



ANC TODAY

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Conversations *with the* **President**



Our Defence Force is working to keeping South Africans safe and secure

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

 On Saturday, we held Armed Forces Day in Thohoyandou in Limpopo, an annual event that honours the men and women of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the important role they play in our country and on our continent.

We do so with a keen remembrance of the transformative journey that our national defence force has travelled from being tool of oppression, division and continental discord under apartheid to becoming a guardian of our democratic order.

With more than 69,000 active personnel, a substantial reserve

force and more young people being brought into the ranks through the Military Skills Development System, the SANDF's efforts to remain a professional, adaptable and resilient force continue.

In an era defined by increased geopolitical tensions, our armed forces are called upon to safeguard our sovereignty and to promote peace and stability beyond our borders. They also have an important role inside the country.

In the State of the Nation Address on 12 February 2026, I announced that we would be deploying the SANDF to support the South African Police Service (SAPS) in tackling

gang violence and illegal mining in the Western Cape, Gauteng and Eastern Cape.

Given our history, where the apartheid state sent the army into townships to violently suppress opposition, it is important that we do not deploy the SANDF inside the country to deal with domestic threats without good reason. This recent deployment has become necessary due to a surge in violent organised crime that threatens the safety of our people and the authority of the state.

That is why the SANDF will be deployed in support of the SAPS, operating under police command, with clear rules of engagement and for specific

time-limited objectives.

The SANDF may, for example, be called on by the police to provide protection in high-risk operations, or to support cordon-and-search operations against armed criminals. Soldiers may also help to secure critical infrastructure, freeing SAPS members to focus on investigations, arrests and building cases that lead to successful prosecutions.

The deployment of the SANDF will take place alongside other measures, such as strengthening anti-gang units and illegal mining tasks teams. The police will also be working with the National Prosecuting Authority on multi-disciplinary task teams to target the leadership, finances, firearms and logistics of these criminal networks.

This is not the first time that the SANDF has been deployed inside the country. It has taken on critical roles not only in maintaining security, but also in responding to disasters and supporting development.

During the recent floods in parts of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, the SANDF supported relief efforts and assisted with evacuations, repairing damaged infrastructure and erecting temporary structures.

Through Project Owethu, which was launched in Limpopo to coincide with Armed Forces Day, the SANDF provided healthcare services to more than 50,000 people in underserved communities.

Over the last few years, the SANDF has helped improve



the lives of rural communities through the Welisizwe Rural Bridges. It has conducted law-enforcement operations at our borders to curb people smuggling, illicit activity and illegal crossings.

The unprecedented mobilisation of the SANDF during the COVID-19 pandemic enabled us to enforce disaster regulations, safeguard our borders, support anti-crime efforts with the SAPS and set up field hospitals to tend to the sick.

Like many other areas of the state, the SANDF has for several years been operating under significant financial constraints due to the poor state of our public finances. As our financial position stabilises, we are working to close funding gaps and strengthen the readiness of our armed forces.

We are also strengthening the

complement of younger people in the SANDF. Applications recently opened for the 2027 Military Skills Development System, which offers young people the opportunity to gain skills and training in the army, air force, navy and military health service.

When the SANDF was formed in 1994 it marked a decisive break from the use of the defence force to perpetuate apartheid oppression. Today our armed forces are loyal to our democratic Constitution, are subject to civilian oversight and reflect the diversity of our nation. They operate in strict adherence with international humanitarian law.

As we work together to overcome the challenges facing our armed forces, let us not lose sight of their immense contribution to building a democratic nation in which all our people are safe and secure.

The Budget reflects **our shared journey** and the **belief** that **together we can build a more equal, more prosperous economy**

EXTRACTS OF THE 2026 BUDGET SPEECH BY
FINANCE MINISTER ENOCH GODONGWANA

25 FEBRUARY 2026

WE have reached an important turning point in the management of our public finances.

Five years ago, the outlook was stark.

State Capture had hollowed out critical institutions and weakened state owned entities.

South Africa had been downgraded to junk status by the last of the three major credit rating agencies in 2020.

The devastation of the coronavirus pandemic coupled with the Russia-Ukraine conflict had dealt a blow to global growth.

And in 2023, the Financial Action Task Force had placed South Africa on its grey list. The warning lights were flashing.

Public finances were under severe strain and growth had stalled.

Faced with this crisis, we chose not to be defined by it. Instead, we turned it into a catalyst for change.

We committed to a clear reform agenda and a disciplined fiscal strategy built on three principles:



stabilise debt, invest in infrastructure and spend better. Today, that commitment has delivered tangible results.

For the first time in 17 years, debt will stabilise and it will continue to fall in the coming years. The budget deficit has narrowed significantly, and debt-service costs are also falling.

The world has taken notice:

- South Africa has been removed from the FATF grey list;
- We secured our first credit rating upgrade in 16 years;
- And borrowing costs have

eased, creating space for growth and development.

These are signals of restored credibility. Of renewed resilience.

And of a nation regaining its footing.

The lesson is a simple but powerful one: steady structural reform and responsible public finances are the bedrock of a prosperous and more inclusive South Africa.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Allow me to turn to the global and domestic economic outlook.



Global outlook

The global economy is projected to grow by 3.3 per cent in 2026, broadly in line with last year's outcome.

Advanced economies are expected to grow moderately, while emerging markets will continue to anchor global momentum. India and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, are forecast to grow more strongly, supported by resilient domestic demand.

These developments are unfolding within an unprecedented global trade environment characterised by persistent geopolitical tensions and shifting trade policies which are reshaping supply chains.

In response we need to diversify our trading portfolios, secure new markets, reduce vulnerability to external shocks and position ourselves to benefit from emerging global growth centers.

Domestic outlook

On the domestic front, our growth outlook is steadily improving.

We project real economic growth of 1.6 per cent in 2026, an improvement from the 1.4 per cent estimated in 2025.

This improvement reflects the continued strengthening of economic performance from the second half of 2025.

Over the medium term, growth is expected to average 1.8 per cent, reaching 2 per cent by 2028.

Persistent logistics bottlenecks, weak public infrastructure and the recent outbreak of foot- and-mouth disease continue to weigh on economic activity and pose

risks to the outlook.

In light of this, rapid inclusive growth remains our only durable path forward.

Our efforts to promote faster economic growth continue to revolve around the four pillars:

- Maintain macroeconomic stability,
- Implement structural reforms,
- Invest in growth-enhancing infrastructure, and
- Build state capacity.

These pillars are the foundation upon which inclusivity is built, and how we ensure that growth is faster.

FISCAL STRATEGY

A key facet of macroeconomic stability is prudent fiscal management that advances socio-economic obligations.

Our fiscal strategy involves four key features:

- Support economic growth by accelerating public investment.
- Improve the efficiency of public spending.
- Improve the composition of spending by containing the public-service wage bill while increasing capital investment.
- Entrench sustainable public finances with a principles-led fiscal anchor.

We are already reaping the fruits of this strategy.

The consolidated budget deficit has narrowed to 4.5 per cent of GDP for 2025/26, an improvement from 4.8 per cent that we estimated in the 2025 Budget. The deficit falls to 4 per cent in 2026/27 and 3.1 per cent the year after.

Gross debt stabilises as a share of GDP in 2025/26, at 78.9 per cent. In 2026/27 it falls further, to 77.3 per cent of GDP and declines to 76.5 per cent by 2028/29.

The slightly higher debt peak this year reflects weaker nominal GDP growth and our decision to take advantage of strong investor demand in domestic and global markets by increasing issuance in 2025/26.

The main budget primary surplus for 2025/26 reaches 0.9 per cent of GDP.

In the next financial year it expands to 1.6 per cent, and then to 1.9 per cent in 2027/28. By 2028/29, we see it reaching 2.3 per cent.

To sustain fiscal discipline, we intend to continue the engagements on fiscal anchors.

We aim to introduce a proposal for a principle-based fiscal anchor in the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement after thorough consultation in Cabinet, Parliament and with the public.

Just as inflation targeting provided clarity and credibility to monetary policy, the fiscal anchor aims to entrench fiscal credibility.

IMPLEMENTING STRUCTURAL REFORMS

The structural reforms to lift growth we are implementing alongside this fiscal strategy reflect an understanding that the state should adjust to the needs of the national economy in a flexible way. Operation Vulindela must be understood in this context.

In terms of energy reforms, we

are stabilising electricity supply and building a competitive, reliable energy market.

Regulatory reforms in this sector have unlocked significant private investment, accelerating generation capacity and driving the transition towards cleaner, renewable power.

In logistics, we are dismantling bottlenecks in rail and ports that have throttled exports and raised the cost of doing business.

Our intention is to bolster public-private investment in rail operations while retaining state ownership of rail infrastructure.

The objective is to move goods faster, cheaper and more reliably.

Reforms in local government include shifting to a performance-linked utility model for water and electricity services.

This is aimed at strengthening financial sustainability, accountability and transparency.

Spatial and housing reforms focus on restructuring our cities to ensure that people have access to affordable housing located close to centers of economic activity.

This is a systematic effort to remove the structural blockages that have held back growth for many years.

REVENUE TRENDS AND OUTLOOK

Over the past three years, our tax system has demonstrated resilience despite slow economic growth.

For 2025/26, the gross tax reve-



nue is revised up by R21.3 billion compared to the estimate in the 2025 Budget.

Higher-than-expected net VAT, corporate income tax and dividends tax collections, improved the in-year outlook.

As a result, government has decided to withdraw the R20 billion in tax increases provisionally included in the May 2025 Budget.

The improving fiscal position allows us enough room to withdraw the proposed tax increases, without putting fiscal sustainability or economic activity at risk.

We are also proposing additional tax measures to ease the financial burden on households and businesses, by adjusting personal income tax brackets and rebates fully in line with inflation.

Our national savings and investment rate is far below the levels needed to truly create generational wealth and support local investment in the economy.

To encourage South Africans to save more, we propose that:

- The tax-free annual invest-

ment limit be increased from R36 000 to R46 000 per year.

