organise against the war machine, and prepare the forces capable of a different world order – one in which the right of nations to self-determination is not subordinate to the profit calculations of Wall Street and the Pentagon.

Only through the struggle for socialism can humanity move beyond the permanent insecurity that imperialism imposes on the majority of the world's people.

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

BOYCOTT ISRAEL IN SOUTH AFRICA – SUPPORT BDS

BOYCOTT TARGETS

THE PALESTINIAN CALL FOR BDS

The Palestinian-led Boycott movement mobilises consumers to **withdraw support from Israel's apartheid regime and the complicit institutions and companies** that uphold violations of Palestinian human rights. By **strategically focusing on carefully selected companies and products**, we have the **potential for maximum impact**. We target companies with a clear and direct role in Israel's crimes against Palestinians and where there is real potential for winning.

McDonald's
The iconic U.S. brand gave free food to the IOF.

Coca-Cola
Manufactures in the illegal settlement of Atarot. Local Israeli franchise consortium owns Clover.
Sub products of Coca Cola include: Fanta, Sprite, Schwepps, Valpre, Stoney, Appeltiz, Charged, Costa Coffee, Bon Aqua, Cappy, Sparletta and Powerade

teva
Israeli pharmaceutical company directly imports into South Africa.

airbnb
Rents out holiday properties in illegal Israeli settlements built on stolen Palestinian land.

Booking.com
Lists holiday rentals in Israeli illegal settlements and occupied Palestinian land.

ZZ2
Main distributor for Israel's Hishtil Farms in Western Cape and Limpopo.

CAPE UNION MART
Owner, Philip Krawitz, raises money for the Israeli war fund and sits on the board of one of the founding organisations of Zionist settlements.

Reebok
Sponsor of the Israeli Football Association.

REMAX
Sells properties in illegal Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land.

kw
Sells properties in illegal Israeli settlements built on Occupied Palestinian land.

amazon
Provides the IOF with the AI cloud storage platform for large-scale data on Palestinians used to train AI weapon systems.

sodastream
Naqab factory displaces indigenous Bedouin-Palestinian citizens of Israel. Ongoing mistreatment and discrimination of Palestinian workers.

hp
Provides Israel's Population and Immigration Authority with servers enabling system of racial segregation and apartheid against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

Menstrual Leave – the fight continues



TSHOLOFELO MASEKO

Menstrual leave allows women to take time off from school, study or work due to menstrual-related symptoms, such as severe pain.

Menstrual leave would enable employees experiencing severe pain or discomfort to take one to three days of paid leave each month.

Menstrual leave has long been controversial, often discriminated against by men, and very few countries have enacted policies. South African labour law currently does not provide a specific statutory entitlement to menstrual leave, meaning that employees experiencing such pain must use their standard paid sick leave.

Medication is not the answer

According to research, menstrual pain affects between 45% and 95% of women, meaning that the majority of women have to endure this pain at work. They do so to keep their jobs and provide for their families. Menstruation varies from woman to woman; some experience light flow, while others experience heavy flow accompanied by pain.

“Painkillers can help some people manage menstrual pain, but medication is not a solution to the broader problem.”

Painkillers can help some people manage menstrual pain, but medication is not a solution to the broader problem. Different medicines also carry different risks and side effects, particularly when misused or taken excessively. The answer cannot simply be: take a tablet and go back to work.

Working-class women often cannot simply stay home when experiencing debilitating menstrual symptoms because missing work can mean losing wages or job security.

Key points

- SA law has no statutory menstrual leave; women rely on ordinary sick leave
- Painkillers treated as a substitute for real workplace accommodation
- Working-class women can’t afford to stay home despite debilitating pain
- Frames menstrual leave as a necessary right, not “special treatment”

Studies also show that heavy menstrual bleeding affects roughly 10% to 50% of women of reproductive age globally. That means women go to work with the possibility of spotting while at work, in a world fixated on being sexist and believing that women cannot lead; spotting is embarrassing and makes women lose their confidence. Menstruation can also result in emotional fluctuations in women.

Working-class women often cannot simply stay home when experiencing debilitating symptoms because missing work can mean losing wages or job security.

“Menstrual leave is a necessary social right that protects women’s health and reproductive capacity.”

Part of a broader demand

Menstrual leave is a necessary social right that protects women’s health and reproductive capacity under capitalism; it ensures that women are not prevented from participating in productive labour. From a Communist perspective, this discussion cannot be separated from the question of women’s emancipation. Under capitalism, workers sell their labour to survive. For many working-class women, that means going to work even when their bodies are telling them to rest because their wages are necessary for survival.

This creates a contradiction because society needs workers to produce, but workers are human beings who experience pain, illness, pregnancy, childbirth, exhaustion and other realities.

“Women’s reproductive health is neglected and belittled under patriarchy.”