- The limit to retirement fund deductions be raised from R350 000 to R430 000, allowing individuals to invest more each year on a tax-free basis.

Each year we ask South Africans to send in their “*Tips for the Budget*”. This year more than 1,200 citizens sent us their opinions and suggestions.

A small business owner from Gauteng, had this tip:

“Minister Godongwana, please increase the VAT registration threshold for small businesses to R2 million. The R1 million threshold has not kept pace with the cost of doing business.”

You will be happy to know that in this budget the compulsory VAT registration threshold increases from R1 million to R2.3 million.

We are taking other measures to support small businesses:

- We are raising the capital gains tax exemption for the sale of a small business for older persons from R1.8 million to R2.7 million. This applies to small businesses

OPERATION VULINDLELA



worth R15 million instead of the R10 million previously. It will enable small business owners to receive more tax relief when they sell their businesses.

Increases to certain taxes are unavoidable.

For 2026/27, excise duties on tobacco will be increased in line with inflation.

This includes excise duty on electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems.

As a result:

- The tax on a 20-pack of cigarettes rises from R22.81 to R23.58.
- Pipe tobacco rises by 28 cents per 25 grams, and cigarette tobacco by 87 cents per 50 grams.
- Cigars rise by R4.56 per 23 grams.

The excise on alcoholic beverages also rises by inflation. As such:

- A 340 millilitre can of beer or cider increases by 8 cents.
- A 750 millilitre bottle of wine goes up by 15 cents.

- A 750 millilitre bottle of spirits will increase by R3.20.

In terms of fuel levies, the total increase will also be in line with inflation.

- The general fuel levy will go up by 9 cents per litre for petrol and 8 cents per litre for diesel.
- The carbon fuel levy will go up by 5 cents per litre for petrol and 6 cents for diesel.
- The Road Accident Fund levy will increase by 7 cents per litre.

The strong revenue collection this year, and the overall resilience of tax administration, reflects an efficient and agile tax administration, continually improving through targeted compliance initiatives.

However, the scourge of illicit trade represents a major threat to these hard-won gains. It threatens our economy, endangers consumers, and robs the fiscus of billions in revenue.

The recent announcement by a major tobacco producer, that will close its local operations, is

a stark reminder of the impact of illicit trade on jobs and the overall economy.

The sophisticated and organised nature of illicit operations demands an intensified effort to curb this trade, secure prosecutions and dismantle its supply chains.

SARS has already intensified its efforts. It will also continue its joint operations with the Border Management Agency, the SAPS and the defence force to stop the illicit trade in tobacco.

CONCLUSION

The progressive realisation of the fundamental socioeconomic rights enshrined in our constitution is essential to our mission to deal with inequality, poverty and unemployment.

It is a mission that demands that we make prudent fiscal choices.

With the health of our public finances comes a greater degree of economic freedom and sovereignty.

It is this sovereignty that gradually frees us from over-reliance on external debt.

It shields us from the inherent uncertainties of global finance and global politics.

As we have witnessed over the last few years, the established norms of the global order can shift and be undermined.

To achieve our ultimate goal of bettering the lives of our people we must continue pursuing this sovereignty.

A budget and a fiscal strategy that advances inclusive growth and the sustainability of public finances is a crucial part of achieving this greater freedom.

It moves us closer to fulfilling our constitutional promise to do all that it takes for our people to live with dignity and prosperity...

As Commissioner Kieswetter prepares to take his leave at the end of April, I ask this House to join me in thanking him for seven years of patriotic, dedicated service.

Commissioner, your unwavering integrity and commitment to operational excellence is an example to all of us.

Lastly, I thank every South African. This Budget reflects our shared journey and the belief that together we can build a more equal, more prosperous economy.

The full 2026 Budget Speech can be downloaded from the following link:

<https://www.gov.za/2026Budget-Speech>



ANC Welcomes the **2026 National Budget** as a **Decisive Step Towards Economic Stability, Growth and Social Justice**

■ By **ANC SECRETARY GENERAL FIKILE MBALULA**

THE African National Congress welcomes the **2026 National Budget** tabled by the Minister of Finance, Comrade Enoch Godongwana, as a practical and people-centred Budget that speaks directly to the daily realities of ordinary South Africans. In his address to Parliament, the Minister made it clear that South Africa has reached *“an important turning point in the management of our public finances”*.

For many citizens, these words are not about technical fiscal language. They mean something simple but powerful, that the

country is stabilising, and government is regaining control of its finances so that more resources can be directed towards jobs, services and social protection.

For the first time in 17 years, government debt stabilises as a share of GDP and begins to decline over the medium term. The budget deficit narrows steadily, and the primary surplus expands 2026 Budget Speech. For ordinary families, this means lower borrowing costs for the country, more confidence from investors and a stronger foundation for growth. It means we are no longer drifting; we are rebuilding.

This Budget makes it clear that infrastructure remains at the centre of economic renewal. Over the medium term, public-sector infrastructure spending will exceed R1 trillion. That investment will go into roads, rail, water systems, electricity transmission and logistics networks. When roads are maintained, when trains run, when water flows reliably



and electricity supply is secured, it is not just an economic statistic, it is a mother getting to work on time, a small business keeping its doors open, a farmer getting produce to market, and a young person finding opportunity in construction and engineering.

The recovery of PRASA commuter corridors, the strengthening of SANRAL's road network, and major bulk water projects reflect a government that understands that service delivery is not abstract, it is about dignity. The performance-linked reform for metro water and electricity services, backed by R27.7 billion over the medium term, is a direct response to the frustrations of communities who experience water cuts and infrastructure collapse.

The message is clear; revenue collected for services must be re-invested in those same services.

The ANC particularly welcomes the protection of the social wage. More than 60 per cent of non-interest spending continues to go to social protection, health and education. Social grants amounting to R292.8 billion will support millions of vulnerable South Africans. The old age grant increases to R2 400, and the child support grant rises to R580. For pensioners supporting extended families

and for caregivers stretching every rand, these increases matter. Early Childhood Development receives additional funding to expand access to 300,000 more children.

The National School Nutrition Programme continues to provide meals to over 9.9 million learners. In health, R26 billion is allocated to strengthen HIV and AIDS programmes. These are not luxuries. They are lifelines.

This Budget also recognises the pressures faced by workers and small businesses. The withdrawal of previously proposed tax increases, the full inflationary adjustment of personal income tax brackets, and the increase of the VAT registration threshold to R2.3 million demonstrate a government that has listened. Encouraging savings through higher tax-free investment and retirement deduction limits supports long-term financial security for families.

On peace and security, the increased allocation to police, defence and the Border Management Authority signals that communities plagued by organised crime, gangsterism, illegal mining and illegal immigration will not be left alone. Safety is a precondition for economic activity and social stability.

This Budget also directly confronts weaknesses in local government. With many municipalities in financial distress, the review of the fiscal framework and reforms to the Municipal Infrastructure Grant system reflect a decisive effort to protect communities from governance failures. Citizens must see the state working where they live, in clean streets, functioning water systems and reliable electricity.

As we move deeper into an election year, the ANC does not ask South Africans to judge us on rhetoric. We ask them to judge us on measurable progress: stabilised debt, sustained social protection, increased infrastructure investment, improved revenue performance and strengthened security.

The 2026 National Budget affirms supports our priority programmes as outlined the January 8th Statement; that South Africa's challenges can be overcome through disciplined governance, strengthened state capacity and partnership in the public interest.

It is a Budget that balances responsibility with compassion, stability with transformation, and reform with protection of the most vulnerable.

The African National Congress calls on all South Africans; the workers, entrepreneurs, students, pensioners and professionals; to stand together in building a more inclusive, sovereign and prosperous country.

Our journey of renewal is underway, and together we will continue to move South Africa forward.

The **Budget** Must Support a **New Local Economic Development Model**

■ By **DR KHWEZI MABASA**

THE main policy debates about local government correctly highlight the challenges in public goods and services provision. Community protests and the upcoming local government elections have shifted the focus towards equitable access to water, energy, food, social infrastructure and concerns about heightened crime within municipalities. This makes sense because local government is at the coalface of residents' experiences in the country's cooperative governance framework. Most residents, policy stakeholders, government officials and researchers present improved public service provision as the panacea for municipal governance faultlines.

This proposition is salient and deserves more attention in fiscal policy making. But it does not resolve the underlying structural causes underpinning the socio-economic challenges within municipalities. South Africa needs a new local economic development model that addresses poor public service delivery and long-standing uneven spatial development patterns simultaneously. This model should focus on the following strategic fiscal policy choices.

Firstly, it is essential to diversify the revenue base within local municipalities, which is overly dependent on rates and taxes as primary revenue sources.

The fiscal policy framework needs



to provide local government officials with additional policy instruments for generating income. Researched literature and stakeholder inputs point to some useful proposals for augmenting the revenue base at the local level. For example, reorientating the functions of state-owned municipal enterprises and development agencies towards revenue generation policy priorities. The governance oversight and policy impact monitoring systems over these municipal entities are not adequate. In addition, the performance outcomes of these institutions need to be connected with socio-economic imperatives such as employment creation, skills development, technological upgrading and lowering household living costs.

Secondly, municipal fiscal policy interventions need to complement localised industrial diversification

plans. Too many municipalities in the country rely on one or two dominant sectors for attaining socio-economic development goals. This is not sustainable, especially in policy context characterised by regular business closures and uneven spatial investment patterns.

The reports as well as experiences from former mining dependent communities highlights this point in several ways. Fiscal policy choices within municipalities should facilitate the transition towards more diversified economic structures, which include emerging sectors using low-carbon and digital technologies. This requires government coordination to ensure that these fiscal allocations are supported by industrial, social development and public infrastructure programmes.

The documented evidence from successful industrial and special

economic zones interventions provides a basis for this government-wide approach in diversifying local development.

Thirdly, local economic development policy stakeholders and policymakers should dedicate equal attention to demand-led growth. Public procurement, decent work creation and administered prices are crucial pillars in this strategy.

A good starting point is linking public procurement with socio-economic targets such as job creation, building local value chains and improving access to public goods.

This necessitates balancing price competitiveness with the above-mentioned developmental imperatives. Municipal budget committees need to review administered pricing thresholds to assess their impacts on local economic development.

The rigid cost-recovery model

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BUDGET

ECONOMIC GROWTH

The economy is forecast to grow by **1.6 per cent in 2026**, supported by continued momentum on structural reforms, improving confidence, lower interest rates and higher investment.



has impeded broader economic development imperatives. For example, price controls can be used to lower household and business costs within local government.


In addition, municipalities can support demand by creating decent work opportunities and absorbing atypical workers into direct state employment. This is essential for using wages and increased income to drive demand in the municipality.

BUDGET

EXPENDITURE

Consolidated government expenditure is projected to increase from R2.58 trillion in 2025/26 **to R2.89 trillion in 2028/29.**

Spending on education constitutes the largest share of expenditure.



The aim is to pick sectors that have higher labour absorption rates and ensure that employment expansion meets prescribed decent work standards. And this labour market strategy must consider both formal and informal work as well as intersectional demographics (age and gender).

All these interventions explained above illuminate that local economic development in South Africa can be approached differently, with the aim of producing improved human development outcomes. The dominant view which reduces municipal development functions to service delivery should be transcended.



From Paper to Pavement:

Making Candidate Selection Work Where Our Footprint Is Thin

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

LET us speak plainly to one another as comrades. Most of us have read the candidate selection guidelines. We know what they say. We know the procedures, the notices, the meetings, the records, the safeguards. On paper, it is a serious effort to protect the organisation from the habits that have injured us in recent years: imposed candidates, money politics, gatekeeping, intimidation, and processes that collapse into disputes.

But here is the hard truth we must confront without defensiveness. The guidelines assume a level of organisational readiness that is uneven across the country. In many wards our footprint is thin. Some branches meet irreg-

ularly. Some struggle with basic administration. Some have too few active members to carry a heavy process. In some places comrades are committed but exhausted. In others, local legitimacy has been damaged by the behaviour of individuals who treated public office as entitlement rather than service.

If we approach the guidelines as if conditions are perfect, we will fail. We will complete the ritual but lose the community. We will produce candidates who win internal arguments but cannot win trust. We will have technically correct meetings and politically incorrect outcomes.

So the task is not to re explain the document. The task is to make it

work in real conditions. To turn it into a practical tool that cadres can implement where our presence must be rebuilt, where trust must be earned, and where discipline must replace improvisation.

This is my proposal for how we should do it.

1. Stop beginning with names. Begin with a ward plan.

In wards where our footprint is thin, the quickest way to create division is to start with candidates. Once names enter the room, the room changes. People take positions. Suspicion rises. Comrades stop listening. The ward becomes a contest instead of a renewal project.

We should reverse the order. Before a single name is discussed, the ward must agree on a simple plan that answers three questions.

- i) What is the community saying?
- ii) What must a councillor in this ward be able to do?
- iii) What practical work will we do before we present anyone to the public?

If we cannot answer those questions, we are not ready to select. We will end up selecting on familiarity, noise, or factional strength rather than capability and legitimacy.

Where local structures cannot carry the full process, higher structures must use the options provided in the guidelines to delegate responsibility so that the process does not collapse into paralysis or confusion. This is not taking power away from the branch. It is protecting the credibility of the organisation.

So in wards where our footprint is thin, the first decision must be organisational and operational: appoint a small implementation team with clear responsibilities and clear reporting lines, to do the groundwork that the guidelines assume already exists.

That groundwork is not glamorous, but it is decisive.

A reliable contact list.

A stakeholder map.

A clear understanding of local issues.

A properly kept process file.

Without that groundwork, every meeting becomes vulnerable to

confusion, disruption, and dispute.

2. Build the ward record and defend the process

before the process is attacked.

Comrades, we have learnt the hard way that disputes do not begin after meetings. They begin before meetings. They begin in whispers and rumours, in selective notices, in claims that people were excluded, in accusations that registers were manipulated.

That is why the guidelines insist on notice, evidence, proper roles, and documentation. We should not treat this as bureaucracy. We should treat it as political self defence.

In wards where our footprint is thin, build the ward process file from the first day of the work. Keep it clean. Keep it complete. Keep it accessible.

It must contain notices and proof

of distribution, attendance registers, minutes, results sheets, incident notes, and the required visual record of meetings.

If you cannot prove your process, you will not be able to defend your outcome. And when we lose outcomes to procedural weakness, we weaken the organisation and demoralise comrades who came in good faith.

This is also why the guidelines take a firm line on frivolous and malicious disputes. Disputes must be lodged quickly and must be supported by tangible evidence. The message is clear. If we want to reduce disputes, we must build an evidence culture from the start, not scramble for proof after the fight has already begun.

3. Make listening the first act of renewal, not the last.

We cannot rebuild trust through internal meetings alone. The



community does not experience our internal processes as legitimacy. They experience our presence, our humility, our usefulness, and our consistency.

Where our footprint is thin, many residents assume that we arrive only when we want votes. We must accept that perception as our starting point, not as an insult to be argued with. The only way to defeat it is through disciplined listening and practical follow through.

Before nomination meetings, we should conduct structured listening that produces a Ward Reality Brief.

Not a long document. Not ideology. Not a speech. One page.

What are the ten issues people raise most often? What makes them angry? What makes them afraid? What do they expect a councillor to do weekly, not once a year? What would make them reconsider their opinion of us?

This brief then becomes the base material for candidate engagement. It prevents candidates from speaking in vague generalities. It forces them to address what the community actually lives.

The guidelines already require candidates to respond to core questions about ward issues, goals, track record, and reasons for support. Listening ensures those questions are not empty. It ensures the meeting tests reality, not performance.

4. Rebuild presence through usefulness, not promises.

Comrades, where our footprint is thin we cannot begin by saying we will fix everything. People



have heard that too many times from too many parties. What they respect is seriousness.

Seriousness looks like helping residents log service complaints and obtain reference numbers. Seriousness looks like following up, escalating, and reporting back.

Seriousness looks like showing up consistently, not only when there is a microphone.

Seriousness looks like helping people navigate billing queries, municipal offices, service faults, and safety concerns.

This is where we must be innovative in the simplest way. Not fancy ideas. Practical work that proves we are on the side of the people.

Every ward where our presence must be rebuilt should commit to visible actions that can be done without large resources, but require discipline.

A service tracking drive where faults are logged properly and followed up weekly.

A community safety engagement where local structures map

hotspots and agree immediate actions.

A public helpdesk session where residents are assisted with services, rates, and complaints.

When we do this consistently, something changes. We stop being an organisation that arrives to persuade. We become an organisation that arrives to serve. Persuasion then becomes easier because trust has a base.

And it disciplines our candidates too. Anyone who wants to represent must be part of this work. Not for photographs. For character, habit, and credibility.

5. Treat candidate presentations as an examination of capability.

Selection is not a popularity contest. It is a test of readiness.

The guidelines require short CVs and structured candidate responses. That structure must be used to raise standards, not to tick boxes.

In wards where our footprint is thin, we need candidates who can do three things at once.

i) They must be able to connect



with ordinary people in a respectful and calm way.

- ii) They must be able to organise and build relationships, not just attend meetings.
- iii) They must be able to govern, meaning they must understand oversight, budgets, contracts, and service escalation pathways.

So branches and delegated structures should assess candidates on local knowledge, clarity of plan, track record of service, ethical posture, ability to work with diverse people, and basic governance competence.

If a candidate cannot explain what they will do in their first weeks and months, how they will report back, how they will handle community complaints, and how they will hold the municipality accountable, then they are not ready.

Selecting an unprepared candidate is not neutral. It damages the organisation and confirms the public belief that we are careless with responsibility.

6. Protect the process with discipline and firm conduct.

Wards where our presence must be rebuilt are the most vulnerable to disruption, intimidation, and weaponised disputes. That is why the safeguards in the guidelines must be enforced without apology.

No negative campaigning.

No money politics and no buying of support through gifts, patronage, or spending. Clean roles and no conflicts of interest.

Oversight by observers.

Evidence capture to support disputes and discipline where disruptions occur.

Proper notice through the channels available, with proof retained.

These measures do not weaken democracy. They protect it. They protect the organisation from capture. They protect communities from manipulation. They protect comrades who participate in good faith.

7. Use the community meeting to rebuild legitimacy with humility.

The community meeting is not a courtesy. It is part of rebuilding trust. Community participants must be able to ask questions and make recommendations without fear or favour, and support must be counted transparently.

The guidelines also allow an important corrective. If the community is dissatisfied with the candidates presented, it may propose an additional candidate to be considered. Used properly, this breaks the culture of closed lists. It signals that we are listening. It forces us to value legitimacy, not only internal procedure.

At the same time, organisational authority must be stated clearly. The meeting must close with the understanding that final decisions are taken by the organisation while taking community input into account.

This is how we combine humility with leadership.

Conclusion: What I think we should do now.

Comrades, the guidelines are

necessary. But in wards where our footprint is thin, they will not work by themselves. We must make them work through disciplined organising and practical presence.

We should stop beginning with names and begin with a ward plan grounded in community reality.

We should build the ward process file from the first step and defend our credibility through proof, because evidence prevents disputes from becoming weapons.

We should make listening the first act of renewal, not the last.

We should rebuild presence through usefulness, not promises.

We should treat candidate selection as a test of capability and character, not internal popularity.

We should enforce discipline against negativity and money politics, because these are the cancers that destroy legitimacy.

We should use the community meeting to rebuild trust with humility, while maintaining organisational authority and coherence.

If we do these things consistently, candidate selection becomes more than an internal procedure. It becomes a renewal campaign in itself.

It becomes proof, ward by ward, that we can still organise with discipline, serve with humility, and lead with credibility.