Reform labour law

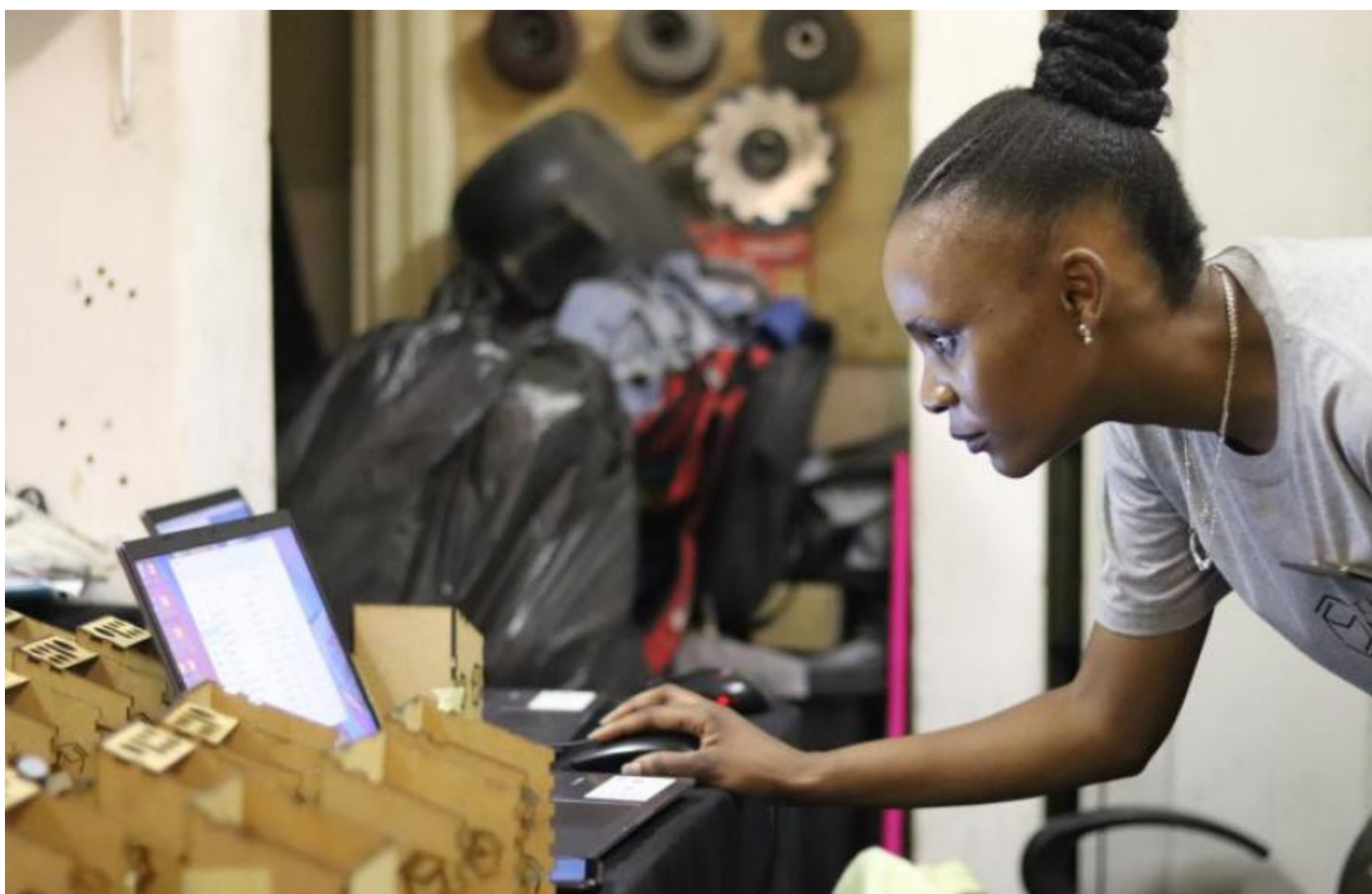
When the demand for production is placed above the well-being of the worker, it is the worker who carries the burden. Women often carry an additional burden because they experience biological and social responsibilities that have historically been used to discriminate against them. This is why menstrual leave should not be presented as women asking for “special treatment.”

As Communists, it is important that we campaign for menstrual leave and collaborate with civil society to ensure it is clearly defined as an obligation under labour law. The fact that this remains a demand rather than a settled right shows how women’s reproductive health is neglected and belittled under patriarchy.

Instead, it is left to individual women to manage with ordinary sick leave, while the pain is treated as a private inconvenience rather than a workplace or a social issue. South Africa still has no statutory provision for menstrual leave, and we need to work to change this.

Cde Tsholofelo Maseko, is the YCLSA district Head of Secretariat in Tshwane.

Youth, STEM, and the digital economy – breaking imperialist dependency



We can create a virtuous cycle where STEM education directly feeds into job-creating, people-centred industries.

Key points

- STEM is sold as opportunity but often deepens dependency and inequality under capitalism
- Youth unemployment reflects a skills mismatch, not a lack of talent
- Foreign tech giants extract data and profit while local sovereignty lags
- Calls for a socialist-orientated STEM strategy: public investment, technological sovereignty, ideological training



AVIWE RAPELANG MOHAPI

In the 50th anniversary year of the June 16 uprisings, South Africa's youth stand at the intersection of immense technological potential and deepening imperialist domination. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields are presented as gateways to the future, yet under capitalism they often reinforce dependency, inequality, and exclusion.

We should call for a radical reorientation: harnessing STEM and the digital economy to serve national development and socialist construction, not multinational profits.