That is how we move from paper to pavement. That is how we begin to win back trust, not by demanding it, but by earning it.

Is South Africa a Country **UNDER SIEGE?**

■ By **MAX FUZANI**

WHEN I first began penning this article, I was in a reflective state, minding my own business. In that quiet moment of contemplation, I stumbled upon a flood of recent, seemingly insignificant social media posts, lamenting the bizarre events of July 2025 many in jest. Some even proposed, half-seriously, that July be struck from the calendar entirely, be archived away as if cursed. The humour, of course, hides a grim reality: July, in our national consciousness, is marked not only by joyful events but also by tragedy. We cannot forget July 2021 when civil unrest colloquially dubbed the “Zuma Riots” claimed the lives of approximately 354 South Africans within mere days.

Background

1. Historical Importance of July

The month July 2025 holds deep historical importance for our country. It is the birth month of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, our global icon, born on 18 July. It is also home to glamorous events such as the Durban July, where whiskey-drinking gentlemen, cigar-smoking elites, and fashion’s finest gather. But my reflection is not about festivals or anniversaries it was sparked by troubling events in July 2025, events that, in my view, signal profound risks to our nation’s security and stability.

2. Key Events in July 2025

On 6 July 2025, Lieutenant General



Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi made startling revelations during a media briefing, exposing the underbelly of South Africa’s criminal justice system. He alleged the existence of a powerful criminal syndicate embedded within law enforcement and judicial structures implicating even senior officials such as the Minister for Safety and Security, Mr Senzo Mchunu. Evidence presented included unauthorised removal of case dockets, WhatsApp correspondence, and financial links pointing to collusion.

Days later, on 15 July 2025, the United States Department of Homeland Security announced deportations of five convicted criminals to Eswatini. These are individuals rejected by their countries of origin for heinous crimes. This sparked immediate unrest in Eswatini and raised grave concerns for South Africa, given our porous borders and the risk of regional spill-over.

On 21 July, another headline shook the nation, Mr Kenny Kunene was found at the Sandton home of businessman Mr Katiso “KT” Molefe during Molefe’s arrest for alleged involvement in the 2022 murder of DJ Sumbody and two bodyguards. Patriotic Alliance leader Mr Gayton McKenzie responded swiftly, suspending Kunene from party leadership roles pending investigation an act of political accountability too rarely seen.

3. Common Thread of National Instability

These seemingly disconnected events are bound by a common thread, their cumulative effect weakens the state, erodes its legitimacy, and fuels public distrust. The South African state’s posture towards TOCs is complex. It oscillates between active confrontation, where crime prevention operations such as Operation Shanela

achieve notable successes, and tacit connivance, where institutional weaknesses, corruption, and limited capacity allow criminal networks to flourish despite official rhetoric. At its most troubling, we witness active encouragement or even collusion, where elements within the state protect and benefit from criminal actors – a systemic failure documented extensively during the era of state capture.

Problem Statement

History teaches us nations fall not only due to external invasion but also from administrative sclerosis, moral or ethical internal decay. In South Africa's case, corruption, compromised institutions, and structural societal inequalities form fertile grounds for criminal syndicates to forage and fester. These forces threaten democratic integrity, weaken the rule of law, and create a perception fair or not that our country is under siege.

All of these seemingly unrelated events may appear isolated from each other, but they share a common consequence: weakening and delegitimising the state. In a recent moment of reflection,

I found myself drawn to works such as *“Rich States, Poor States – Why Some Countries Succeed and Others Fail”* by Greg Mills, and *“Society Under Siege: Crime, Violence and Weapons”* edited by Virginia Gamba. The latter calls for collective introspection by civil society, government, and citizens. It offers a valuable theoretical framework for assessing the nature and character of the state we inhabit, as part of ongoing debates aimed at safeguarding our nation and salvaging what remains of our social fabric. This framework focuses on the orientation and disposition of states towards Transnational Criminal Organisations (TOCs), serving as a barometer for assessing our vulnerability to both internal and external criminal threats.

Countries worldwide confront TOCs through robust legal frameworks and international cooperation. This approach gained significant global momentum in the early 2000s following the adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which was enforced from 2003. For instance, both the United States and the European Union have collaborated with Balkan

countries since the early 2000s to counter TOCs dealing in drug and human trafficking in fragile post-conflict states such as Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

South Africa's Stance Towards TOCs

1. Active Confrontation

South Africa's current orientation towards tackling transnational criminal organisations broadly aligns with this international model, as the state works vigorously to combat organised criminal activities through a combination of law enforcement, community collaboration, and technological innovation. Notable government efforts include high-impact operations led by the South African Police Service (SAPS), such as *Operation Shanela*, which has resulted in the successful arrest of thousands of suspects linked to serious crimes like murder, drug smuggling, and illegal firearm possession. Cooperation between SAPS, metropolitan municipalities, and community stakeholders further strengthens the targeting of crime hot-spots and gang activity. There is also



a clear government focus on expanding detective services and integrating modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) for enhanced fraud detection and intelligence analysis to support law enforcement.

South Africa's approach to safeguarding borders addressing illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and firearms illustrates the importance placed on national security. At the regional level, the government has convened high-level strategic meetings with stakeholders, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and INTERPOL, to develop joint strategies for combatting transnational organised crime. These regional collaborations, aligned with global commitments such as the UNTOC, reinforce South Africa's pledge to a coordinated, cross-border law enforcement response.

Cabinet and presidential addresses consistently prioritise the dismantling of organised crime syndicates. Current policing priorities explicitly cover combating drug trafficking rings, cash-in-transit heists, extortion, kidnappings, gang violence, and corruption within police structures. Encouragingly, some areas show declining quarterly crime statistics, signalling progress. Institutional efforts also include restoring public trust, enhancing controls over legal and illegal firearms, and improving the overall integrity of law enforcement.

Nevertheless, the persistence of structural challenges remains corruption, economic inequality, and inadequate regulatory enforcement undermine progress. Strategic reviews of national crime prevention indicate mixed outcomes strengths in cus-



toms and border management are countered by vulnerabilities linked to criminal enablers or illicit trade in specific sectors. Policy-makers widely acknowledge that more targeted reforms and practical implementation of international commitments are vital to addressing these gaps effectively.

A critical factor lies in the state's limited institutional capacity and political will to take firm action. Despite legal tools like the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) (1998) and initiatives such as the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), enforcement bodies face corruption, resource shortages, and inter-agency coordination challenges. As a result, disruption of criminal networks is often ineffective. Public condemnations rarely translate into vigorous operational responses, allowing criminal operations to persist, sometimes under tacit protection linked to officials benefiting from the illicit economy.

2. The State's Tacit Connivance with Transnational Criminal Organisations (TOCs)

In this scenario, fragile states often display tacit connivance, where local officials or power holders turn a blind eye to criminal activities. For example, in the 2010s, illicit diamond exports from the Central African Republic were conducted by private actors with minimal systemic state in-

tervention, signifying tacit acceptance. Similarly, parts of Central Asia and post-conflict Kosovo (late 1990s to 2010) saw drug trafficking networks facilitated by ethnic and kinship ties.

Thus, tacit connivance should not be seen merely as a passive failure but as an outcome of fragility, wherein certain actors implicitly accept or benefit from organized crime for economic or political gain. Consequently, law enforcement policies often serve symbolic purposes to reassure the public while substantive disruption of criminal syndicates remains limited.

South Africa's experience with state capture where influential political and economic actors manipulate state institutions exacerbates these problems, creating fertile ground for criminal enterprises to flourish with impunity. Investigations reveal how criminal syndicates have infiltrated key institutions, further undermining enforcement agency independence and effectiveness.

3. State's Active Encouragement of TOCs

In some cases, states actively encourage or support transnational criminal organisations. Examples include Iran's alleged sponsorship of criminal groups for intelligence and trafficking operations in Europe and Latin America

since the 2010s. Similarly, Syria's Assad regime became deeply involved in illicit drug production and distribution during the same period. Such extensive criminal infiltration weakens justice systems and fosters impunity.

In South Africa, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) recognizes the existential threat organized crime poses, compounded by corruption and state capture, which erode the rule of law and allow criminal networks to flourish under political protection. Despite efforts to reassert control, entrenched criminal groups with ties to state actors make dismantling these networks extremely difficult.

Organised crime syndicates grow rapidly, partly due to complicity within state institutions. This includes police officers who, occasionally while on duty, provide armed protection and support to criminals, effectively creating a parallel decentralized state that undermines law enforcement and governance. This scenario closely mirrors the active encouragement scenario, where key state actors have vested interests in shielding criminal enterprises, exacerbating social instability

and corrupt governance.

South Africa's stance toward organised crime, particularly regarding tacit connivance and passive enforcement, can be critically understood as a complex mix of systemic weaknesses, constrained state capacity, and symbolic policy gestures rather than effective intervention. The framework highlights how a state lacking sufficient power to confront organized crime decisively resorts to symbolic condemnations that mask deeper passivity or complicity. Substantial evidence shows organized crime deeply entrenched in South Africa's economic, social, and political fabric. These criminal networks are not only widespread but entrepreneurial, violent, and embedded in illicit markets that threaten democratic integrity and institutional stability.

4. State Collusion with TOCs

Full collusion occurs when state actors and criminal networks cooperate directly. In a fragile or authoritarian states, institutional fragmentation allows officials to benefit from and protect criminal ventures. Examples include politico-criminal alliances in Colombia in the early 2000s and

Russian organized crime's control over economic sectors in the 2000s-2010s.

South Africa shows similar troubling patterns of collusion. Investigations like the Public Protector's report, the Nugent Commission, and the Zondo Commission document how state institutions South African Airways, Eskom, South African Revenue Service (SARS), and South African Police Service (SAPS) were infiltrated by political and business elites linked to state capture, including the Gupta family. These groups used state organs both for private economic gain and to protect organized crime and corruption.

The consequences are profound and law enforcement and accountability mechanisms are compromised, significantly limiting the ability to investigate and combat organized crime. SARS, for example, saw its capacity to counter financial crime greatly diminished due to leadership changes tied to state capture. SAPS faces allegations of shielding politically connected criminals, obstructing justice, and enabling syndicates cases supported by whistleblower testimonies from senior police officers. Allegations include interference in investigations, suppression of inquiries into political violence, and close ties between senior police officials and criminal actors.

Academic analysis defines such collusive systems as kleptocratic symbiosis, where corruption extends beyond bribery to systemic embedding of criminal networks within state organs, influencing policy and law enforcement outcomes. This relationship deeply erodes democracy and governance, allowing criminality to flourish with impunity.



South Africa exemplifies the collusion scenario, where the state acts as an active partner in criminality rather than a passive beneficiary. High-ranking officials have not only protected but facilitated organized crime for personal and political gain, severely weakening governance, security, and public trust.

While the government officially rejects the notion of organized crime being uncontrollable, realities show a difficult balancing act. Recognizing ongoing crime challenges, efforts continue, but institutional weaknesses and crime scale sometimes create environments where criminal organizations face less resistance than ideal. This generates concerns of reluctant acquiescence.

International Commitments and Regional Cooperation

1. Global Best Practices

Countries worldwide combat transnational organized crime (TOC) through robust legal frameworks and international collaboration. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), entered into force in 2003, sets a global baseline: states commit to criminalizing participation in criminal groups, money laundering, corruption, and obstruction of justice. UNTOC also promotes extradition, mutual legal assistance, harmonized law enforcement, and capacity building for national authorities. Collaboration between the US, EU, and Balkan states has targeted drug and human trafficking networks, with joint operations and regulatory harmonization showing measurable success in fragile post-conflict countries such as Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and



Herzegovina.

2. South Africa's Initiatives and Partnerships

South Africa's efforts align closely with these global standards, leveraging SAPS-led operations, partnerships, and technological innovation. *Operation Shanela* demonstrates proactive crime fighting, recently leading to thousands of arrests for serious offenses including murder, drug trafficking, and illegal firearms. The South African Police Service also works extensively with INTERPOL, utilizing mobile devices to share data, verify identities, and stop cross-border criminals. South Africa is recognized regionally for leading information sharing and participating in SADC security sessions to develop coordinated border control strategies. Engagement with INTERPOL and SADC ensures South Africa's alignment with global commitments and enhances its law enforcement reach.

3. Structural Challenges

Despite this commitment, persistent structural challenges undermine progress. Corruption at various levels of administration erodes public trust and reduces law enforcement effectiveness. Resource constraints, political interference, and coordination difficulties hamper efforts to confront sophisticated criminal networks.

Economic inequality and regulatory gaps exacerbated by elite capture, service delivery failures, and misallocation of funds allow criminal networks to thrive and spread. Oversight institutions such as the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and Special Investigation Unit (SIU) are hampered by political and financial pressures, perpetuating impunity and complicating the effective implementation of anti-crime strategies.

Conclusion

South Africa's stance toward transnational organized crime is not one of outright resignation but is marked by entrenched obstacles impeding full control.

The state remains committed and takes concrete anti-crime actions; however, institutional weaknesses, corruption, and socio-economic issues allow organized crime to flourish in certain parts or sectors, creating pockets of reluctant acquiescence. Although the government emphasizes robust law enforcement, the persistence of systemic challenges indicates a need for ongoing reforms and effective implementation.

Max Fuzani is a social entrepreneur and activist who writes in his personal capacity.



■ By **SEPHOKA DAVID SEKGOBELA**

ALL signs are there that World War III (WWIII) is looming and imminent. With the latest unfolding developments, the US-Iran tension in the Middle East could spiral into full-blown WWIII, and not much could be done to prevent it, especially with the UN having been exposed to be a not-so-useful entity that is even failing to restrain the Israeli genocidal regime from annihilating innocent Palestinians in Gaza. The credibility and usefulness of the UN has always been in doubt, but all doubts have now been cleared, that the UN is a highly compromised entity – a toothless bulldog that only barks, but cannot bite.

No one would like to be in the shoes of the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. Never before had the office of the UN Secretary General been so undermined by the US and its ally, Israel. As the UN Secretary-General, WWIII is looming and imminent right under his watch, and there seems to be nothing that he can do about it,

because he is helpless. Donald Trump is also establishing a parallel body alongside the UN, called “Board of Peace”, just to undermine the UN.

In the recent past, Iran made an urgent appeal to the UN to intervene in the Israeli aggression towards its sovereignty. However, instead of siding with the victim of unprovoked aggression by Israel, the UN Secretary General, said that Iran must be transparent and allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections on its military facilities. Why should Iran do that? Who authorized Israel and/or the US to be the world’s police? Who is inspecting their own nuclear arsenals?

We need to brace ourselves up for more destructive global instability. If we have not been ready for WWIII, we better be, because should the war broke out, no nation would be spared. SA could be drawn into imminent WWIII rather sooner than expected.

Due to US aggression and Donald Trump’s unpredictability, it would seem other nations have already been preparing themselves for WWIII. Intense armament of the nations is one of the causes of WWII, where countries like Germany were armed to the tooth, and became aggressive to other nations.

With state-of-the-art artillery weaponry, countries that are heavily armed like the US are prone to be aggressive, in order to test their military strength. Geopolitical peace is not in their best interest.

France recently had air-show, and amongst what was on display were military aircrafts. Whether that was just an alarmist stance or not, in March 2025, NATO warned Europeans to start preparing for WWIII. Some people were stockpiling necessities. Items such rechargeable radios, flash lights, flour, rice, and soap were stored. Each home was advised to keep at least 500 Euros at home.



As US-Iran stand-off is intensifying, both countries are exchanging unsavoury words towards each other, and are also engaged in military build-ups. US military has been building its presence in the Middle East, deploying a significant military presence there, including two aircraft carrier strike groups and advanced fighter jets. Iran warned the UN about the risks posed by the US military build-up in the region.

The US-Iranian diplomats have held several talks, without meaningful progress. Amongst some of those spurious demands by the US to Iran include the following:

1. End to uranium enrichment – dismantle nuclear program and facilities.
2. Stop supporting, and disarm and freeze activities of regional groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis.
3. Restore inspections by IAEA.
4. Curb its ballistic missile development.
5. Not threaten the security of Israel.

These demands are part of ongoing tensions and negotiations between the US and Iran,

with the US imposing sanctions and threatening military action if Iran does not comply. The US is pressing Iran to agree to its terms on nuclear program, with President Trump, stating that Iran must make a “*meaningful deal*” or face consequences, whatever that means, but Iran is apparently refusing to accede to some of those demands.

On the other hand, Donald Trump has actually given Iran 10 to 15 days ultimatum to do as he wishes, or else, “*really bad things*” will happen to Iran. Iran has also threatened to respond “*decisively and proportionately*” to any US attack. With Iran digging in its heels, refusing to barge, anything might happen anytime. Hence we need to brace ourselves up for possible eventuality of the outbreak of WWII.

Being one of the founding members of BRICS, SA is therefore in alignment with all other BRICS member nations, including Iran, Russia, and China, and this is a thorn in the flesh for Donald Trump Administration. Hence, the newly-elected US Ambassador to SA, Brett Leo Bozell III, is report-

ed to have pledged to address SA’s “*geostrategic drift*” towards Russia, China, and Iran, and to urge SA to “*return to non-alignment*”.

In a letter that Donald Trump initially wrote to Iran Supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, he was threatening to attack Iran, if Iran does not come to the table to discuss nuclear peace agreement. However, Iran does not take kindly to those threats, and has vowed to retaliate should the US attack it. Iran says it has “*its finger on the trigger*”, and is ready to defend its sovereignty against any aggression. God forbids, should the US attack it, that could lead to global catastrophe of unparalleled magnitude, because Iran also has nuclear weapons, and is also aligned to both Russia and China, which are nuclear superpowers in their own right. Veiled threats towards Iran by the US President, Donald Trump, could attract the ire of Iran’s allies in BRICS, especially Russia and China, leading to full-blown WWII. Though he should indeed be concerned, Trump seems, however, oblivious of what would happen should he attack Iran,

because any attack on Iran might lead to what Saddam Hussein referred to in 1991 as, *“The Mother of All Wars”*. Nuclear warfare would be different from conventional warfare, with drastic consequences for the whole world.

On the other hand, Donald Trump Administration seems to be losing long-time allies in NATO, like the UK. For the UK Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, to be talking about seeking opportunities in China, should be causing Donald Trump sleepless nights. Though the US is directly talking to Vladimir Putin and Jin Xiping for one reason or another, Trump Administration is trying to keep everyone away from both Russia and China, because nations getting closer to China in particular, reduce their reliance or dependency on the US for anything whatsoever.

But why shouldn't other countries like Iran also be nuclear armed states? Why should other nations feel entitled to keep or use all sorts of weapons, including nuclear arms, whilst others should not? Why should Iran be talked into dismantling its nuclear arms whilst others retain theirs? For instance, the US ally, Iran's loathed enemy, Israel, is one of the nuclear arms countries that are not NPT signatories. That means the UN cannot monitor their nuclear arms programmes. The other nine nuclear-armed states which are not signatories to the NPT and not subjects to the IAEA jurisdiction are the US, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel. Hence there are countries like the US, UK, China, Russia, Israel, Pakistan, France, India, and North Korea.

SA apartheid government had nuclear weapons, but apparently

dismantled them. SA is apparently the only country that developed nuclear weapons, and voluntarily dismantled them before the democratic dispensation. The country's nuclear weapons program was terminated in 1990, and all six nuclear devices were dismantled by 1991. SA subsequently signed the NPT and African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty.