Crisis of youth unemployment and skills mismatch

South Africa's youth unemployment crisis reveals a glaring skills mismatch. Many graduates, including those with STEM qualifications, struggle to find work because the economy remains dominated by finance, mining enclaves, and low-value services. Meanwhile, critical sectors lack sufficient skilled workers. Working-class youth, particularly from rural and township backgrounds, face barriers to quality STEM education – poor basic schooling, lack of laboratories, expensive data and devices, and limited internet access in marginalised areas. Young women are further disadvantaged by gender stereotypes and care burdens.

“South Africa must invest in indigenous research and development that addresses local challenges while building global competitiveness.”

Pitfalls of the digital economy under imperialism

The digital economy, driven by online platforms and AI, promises opportunity but delivers precarity under imperialism. Foreign tech giants extract data and profits while local content and sovereignty lag. This mirrors broader dependency: our economy is shaped by global capital rather than the needs of the masses.

Building local innovation capacity

To break this cycle, South Africa must invest in indigenous research and development that addresses local challenges while building global competitiveness. This includes prioritising research into climate-resilient agriculture, affordable renewable energy solutions suited to

our geography, and digital tools that support small-scale producers and community health initiatives.

“In this Youth Year, we must demand that government declarations translate into concrete action.”

By fostering university-industry linkages under public oversight, rather than foreign direct investment that hollows out local capacity, we can create a virtuous cycle where STEM education directly feeds into job-creating, people-centred industries. Such an approach would not only reduce brain drain but also position South African youth as creators of technology, not mere consumers or data sources for Silicon Valley and Beijing conglomerates.

A socialist-orientated approach to STEM and digital transformation

A socialist-orientated approach to STEM and digital transformation must include:

- **Massification of quality STEM education:** Substantial public investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and learner support, especially in historically disadvantaged areas. Make STEM accessible, not elitist.
- **National skills planning:** Align education outputs with a developmental state programme – renewable energy technicians, agricultural engineers, health informatics, advanced manufacturing, and digital infrastructure for township and village economies.
- **Technological sovereignty:** Develop local innovation ecosystems, open-source technologies where appropriate, and strategic state-led digital industries. Reduce reliance on imperialist platforms through public alternatives for education, health, and e-governance.
- **Linking education to production:** Expand work-integrated learning, public employment schemes that incorporate digital and STEM skills, and cooperatives in emerging sectors.

- **Ideological and ethical training:** Equip youth with critical awareness of how technology can serve liberation or entrench exploitation, drawing on Marxist analysis of the forces of production.

Lessons from the revolutionary youth of 1976

The revolutionary youth of 1976 challenged the education system of their time. Today's generation must challenge the neoliberal digital order. The Young Communist League of South Africa must lead in politicising STEM – turning potential individual advancement into collective advancement for socialism.

In this Youth Year, we must demand that government declarations translate into concrete action: increased funding for STEM in public institutions, partnerships that prioritise local control, and integration with broader economic transformation.

Anything less perpetuates the betrayal of the June 16 generation.

“The digital economy, driven by online platforms and AI, promises opportunity but delivers precarity under imperialism.”

Let the youth master science and technology not to serve capital, but to build a socialist South Africa where the full potential of every young person is realised in service of the people.

Master science for the revolution! Socialism is the future!

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

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

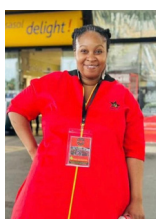
The crisis of lack of public care work – it's not just about absent loved ones



Care work – whether raising children, caring for the elderly or sustaining households – becomes invisible because it is unpaid, feminised and treated as natural rather than socially necessary labour. Image: Gauteng Care Crisis Committee

Key points

- Winter tragedies (shack fires, break-ins) tied to lack of public childcare, not bad parenting
- Care has been privatised onto households while profit is socialised
- Tithi Bhattacharya's social reproduction theory: care work is unpaid and invisibilised
- SA needs a public, socialised care system as essential infrastructure



DINEO MAJAVU

Winter is not just a season of cold and hunger but, more importantly, a season where the crisis of unpaid care work and the crisis of social reproduction lead to the deaths and trauma that children face.

Winter in South Africa is always scary for those living in informal settlements and townships. Even more so for parents who fight against capitalist exploitation just to survive the impact of a divided class society, leaving home in the dark and returning in the dark. The insufficient care facilities have made working-class children more vulnerable to unprecedented death, stunting, and criminality and really put them in the corner of society.

Desperate situations faced by working-class parents

The problem is not that parents do not love or care for their children. The problem is that capitalism has organised society in such a way that working-class parents are forced to choose between earning a wage and providing care.

“What struck me the mosCare has been privatised into the household, while profit has been socialised through the exploitation of labour.”

Care has been privatised into the household, while profit has been socialised through the exploitation of labour. The consequence is that those who reproduce society every day are left without the public support necessary to do so safely.

A news outlet reported that a father who left his daughter in the house experienced a break-in, during which the child was raped and killed. A second incident speaks about children who were burnt in a shack; the causes are still unknown, but their parents were not there, and the reasons for their absence are also unknown.

Society is quick to ask, “Where were the parents?” Yet we rarely ask why parents have been left with no public care alternatives. Why do we normalise a society where parents must leave children unattended because survival depends on selling their labour?