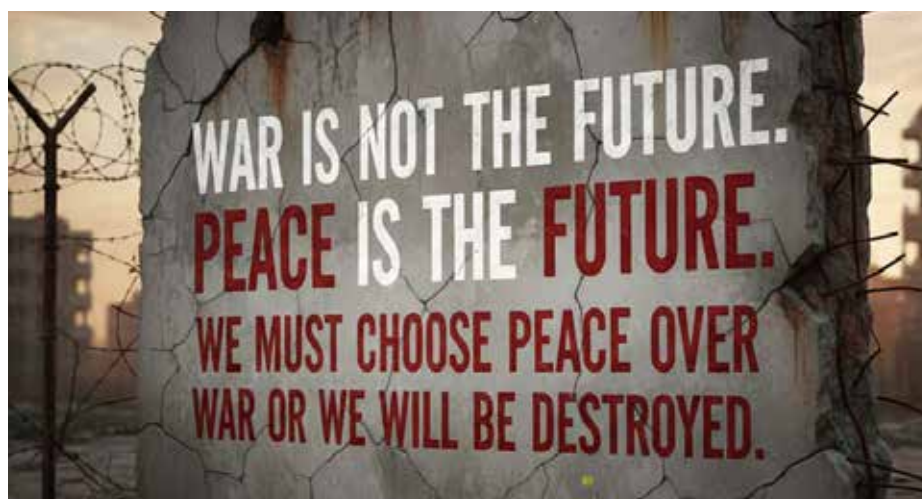
With the benefit of hindsight, was that the wise move? What prompted SA to do that, especially if other countries continue to enrich their nuclear arsenals, and are also not signatories of NPT? Some of the decisions taken in the dawn of democracy are mysterious. SA seems to have committed serious mistake in an attempt to appear morally relevant in the face of the world.

Donald Trump is calling Iran *“highly unstable and dangerous regime”* – classic case of the proverbial *“pot calling kettle black”*. Why should the US be concerned about Iran's nuclear arsenal, because the recent US attack on three of the Iranian nuclear facilities in 2025 was described by Donald Trump himself as, *“Incredible and overwhelming success”*. It is still a mystery to apprehend what led to the US attacking Iran. If it was about Iran

producing nuclear arms, why should Iran be expected to dismantle its nuclear arms whilst others retain theirs?

Against this backdrop, who would not agree with Iran to withdraw from the NPT and IAEA, which seem to be biased against other nations, including Iran? In any case, it does not seem to be compulsory for countries to be signatories to the NPT and/or subject themselves to the IAEA. That means their nuclear weapons programs are beyond reproach. They can produce nuclear arms at will without anyone saying anything. Why should other nations like Iran, not develop their own nuclear weapons programs as well? Even SA should consider doing that at its earliest convenience. SA cannot claim sovereignty, but yet cannot defend the same sovereignty against aggression of whatever nature.

Whatever is taking place in the Middle East should be of concern to everyone. Due to geopolitical alignment, SA is a BRICS member, and Iran is one of SA's partners in BRICS. It is therefore expected that partners should stand together through thick and thin. SA should therefore look at whatever is going on in the Middle East with keen interest.



South Africa's Critical Mineral Opportunity: Navigating the Geopolitical Rush

■ By **ASHLEY NYIKO MABASA**

THE global scramble for critical minerals has intensified, driven by an accelerating energy transition and heightened geopolitical competition. New tariffs, incentives, and export barriers are reshaping supply chains, while the concentration of supply for key commodities in both mining and refining continues to rise. While South Africa's major exports to the US, Platinum Group Metals, titanium, and certain ferroalloys, currently enjoy exemptions from these tariffs, these dynamic underscores an urgent need for a comprehensive national strategy to maximize benefits from the critical minerals boom.

South Africa faces a pivotal moment. To avoid being left behind, it must proactively lead efforts to unlock the value proposition of critical minerals across the

African continent. This involves addressing inherent challenges such as the need for accelerated productivity improvements, balancing declining ore grades, complex mining conditions, and labour shortages, all while managing rising operational costs, environmental considerations, and ensuring timely project execution.

The landscape of critical mineral supply is increasingly dominated by a few players. Chinese companies, for instance, have accounted for approximately 36 percent of new mining and refining assets brought online over the past five years, with a significant focus on growth in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. This concentration highlights the strategic importance of refining and processing capabilities, areas where South Africa currently lags.

The impetus behind the critical mineral rush is not primarily the rapid rise of AI, but rather the two-dimensional factors of solar, wind, and electric passenger vehicles. South Africa currently holds no distinct competitive advantage in the downstream value chain of these sectors.

The energy transition alone represents an annual investment of \$2.1 trillion, an 11% increase from 2024. Notably, 93% of this colossal investment is directed towards four key areas: renewable energy, storage, electrified transport, and grid infrastructure.

Significant cost reductions in 2025 were focused as follow, with battery costs decreased by 20% and solar by 60%. Investment in grid infrastructure is also substantial; South Africa plans to build approximately 14,000 km of



new grid transmission, contributing to an estimated 29 million km of global grid investment needed by 2050. This critical infrastructure development is intrinsically linked to the future of the energy sector. Electric vehicles, for example, are forecasted to capture 40% of the vehicle market share by 2040, catalysing demand for batteries and the essential minerals they contain: Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Graphite, Manganese, Iron, and Copper. This represents a two-and-a-half-fold increase in demand for these commodities between today and 2035, solidifying their status as 'critical minerals'.

However, sustaining this transition requires more than just current reserves. Increased exploration is vital to replace depleting mineral reserves and boost primary supply. The uptake of energy transition technologies and the proliferation of data centers will accelerate mineral depletion, necessitating continuous exploration efforts. While recycling will play an increasingly important role in filling this gap, it alone will not suffice.

Refining and processing critical minerals are paramount for boosting South Africa's economy through its mining sector, which currently sees stagnant investment at 6% of GDP. China's strategic focus on refining is evident, accounting for over 90% of rare earth, polysilicon, manganese, and graphite refining, and 70% of Platinum Group Metals, lithium, and cobalt. South Africa's reliance on imports from Chinese refining operations underscores a significant vulnerability and missed economic opportunity.

While South Africa does have a vertically integrated rare earth



business in Phalaborwa, Limpopo, operated by the U.S. company Mosaic, producing neodymium, praseodymium, and mixed oxide, this remains an isolated example.

To truly capitalize on the critical mineral rush, South Africa must implement policy incentives to foster new projects and develop mining operations that adhere to stringent environmental standards. Crucially, it needs to build integrated extraction and processing facilities closer to end markets. This vertical integration, optimized across Africa, will maximize regional benefits. Furthermore, South Africa should collaborate on downstream activities, working with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to develop low-carbon products, access shared financing or subsidies, and, most importantly, advance the adoption of automation and AI solutions. This includes deploying autonomous haulage, drilling, and systems to offset labour shortages and utilizing generative AI for exploration, planning, maintenance, and operator support to lower costs and downtime.

While South Africa aims to maximize the benefits of unlocking downstream industries for mining beneficiation, building long-standing trust is essential. The enduring 50-year relationship between Botswana and De Beers, for instance, demonstrates how investment certainty and stable policies can drive value addition in the long game of mining, where an average mine can take 15 to 18 years from exploration to production. A predictable investment environment is therefore paramount.

Finally, while some nations are adopting protectionist measures like export barriers or enforcing local downstream integration to preserve their positions in the global supply landscape, such strategies risk prompting alternative market searches.

The reality is that countries lacking self-sufficiency are intensifying efforts to stimulate local development through import barriers, resource development funds, and strategic projects with better access to funding and accelerated permitting. For South Africa, regional integration is critical to elevating its critical minerals sector. African countries must foster intra-continental opportunities, allowing some to specialize in processing while others invest in extraction, thereby creating a robust and mutually beneficial ecosystem.

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■ **FAITH & DEFIANCE – THE LIFE OF SALLY MOTLANA**

Reviewed by **JOE MAKHAFOLA**

Sally Motlana's legacy of defiance draws reader's gaze into **rearview mirror of history**



**FAITH &
DEFIANCE**
THE LIFE OF SALLY MOTLANA

MUKONI Ratshitanga's "*Faith & Defiance – The Life of Sally Motlana*", which was published in December last year, has added to a growing list of SA's biographical offerings.

The book brings to a new generation the exceptional life of Motlana as an avid developmental and Christian anti-apartheid activist from the mid-1940s until her retirement in the early 1990s. It begins in 1927, the year of her birth in Moremela, a village in the then-Eastern Transvaal, now Mpumalanga.

Her arrival into the world was marked by bad blood that flowed due to her maternal family's opposition to her parents' marriage – her mother was of royal lineage and her father was a commoner.

The narrative glides seamlessly into Motlana's early life and formative years in Sophiatown in the 1940s, her tertiary education at the Anglican Grace Dieu Diocesan Training College for teachers in Limpopo, and on to the University of Fort Hare.

The pace gathers momentum as Motlana enters adulthood, the

beginning of her teaching career, and a reversal with her early exit from the profession after the introduction of Bantu education in 1953.

We follow her as she rediscovers herself with eventual leadership of the self-help organisation, Black Housewives League (BHL), in the late 1960s.

Brought up under the tutelage of the Anglican Church's Father Trevor Huddleston in Sophiatown, Motlana joined the SA Council of Churches (SACC) in the early 1970s, where her leadership potential was recognised by her election as vice president of the interdenominational body, becoming one of its fiercest and most vocal leaders against apartheid.

Ratshitanga is a stickler for history, sometimes laboriously so, criss-crossing various epochs of SA's past, presumably to "*facilitate*", as seems to be his central concern, "*a better understanding of [my] subject and the zeitgeist that shaped her*". While this might make for hard work, a biography of a person born in the late 1920s is invariably a historical text that opens a window to a fast-receding past.

As a black woman activist with odds heavily stacked against her, Motlana's ability to multitask in the face of various hurdles is incredibly impressive. Part of the explanation for her industry lies in the decision she and Nthato Motlana, her husband, made to send their young children to boarding school at an early age.