If there were available, accessible and publicly funded care facilities, and if the reproduction of human life and the care thereof were treated as important social responsibilities rather than private burdens, the lives of these young children would not have been ended so fast.

“You can’t choose quality childcare where none exists.”

More importantly, parents would not be forced into a lifetime of guilt for tragedies produced by the failures of capitalism. The evidence before us is not evidence of failed parenting; it is evidence of a failed social system.

Confront the crisis of social reproduction

Many will argue that parents must simply take greater responsibility, plan better or make different choices. But this assumes that working-class people have choices that they simply do not possess. You can’t choose to stay home when unemployment, low wages, precarious work and rising food prices demand that every available adult works. You can’t choose quality childcare where none exists. You can’t choose safety in communities abandoned by the state.

To individualise these tragedies is to remove capitalism, the state and public policy from the discussion altogether.

This is precisely where the crisis of social reproduction becomes important. As Tithi Bhattacharya argues, capitalism depends upon the daily and generational reproduction of labour, yet systematically underfunds and devalues the very work that makes life possible.

Care work – whether raising children, caring for the elderly or sustaining households – becomes invisible because it is unpaid, feminised and

treated as natural rather than socially necessary labour. Capital benefits from this arrangement while refusing to invest in the infrastructure that reproduces workers and communities.

We therefore have to rethink care work, not just in society but in every sphere of our lives, beginning with our own organisations. As death peaks in the lives of many, as the lives of babies bleed through the thighs of women, comrades refer to the ills of patriarchy that have placed the burden of care on women comrades, as shows of incapacity, as reflections of stifling revolutions and definitely as reaffirmation of why revolution, according to them, is not a place for care providers.

But a revolution that cannot organise care cannot organise liberation. If our politics cannot account for the daily work of reproducing life, then our politics remains incomplete. The struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism cannot be separated because both rely on the exploitation and invisibility of care work. The burden should not fall on women alone, nor should it fall on individual families. It must become a collective and public responsibility.

Create a socialised care system

This article is not about who is more exploited between the unpaid caregiver and the wage labourer. Rather, this discussion is about the urgent need for a socialised care system in this country. Such a system would mitigate the

deaths of children caused by shack fires while their parents are at work, prevent the stunting of children exposed to excessive amounts of sludge in their communities, and ensure that every child has the right not only to survive, but also to be cared for.

*"A revolution that cannot
organise care cannot
organise liberation."*

The evidence around us tells us that these tragedies are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a society that has failed to invest in the reproduction of life. We cannot continue

responding only with outrage every time another child dies while refusing to confront the structures that made those deaths possible.

Until South Africa recognises care as public infrastructure, just as important as roads, electricity and hospitals, we will continue mourning children whose deaths could have been prevented.

The real question, therefore, is not where the parents were. The real question is, where was society? Where was the state? Where was public investment in care? Where was the party? Until we answer those questions honestly, we will continue blaming working-class parents for crises created

by capitalism itself. We will continue not making our organisation a space of revolution and solidarity.

Cde Dineo Majavu is the SACP Linda Jabane District Chairperson.

MK VETERANS

Erasing a liberation zone – the Bonteheuwel Military Wing and the database used to bury it



Masked members of Bonteheuwel Military Wing raised the flag of the ANC during a meeting held in Cape Town in 1987.

Key points

- BMW veterans say their unit is being wrongly downgraded from MK to a lesser status
- TRC records show apartheid state treated BMW as a serious armed threat
- Verification interviews are allegedly rushed, and vouching allegedly for sale
- Veterans demand an independent parliamentary review of the veterans' database

UMSEBENZI ONLINE

For more than a decade, veterans of uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) across South Africa have waited on a bureaucratic process that was meant to finally settle who fought, who served and who is owed recognition and support by the democratic state.

In the Western Cape, that process has instead become the site of a quiet but consequential fight: an attempt, veterans say, to strip the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW) of its status as a structure of MK and reclassify it instead as a self-defence unit (SDU) – a different, and lesser-recognised, category of struggle-era formation.

The distinction is not academic. It goes to the heart of who South Africa's post-apartheid state is willing to remember as a soldier of the liberation movement and who it is prepared to quietly write out of the record.

Formed out of MK cells operating in and around Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats from the mid-1980s, the BMW ran a sustained underground military campaign. By the account of veterans and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) own record, this campaign made the township one of only two areas in South Africa – alongside parts of Soweto – to achieve the informal status of a “liberated zone”, effectively too dangerous for apartheid security forces to operate in freely.

Downgrading effort

This is a matter of documented history, not just of memory. TRC investigators uncovered apartheid-era Joint Management Centre and Stratcom planning documents that named the BMW specifically as an internal threat to be neutralised. Several of its known members – Ashley Kriel, Anton Fransch, Coline Williams and Robbie Waterwitch, among them – were killed in the years that followed, in circumstances long associated by veterans and researchers with state-directed or state-adjacent violence. The unit and its history have since been the subject of academic studies, including postgraduate theses at South African universities.

Self-defence units, by contrast, were a different and later phenomenon: community-based structures formed under the ANC from the late 1980s (associated particularly with the work of the late Oscar Mpetha after his release from Robben Island) to protect ANC-aligned communities from Inkatha-linked and state-security attacks. Veterans of the BMW are emphatic that no equivalent structure ever existed, or was needed, in Bonteheuwel: the BMW was cell-based, MK-linked and operational from its inception, not a community defence structure that emerged later in response to political violence.