"*All my friends and relatives,*" she told Ratshitanga, "*thought I was the most cruel mother on Earth, but that didn't bother me. The Catholics looked after the children*



very well." Another estimation was provided by veteran cleric, activist, and former general secretary of the SACC, Frank Chikane. He held Motlana in high esteem because she was of the "*pedigree,*" "*like ... Charlotte Maxeke,*" the first South African black woman to obtain a university degree.

Faith & Defiance is an important book for several reasons. It honours a remarkable woman and elevates SA women's agency in challenging oppression. It therefore contributes to the struggle for gender equality, bringing added richness to the various narratives of women's emancipation.

Its release is especially auspicious as we commemorate the **70th anniversary** of the **1956 Women's March** to the Union Buildings.

In 1963, civil rights leader Martin

Luther King Jr wrote that "*freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.*" Referring to the SA situation, much later in 1987, Motlana wrote in *Tiger Lily* magazine – a Canadian publication for women of colour – that: "*History has shown that no oppressors have willingly relinquished power to the vanquished.*"

"The disadvantaged have to build a comparable power base, either through military might or through grassroots organisations with popular support, to articulate the needs of the poor and to find solutions."

Motlana took to heart the lesson that freedom is never free. She and her generation of freedom fighters nailed their colours to the mast for values that should be amplified today: a just, non-racial,

non-sexist, and democratic SA. This country's social and political stability depends on the fulfilment of these values.

Like all activists arrayed against oppressive regimes, Motlana was nothing if not defiant. The book recounts a 1976 incident in which some young people took refuge from truncheoned, heavily armed police at Motlana's Sizwe Stores grocery store in Mofolo, Soweto.

A tense standoff ensued between Motlana and the officer commanding. He sought to gain entry into the room where the teenagers had hidden without her permission, but she would have none of that: *"You are not going in; this is my shop, and permission to enter comes from me,"* she chastised him, calling the officer a *"brain-washed"* quisling who did not *"realise that these children are yours and mine"*.

The hapless police officer's response betrayed both his loyalty to his job and the sharp tension between communal African values and modernity, pitched in the intersection of apartheid and capitalist individualism. *"My children are in the Transkei,"* he retorted.

Acknowledging this tension is a vital first step towards an important national conversation about how the country fuses the best of our diverse cultural traditions into a uniquely post-apartheid SA cultural and social synthesis.

The dramatic high point of ***Faith & Defiance*** is Motlana's 1978 conspiratorial manoeuvre, in which she plots the escape of two Azanian People's Liberation Army operatives from Jeppe police station with the assistance of Samuel Ngobeni, a SA Police (SAP) officer, who ends up leaving for

Tanzania with the two guerrillas donned in his SAP uniform. It reads like a film script.

Faith & Defiance reminds us of the importance of agency. Motlana and her colleagues in the BHL were not passive recipients of the generosity of others. They got up and rolled up their sleeves, built schools, vegetable gardens, and income-generation projects, which changed people's lives. Their perseverance offers timeless lessons in active and responsible citizenship.

This book is a testament to the virtues of character and selflessness. Sally Motlana did not have to spread herself so thinly in the service of others, or to put herself in harm's way. This teacher by training, married to medical practitioner, businessman and prominent activist, Nthato Harrison Motlana, chose the path of sacrifice. The couple could easily have lived cocooned middle-class lives – to

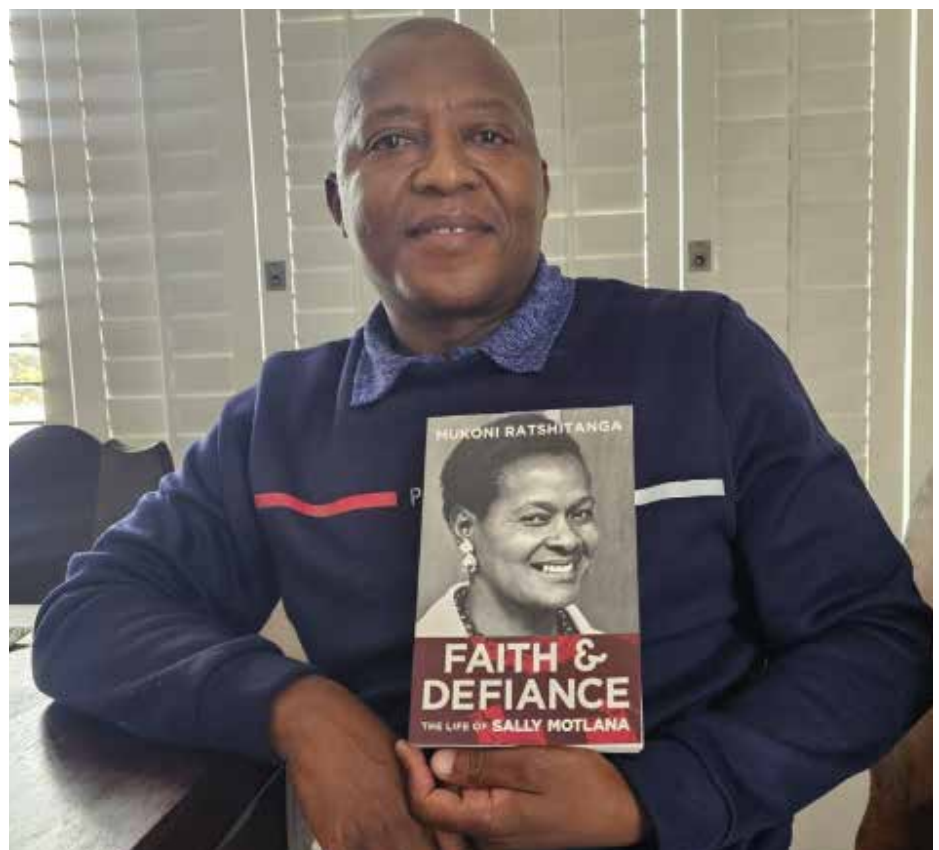
the extent that apartheid allowed Africans – but instead they chose the path of service to the greater cause.

Faith & Defiance is a great read; it draws the reader's gaze into the rearview mirror of history, the better to reflect on the present and the future. The youth of today should accept this challenge, to look into their future through the eyes of remarkable figures from our history.

Former president Thabo Mbeki, who authored the book's foreword, concluded that the *"book is itself a school, which, especially the younger generations, should not miss"*.

Faith & Defiance is available at Exclusive Books.

Joe Makhafola is a former spokesperson for the minister of communications.



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

1–6 March 2026

Source: *SA History Online, O'Malley Archives, Africa Today/Yesterday, The Africa Factbook and Amazwi SA Museum of Literature*

1 March 1914 Archie Gumede born



Archibald Archie Gumede was born on 1 March 1914 in Pietermaritzburg. He studied at the South African Native College (now University of Fort Hare), but dropped out after two years. He returned to Natal and joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1949 and became secretary of the Natal branch. Gumede was very active in the Natal ANC, leading the delegation to the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955 and in the campaigns against the extension of pass laws to women. Gumede established his own law practice in Natal in 1970 after being admitted to the bar. He became chairman of the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) in 1979. He was founding member of the United Democratic Front (UDF), was elected as UDF president in 1983, and tirelessly campaigned for liberation, despite harassment. In 1994 Gumede became

a member of the National Assembly of South Africa. He died in June 1998 at the age of 84.

1 March 1922 Wits gain full university status



The University College in Johannesburg attained full University status under the name the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg. The origin of Wits lies in the South African School of Mines, which was established in Kimberley in 1896 and transferred to Johannesburg as the Transvaal Technical Institute in 1904. The Institute became the Transvaal University College in 1906 and was renamed the South African School of Mines and Technology four years later. Full university status was granted to the University College in 1922, with effect from March 1. Seven months later, the inauguration of the University was duly celebrated. Prof Jan Hofmeyr became the first principal. Construction on the new University buildings began at Milner Park on a site donated to the University by the Johannesburg Municipality. The

University had, at that stage, six faculties, namely Arts, Science, Medicine, Engineering, Law and Commerce, 37 departments, 73 academic staff members and just more than 1 000 students.

1 March 1994 Walvis Bay handed over to Namibia

The South African government ended eighty-four years of control over the Walvis Bay enclave by handing over the port and twelve offshore islands to the Namibian government. This followed in the wake of bilateral discussions lasting three years between the South African and Namibian governments and the establishment of a transitional Joint Administrative Authority (JAA) in November 1992 to administer the 300 square mile territory. The amicable resolution to this territorial dispute, which stretched back to 1878, was commended by the United Nations and the international community as it fulfilled the provisions of UN Security Council 435 (1978), which declared Walvis Bay to be an integral part of Namibia.

2 March 1918 UNISA officially opened, replacing University of the Cape of Good Hope

South Africa's biggest University, the University of South Africa (Unisa) was officially opened



on 2 March 1918. It had been known as the University of the Cape of Good Hope since it was established in 1873. Today, Unisa is one of the mega universities of the world, with over 300 000 students in 130 countries. In 2000, the University merged with Technikon SA and also incorporated the distance education component of Vista University.

2 March 1987 Ladysmith Black Mambazo wins first Grammy



Ladysmith Black Mambazo, with founder and lead vocalist Joseph Tshabalala, became the first South African group to win a Grammy award. The group won the award for the best traditional folk album. The album '*Shaka Zulu*' was produced by music icon Paul Simon.

3 March 1919 Author Peter Abrahams born

South African writer and journalist, Peter Abrahams was born in Vrederdorp, Gauteng. He is best known for his third novel *Mine*



Boy (1946). He went into exile and worked as a journalist in London, where he met Nkruma and Kenyatta, fictionally combining them into the lead character of his novel *A Wreath of Udomo* (1956), forecasting the difficulties facing newly independent states. Abrahams in 1956 moved to settle in Jamaica, where he passed on at the age of 97. His memoir *The Coyaba Chronicles* was published in 2000

3 March 1968 King Kong composer Todd Matshikiza passed on



South African artist, composer and writer, Todd Tozama Matshikiza, died at the age of 47 in Lusaka, Zambia after a sudden illness. He composed the music and wrote some of the lyrics for the popular all-Black musical *King Kong*, portraying the life and death of heavyweight boxer Ezekiel Dlamini. He also wrote for *Drum* magazine.