To reclassify the BMW as an SDU, veterans argue, is not a technical correction. It is an attempt – whether by oversight, institutional convenience or deliberate design – to erase the specific, MK-linked character of the unit's history, and with it, the recognition and benefits its surviving members are entitled to.

A verification process that isn't listening

The body currently responsible for resolving these cases, the Presidential Task Team on Military Veterans (PTT), was established toward the end of Jacob Zuma's presidency, but according to veterans who have engaged with it, it has consistently failed to meaningfully process their claims.

Verification interviews, several veterans report, typically last only five to 10 minutes – barely enough time to state a name, let alone account for



Ashley Kriel was among the BMW heroes of Bonteheuwel township murdered by the apartheid regime.

years of clandestine service, commanding officers or documented military history. Two of the only cases on record to have received substantially longer hearings – one running roughly 25 minutes, the other over an hour – reportedly still ended in the same outcome as the brief ones: rejection.

In at least one instance, a surviving relative of a BMW member killed during the struggle was reportedly told he could not have been involved in operations in the mid-1980s because he would have been a young teenager at the time. An argument, veterans say, misapplies a bureaucratic,

statutory-force logic to a structure that was never a formal statutory force in the first place and that draws no distinction between the BMW's mode of operation and that of an SDU.

A database veterans say has been captured by fraud

The dispute over the BMW's classification sits inside a much larger and more troubling picture: persistent, detailed allegations from within the Western Cape's MK veteran community that the Department of Military Veterans' (DMV) verification and registration system has been extensively compromised since its establishment following the Military Veterans Act of 2011.

"Verification interviews typically last only five to 10 minutes – barely enough time to state a name, let alone account for years of clandestine service."

According to veterans who have engaged directly with the process since its rollout began in 2012, applications have moved for over a decade through a tangle of overlapping and sometimes improperly constituted verification channels – DMV committees, ANC Luthuli House committees and, veterans allege, informal "verifications" conducted by individual ministers, a practice with no proper legal standing.

The frustration born of this process reportedly culminated in veterans travelling to Pretoria to confront DMV and parliamentary officials directly over the backlog, in an episode that, according to sources, also involved an altercation with a senior DMV official.

The more serious allegation, however, is about who has been let onto the veterans' database, not just who has been kept off it. Veterans interviewed describe a pattern in which:

- Individuals with no genuine MK service history – including, in some cases, people who would have been toddlers during the armed struggle or who were demonstrably studying

or working abroad during the years they claim to have served – have nonetheless been registered as verified MK veterans.

- Vouching, the process by which a commander or fellow combatant confirms an applicant's service, is alleged to have become, in practice, a tradeable commodity – sold or exchanged by individuals without any real knowledge of the applicant's history.
- The database itself is not singular. Veterans describe at least five separate, overlapping registers – covering political prisoners, exiles, internal operatives, special pensions and military veterans specifically – creating room for inconsistency, duplication and manipulation between them, and making cases fall through the cracks even where an individual's service is well documented elsewhere in the system.
- In one case described in detail by a source with direct knowledge of the file, an individual's application – claiming MK training abroad and later internal ANC security work – was allegedly verified and approved within roughly 10 minutes of a single interview, despite what sources describe as documented employment and residence records placing the applicant elsewhere throughout the period in question.

"Individuals with no genuine MK service history – including, in some cases, people who would have been toddlers during the armed struggle – have been registered as verified MK veterans."

These are serious allegations, made by people with a direct personal stake in how the process resolves, and they have not been independently verified by this publication. They are reported here because they are widely and consistently held within the Western Cape's community of unrecognised liberation army veterans, and because the pattern they describe – of a slow, opaque process producing inconsistent and, in

“Bonteheuwel Military Wing veterans demand an independent parliamentary review of the Department of Military Veterans’ verification database.”

veterans’ view, sometimes fraudulent outcomes – is one that warrants formal, independent scrutiny.

What veterans are asking for

The demand from Bonteheuwel Military Wing veterans and their allies is straightforward: an independent parliamentary review of the Department of Military Veterans’ verification database, its methodology and the specific decisions that have, in their account, both excluded legitimate liberation army combatants and admitted individuals with no genuine service history.

Alongside this, they are calling for the BMW’s status as a bona fide structure of MK to be formally reaffirmed, rather than administratively downgraded through a reclassification process they say has repeatedly failed to properly hear their case.

More than 30 years after South Africa’s transition, the surviving combatants of one of the country’s few genuinely “liberated” townships are still fighting to be believed. Whether the state is willing to properly investigate – both the historical record it owes them and the process that has so far failed to deliver it – remains, for now, an open question.

Sources for this article are veterans of the Bonteheuwel Military Wing and individuals with direct knowledge of the Department of Military Veterans’ verification process, who spoke on condition of anonymity given the sensitivity of the corruption allegations described. Specific claims regarding individual fraud cases and personnel have been generalised or withheld pending independent verification.

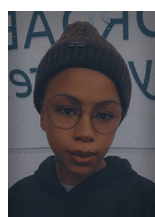
MANDELA DAY 2026

SACP Mochochonono Branch honours Mandela Day with school painting



Key points

- Branch marked Mandela Day by repainting Tlholohelo Primary School in Moletsane
- 67 minutes of service tied to Mandela's 67 years of public life
- Local businesses donated paint, materials and food for volunteers
- Branch calls for the spirit of service to extend beyond a single day



TENANILE MNGOMEZULU

Members of the Mochochonono Branch of the SACP, together with community members in Moletsane, Soweto, dedicated their 67 minutes on International Nelson Mandela Day by painting a local school.

Observed annually on 18 July, Mandela Day commemorates the life and legacy of former President Nelson Mandela. The day calls on people around the world to give 67 minutes of service, representing the 67 years Madiba spent in public service fighting for democracy, equality and human rights.

This year, the SACP Mochochonono Branch marked the day with practical community work at Tlholohelo Primary School, where comrades and volunteers spent the day repainting classrooms, corridors and toilets to improve the learning environment for learners.

"We chose to invest our time in education because it remains central to the future we are building," said Jannie Horatius, Ward Secretary of SACP Mochochonono Branch.

Members of the SACP Mochochonono Branch, Soweto, marked Mandela Day with practical community work, renovating Tlholohelo Primary School.

“The SACP Mochochonono Branch marked the day with practical community work at Tlholohelo Primary School.”

“In the spirit of Mandela, we must serve our people and leave every space better than we found it.”

The initiative was made possible with support from local businesses. Hardware stores in the area donated paint, brushes and cleaning materials, while others provided food parcels, ensuring that volunteers continue working throughout the day.

Branch leadership expressed appreciation to the businesses for their contributions, noting that partnerships between political organisations and the private sector are important in addressing community needs.

The activities concluded with a short reflection on Mandela’s values of service, unity and selflessness.

“Mandela Day should not be limited to one day,” the branch said in a statement.

“It must inspire ongoing commitment to building better schools, stronger communities, and a better South Africa for all.”

Cde Tenanile Mngomezulu is an SACP activist in Linda Jabane District.

Clean audits and the constitutional vision of good governance

OF THE DAY

25 MARCH 2026



AUDITOR - GENERAL
SOUTH AFRICA

Auditing to build public confidence



INCREASE IN CLEAN AUDITS

**From 142
in 2023-24**



**To 151
in 2024-25**

The Auditor-General's 2024-25 general report shows a slight increase in clean audits.

[f](#) [X](#) [@](#) [v](#) [d](#) [in](#) #GovZAUpdates | @GovernmentZA | www.gcis.gov.za



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



The 2024-25 general report for national and provincial departments, public entities and legislatures shows that the number of clean audits slightly increased from 142 in 2023-24 to 151 in 2024-25. But do 'clean audits' tell the whole story about service delivery?

Key points

- A “clean audit” can mask multiple failures
- The term is a uniquely SA construct, often stretched far beyond its technical meaning
- Politicians use clean audits as a shield against scrutiny of real outcomes
- Voters ahead of 2026 local elections must demand more than clear audit certificates



DR SIZWE NYENYISO

As we head towards the local government elections, we need to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses of clean audits.

A municipality can receive a clean audit while its residents continue to experience sewage spills, unreliable water supplies, deteriorating infrastructure and poor service delivery. This apparent contradiction raises an important question about how South Africa understands and measures good governance.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa sets a high standard for public administration. It requires public institutions to uphold professional ethics, remain responsive to the needs of citizens, exercise accountability and transparency, and utilise public resources effectively and efficiently.

“By their nature, audits cannot detect every deficiency nor guarantee perfection.”

Beyond administrative competence, the Constitution envisages a developmental state committed to transformation, redress and the equitable distribution of opportunities and resources. Achieving these objectives requires balancing the country’s developmental imperatives with the prudent, effective and impactful use of public resources.

The Constitution also recognises a fundamental challenge of democratic governance: public

officials exercise authority on behalf of citizens and must therefore be held accountable for how they use that power.

Alongside these arrangements, the Constitution created a range of independent institutions to support constitutional democracy. These help ensure that public resources are used to advance development and improve service delivery.

Role of the Auditor-General and audits limitations
Among these institutions is the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA), whose constitutional mandate is to audit and report on the financial management and accountability of public sector institutions. To give effect to this mandate, Parliament enacted the Public Audit Act, under which public sector audits are conducted in accordance with internationally recognised standards. In practice, these include the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) and the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs).

These standards prescribe recognised audit outcomes, ranging from an unqualified audit opinion, which indicates that financial statements are fairly presented in all material respects, to a disclaimer opinion, the most severe audit outcome. They also acknowledge the inherent limitations of audits and make it clear that auditors provide reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance. By their nature, audits cannot detect every deficiency nor guarantee perfection.

The concept of a “clean audit”

Within the South African public sector discourse, however, a concept known as the “clean audit” has emerged. Unlike conventional audit opinions, a clean audit is a uniquely South African construct with no direct equivalent in international auditing standards. Over time, clean audits have become one of the most prominent indicators used to assess public institutions and have come to dominate public discourse about accountability and governance. Their prominence is precisely why it deserves greater scrutiny.

While politicians, analysts and commentators frequently invoke the term, there has been remarkably little public debate about what clean audit actually measures and whether it

aligns with the Constitution's broader vision of a developmental and transformative state. Increasingly, the concept appears to have acquired significance far beyond its original auditing purpose. It is often used as shorthand for good governance, institutional effectiveness and even successful service delivery.

Operation Clean Audit and its unforeseen consequences

The origins of this phenomenon can be traced back to 2009, during the tenure of the late Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Sicelo Shiceka, who championed the "Operation Clean Audit 2014" campaign. Its primary objective was to strengthen financial governance and administrative compliance.

Importantly, however, the Operation Clean Audit 2014 was never intended to serve as a comprehensive measure of transformation, developmental impact or the extent to which public institutions were addressing South Africa's deep social and economic inequalities. Somewhere along the way, that distinction became blurred. The concept of a clean audit became conflated with broader notions of good governance and developmental performance.

What a clean audit shows and what it does not

In audit terms, a clean audit refers to an unqualified audit opinion with no material findings on financial statements, performance information and compliance with legislation. This is undoubtedly an important indicator of financial discipline and administrative control. What it does not measure, however, is whether a government department is achieving its policy objectives, whether a municipality is delivering reliable services, or whether public institutions are advancing transformation and improving citizens' quality of life.

Despite these limitations, clean audits are frequently used by political actors to support claims of sound governance and effective service delivery, even where communities continue to experience deteriorating infrastructure, unreliable services, persistent poverty and inequalities, and growing public dissatisfaction. What was intended as a mechanism to promote sound financial administration has, at times, been appropriated as a political shield against legitimate scrutiny of governance outcomes.

As a result, a technical audit outcome has been elevated into a comprehensive measure of government performance.

Towards a holistic understanding of governance

Public sector governance cannot be solely measured through financial controls and regulatory compliance. Governance is broader than that. Financial accountability is undoubtedly a cornerstone of effective government, but it represents one dimension of the constitutional project. Budgets are ultimately strategies expressed in numbers. What matters just as much is whether those strategies translate into tangible improvements in people's lives.

"What was intended as a mechanism to promote sound financial administration has, at times, been appropriated as a political shield against legitimate scrutiny of governance outcomes."

A clean audit should therefore form part of a broader assessment of institutional performance rather than serve as its definitive measure. Financial integrity should be considered alongside service delivery outcomes, infrastructure performance, responsiveness to communities, transformation, redress and measurable improvements in citizens' living conditions.

South African Local Government Association President Cllr Bheki Stofile has argued that governance in local government is often undermined by an "invisible hand". He refers to structural weaknesses that are not reflected in audit outcomes. Among these is the reality that, while municipalities are constitutional institutions, the power to determine the calibre of

“The term “clean audit” can create a misleading impression of a flawless institution, excellent governance or effective service delivery.”

councillors deployed to govern them rests with political parties.

This extends beyond political deployment. Political interference in the recruitment processes, procurement decisions and budget allocations can undermine institutional governance.

Clean audits as a foundation, not an end in themselves

None of this is an argument against clean audits. Financial discipline, compliance and sound administration remain indispensable foundations of effective government. The problem arises when audit outcomes become an end in themselves rather than a means of creating broader public value.

South Africa needs a more nuanced understanding of accountability. Good audit outcomes should be recognised for what they are: an important indicator of financial and administrative health. They should not, however, be treated as a definitive measure of good governance or developmental success. Until this distinction is properly understood, there is a risk that communities will continue to endure poor services, deep inequalities and unfulfilled constitutional promises while governments take comfort in the label of a “clean audit”.

There is another reason for caution. Auditing provides reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance. The term “clean audit” can consequently create a misleading impression of a flawless

institution, excellent governance or effective service delivery.

The real question, therefore, is not whether clean audits matter. They do.

The more pertinent question is whether they have become a substitute for measuring what ultimately matters most: whether the government institutions are improving the lives of the people it exists to serve.

Towards the 2026 local government elections

As South Africa approaches the 2026 local government elections, citizens should be wary of political parties that selectively invoke clean audits while avoiding scrutiny of service delivery outcomes and broader governance failures. Political parties must take responsibility for the calibre of councillors they deploy, the competence of officials they employ and the service delivery outcomes that follow.

As political parties crisscross the country, boasting about clean audits, they should be prepared to answer a more fundamental question: How have these clean audits advanced the constitutional promise of good governance? Have they translated into better services, greater responsiveness, meaningful transformation, effective redress and improved living conditions for the communities they govern?

Ultimately, the constitutional promise of good governance will not be fulfilled by clean audit certificates alone. It will be fulfilled when sound financial administration translates into competent institutions, reliable public services and measurable improvements in the lives of South Africans.

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Reject the Eskom restructuring plans



Unbundling Eskom into separate generation, transmission and distribution entities creates opportunities for private capital to progressively penetrate the electricity sector.

Key points

- “Unbundling” plan threatens public ownership of Eskom
- Splitting generation, transmission and distribution opens doors to privatisation
- “Investment” claims are ideology, not fact — private capital extracts, it doesn’t rescue
- Eskom must remain a strategic, publicly owned pillar of the developmental state

VI Lenin, No Falsehood! Our Strength Lies in Stating the Truth (1905)

The proposed restructuring of Eskom through the establishment of the Eskom Restructuring Task Team must be understood within the broader struggle over the future of South Africa’s strategic public assets.

The government presents the restructuring of Eskom, particularly the creation of an independent Transmission System Operator, as a necessary intervention to improve efficiency, attract investment and strengthen electricity security. This assumption must be fundamentally rejected: the idea that marketisation and the unbundling of Eskom constitute the appropriate solution to the country’s electricity crisis. This is a threat to public

SPHE YALO



“We must speak the truth: therein lies our strength, and the masses, the people, the multitude will decide in actual practice, after the struggle, whether we have strength”

ownership, workers' interests, energy sovereignty and the developmental role of Eskom.

Eskom should not be treated merely as a financially distressed commercial entity requiring greater private-sector participation. It is a strategic state-owned enterprise whose electricity infrastructure is fundamental to South Africa's economic development and the wellbeing of working-class and poor communities.

"Eskom should not be treated merely as a financially distressed commercial entity requiring greater private-sector participation."

Destroying public ownership

Unbundling Eskom into separate generation, transmission and distribution entities creates opportunities for private capital to progressively penetrate the electricity sector.

The fact that the proposed transmission entity may initially remain state-owned does not eliminate this concern; rather, the separation of strategic functions can weaken the integrated public utility and establish conditions for further marketisation and eventual privatisation.

The Phase I Report of the Eskom Restructuring Task Team (ERTT) emphasises creating an independent transmission system and a competitive electricity market raises a fundamental developmental-state concern. Instead of asking primarily how the state can strengthen its strategic control over electricity, the reform places considerable emphasis on creating a market framework in which different public and private generators can participate.

The basic character of the developmental state is that it should be relatively autonomous from the interests of capital. If the restructuring of Eskom makes the electricity system increasingly dependent on market signals and private investment decisions, the state risks losing part of its capacity to plan electricity provision according

to long-term developmental priorities.

South Africa's economic problems cannot be solved through the marketisation of strategic public assets. Operation Vulindlela, launched as a joint initiative between the Presidency and National Treasury, represents precisely the kind of neoliberal structural reform that is the primary obstacle to socialist transformation.

The ERTT is an instrument of this agenda, and its proposals for unbundling Eskom must be understood within this framework. The central problem is that Operation Vulindlela embodies a class project, the consolidation of capitalist hegemony over the commanding heights of the economy under the guise of technical reform.

Serve the people

The National Democratic Revolution (NDR), understood as the transformation of the colonial and apartheid economic inheritance, requires that strategic sectors of the economy serve the needs of the working class and the poor. Electricity is not a commodity like any other. It is the foundation of industrialisation, of household reproduction, of education, health, and communication.

When the provision of electricity is made dependent on market signals and private investment decisions, the state surrenders a critical lever of economic planning. The developmental state must be relatively autonomous from capitalist interests. Unbundling reduces that autonomy by embedding private actors and market logic at the heart of the electricity system.

"The developmental state should be relatively autonomous from the interests of capital."

The problem with the ERTT approach is that it risks treating Eskom primarily as an organisational and financial problem rather than as a strategic instrument of economic transformation.

No to fragmentation, marketisation

“The claim that restructuring will attract investment is an ideological assertion, not a demonstrated fact.”

The solution to Eskom’s crisis should not be the fragmentation and marketisation of a strategic public asset. South Africa requires a strong, capable and democratically accountable developmental state, with Eskom functioning as a central pillar of the public economy. Eskom must be transformed to become more efficient, accountable and sustainable, but that transformation must advance the NDR rather than reproduce neoliberal economic relations.

The claim that restructuring will attract investment is an ideological assertion, not a demonstrated fact. Private investors enter markets where they can extract returns. They do not enter to

solve public crises. If the state guarantees those returns, it socialises risk while privatising profit. If it does not, investment will not come. Either way, the developmental objectives of affordable, reliable, universal access are subordinated to the imperatives of accumulation.

The great anti-colonial revolutionary leader of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, Amilcar Cabral said, “Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories.” The truth is that the Eskom restructuring plan is a step toward the commodification of electricity and the erosion of the public sphere. It must be rejected, and a genuine alternative, rooted in public ownership, democratic planning, and working-class power, must be built.

Cde Yalo Sphe is YCLSA Greater Tshwane District Secretary. He writes in his personal capacity.



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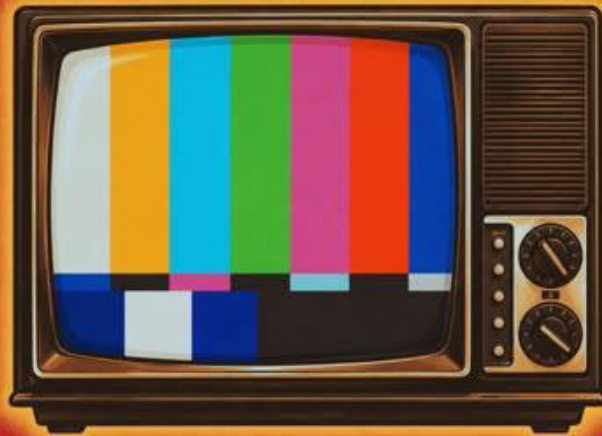
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