3 March 2004 Caribbean countries boycott UN mission in Haiti

Angered by the manner in which Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced to flee his country, the fifteen-nation Caribbean Community said it would not provide troops for the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Force in Haiti. Aristide was overthrown twice, first in a military coup in September, 1991, and finally in February, 2004. He claimed he was abducted at gunpoint by United States Marines. After two-and-a-half-months' exile in Jamaica, he was offered amnesty in South Africa.

3 March 2014 Lupita Nyong'o wins Oscar

Kenyan Lupita Nyong'o wins an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in the 2013 movie, *12 Years a Slave*.



4 March 1890 Architect Gerard Moerdijk born

Gerard Leendert Pieter Moerdijk, of Dutch descent, was born in the Waterberg district, Transvaal (now Limpopo Province). He was one of the first Afrikaans architects and pioneered new designs for churches, adapting them to South African requirements and using

local materials. He designed approximately ninety churches, numerous houses, halls and public buildings, and the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

4 March 1901 Poet Jean-Joseph Rabearivol born

Malagasy poet Jean-Joseph Rabearivol, widely regarded as Africa's first modern poet and Madagascar's greatest figure was born in Antananarivo on this day. As a poor child, he taught himself to read and drive, driven by a passion for literature. He committed suicide at the age of 36, and at Independence of Madagascar in 1960, he was declared National Poet.

4 March 1932 Miriam Makeba born



Miriam Zenzile Makeba, world famous singer, actress and campaigner against apartheid, fondly known as Mama Afrika, was born in Prospect near Johannesburg.

5 March 1955 Birth of SACTU

The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was formed at an inaugural congress held in Johannesburg on 4 and 5 March 1955. It became the leading non-racial trade union co-coordinating body, and ally of the African

National Congress (ANC)-led Congress Alliance. It recognized the link between political and economic struggles, organising against racist and exploitative labour practices and the first national living wage campaign in 1957. SACTU also organised night schools and factory cells for workers. When the banning of organisations of 1960 happened after Sharpville, its activities went into decline, with many of its leaders forced into exile or victims of bannings and imprisonment. SACTU reorganised in exile, mobilizing support against apartheid amongst working class and trade union organisations and giving support to the emerging trade union organisation inside the country, to the process of trade union unity which eventually led to the formation of COSATU in 1985.

5 March 1943 Artist Mmakgabo Sebidi is born



South African artist Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi was born in Marapyane (Skilpadfontein) in the Hamanskraal area. She developed a life-long love for the designs of traditional arts and craft. As a young girl she accompanied her grandmother who was a traditional wall and floor painter. She studied with John Mohl while also studying and teaching pottery and clay sculpture at the Katlehong Art Centre in Germiston and in Alexandra. She sold many of

her paintings at the art fair, Artists under the Sun, in Joubert Park. Sebidi was a figurative painter working in oils until she began to experiment with abstraction and collage. She described this change in her work: *"First I kept on drawing figures in the studio, feet, hands, portraits; and I kept all this rubbish from the whole year piling up on the carpet. At the end of the year I said to myself, 'I want to see if I can grow these up'. I took myself away from other people – I said 'Now break all this in pieces and see what comes out.'*" In 1985 she took up a teaching position at the Katlehong Art Centre near Germiston. Between 1986 and 1988 she worked for the Johannesburg Art Foundation while teaching at the Alexandra Art Centre. She also participated in numerous art projects with community organisations such as the Funda Art Centre, and the Thupele Art Workshop. In 1998 she was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to travel to the USA and exhibited her work at the Worldwide Economic Contemporary Artists Funds exhibition. Helen Sebidi, as she is known professionally, has become a recognized artist in South Africa and internationally. Her work is exhibited regularly in major galleries across the country and abroad and her work routinely included in standard reference books on South African art.

5 March 1975 WHO publishes indictment of Apartheid

The system of Apartheid was not only detrimental to the cultural, economic and emotional wellbeing of those on whom it was imposed, but also on the physical wellbeing of those who bore the brunt of it. This was shown by a study done by the World Health Organization in 1975. The report

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

published on the 5th of March 1975 showed that Apartheid as a system through impoverishing its subjects exposed many to physical ailments and deficiencies that could be avoided at minimal cost. This degradation was so extreme that there was a marked difference between the life expectancy of White South Africans and Black South Africans. Further, the infant mortality rate of Black South Africans outstripped the mortality rate of White South Africans. This was one of the many contradictions of the Apartheid system that eventually led to its fall.

5 March 1997

Munitoria building burns down

The Munitoria building, a municipal building in Pretoria burned down in 1997. The fire spread through the building very quickly and was already out of control by the time fire fighters arrived. It took four days and 252 fire fighters to put out the fire completely and was the biggest fire the country had ever seen at the time. In the end, nothing could be salvaged, with damage estimated at R 353, 4 million and thousands of public records destroyed. The building was 44 years old, non-compliant with the South African national building regulations, SANS 10400 and a known fire hazard. There were no casualties as the fire started after hours. The building was demolished in 2013.

5 March 2020

First SA COVID case

On Thursday March 5, 2020, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases confirmed that a suspected case of COVID-19 has tested positive. The patient was a 38-year-old male who travelled to Italy with his wife, along with a group of other ten persons.

6 March 1957

Ghana gains independence



On 6 March 1957, the Gold Coast (now known as Ghana) gained independence from Britain. Ghana became a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and was led to independence by Kwame Nkrumah who transformed the country into a republic. The country was the first to gain independence from European colonialism. Before it was colonised, Ghana was made up of a number of independent kingdoms, including Gonja and Dahomey in the north, Ashanti in the interior, and the Fanti states along the coast. The flag of the newly independent state was designed by Theodosia Salome Okoh. The red signified those who had died for independence, the gold is the mineral wealth with the green representing the rich grasslands of the area. The black star is the symbol of the people and of African emancipation.

6 March 1979

Bethal Trial Resumes

The trial of 18 Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) members, which began in December 1977 and had already taken over 100 court sessions, resumed in Bethal (also known as State v Mothopeng and 17 others). The defendants faced charges under the Terrorism Act, and a number of alternative counts under other legislation. Zephaniah Mothopeng, who was

also an internal leadership member of the banned PAC, was accused number one. They were convicted and jailed for their alleged role in fermenting revolution and for being behind the Soweto uprising. During the course of the Bethal trial, four of those awaiting prosecution died in police custody. They were Naboath Ntshunsha, Samuel Malinga, Aaron Khoza and Siphon Bonaventura Malaza. Vusumzi Johnson Nyathi, another trialist, miraculously survived after he was thrown out of the window during an interrogation session. Nyathi, who suffered spinal injuries, was later charged and found guilty of trying to escape from custody. He later sued the Minister of Police without success.

6 March 2006

Tsotsi wins Oscar



On 6 March 2006, the South African film *Tsotsi*, starring young actors Presley Chweneyagae and Terry Pheto and directed by Gavin Woods, received the Oscar for the best International Film at the 77th Academy Awards in Hollywood. Set in Soweto the movie *Tsotsi* traces six days in the life of a ruthless young gang leader who ends up caring for a baby accidentally kidnapped during a car-jacking. *Tsotsi* was the third African film to win an Oscar in this category, the other being *Z* (Algeria, 1969) and *Black and White in Colour* (Cote d'Ivoire, 1976).

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

1–6 March 2026

Source: www.un.org, www.au.int, *The Africa Fact Book (2020)*, www.daysoftheyear.com

1 March

African School-feeding Day



The African Union has declared **1 March** as **African School-feeding Day**, to advocate for members states to extend school feeding programmes as critical to educational and health outcomes of African children, their families and communities. According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), *“school feeding is one of the most extensive social safety nets in the world, and in 2020 one in every two schoolchildren, or 388 million children, receive school meals every day in at least 161 countries from all income levels.”*

1 March

World Zero Discrimination Day

Discrimination comes in all shapes and sizes, and the day is aimed at raising awareness of the importance of celebrating difference and diversity, and for laws, leadership and institutions to be proactive to combat discrimination. It was first introduced by UNAIDS to raise awareness on the need not to discriminate and stigmatise people living with AIDS, but targets broader discrimination, calling on people to *“make some noise around zero discrimination, to speak up and prevent discrimination from standing in the way of achieving ambitions, goals and dreams.”*

3 March

Wangari Maathai Day for Africa Environment and World Wildlife Day

Wangari Maathai, a biological scientist with a doctorate in veterinary anatomy, was the founder of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya, encouraging communities to reverse environmental degradation by planting millions of indigenous trees and advocating and working throughout her life for the protection of the environment and communities. She became the first African woman to win a Nobel Prize for her work. The African Union recognised her contribution, when it named Africa Environment Day after her. The day is also globally celebrated as World

3 March 2026

Africa Environment & Wangari Maathai Day

“I am working to make sure we don’t only protect the environment, we also improve governance.”

Professor Wangari Maathai

Environmentalist & 1st African Woman to receive Nobel Peace Prize



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Wildlife Day, because on 3 March 1973 the UN members signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

3 March

World Hearing Day

The day raises awareness of hearing loss and ear diseases. Key message by the WHO on this day are that good hearing and communication are important at all stages of life and that hearing loss (and related ear diseases) can be avoided through preventative actions such as: protection against loud sounds; good ear care practices and immunization.

4 March

World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development

UNESCO proclaimed 4 March as World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development, to raise awareness of the role of engineering in modern life. Engineering is defined as *“the branch of science and technology concerned with the design, building, and use of engines, machines, and structures.”* The day is also used to promote awareness of engineering as a career, and the importance of young people, especially girls and women, studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

4 March

International Day of Mathematics

Greater global awareness of mathematical sciences are vital to addressing challenges in areas such as artificial intelligence, climate change, energy and sustainable development, and to improving the quality of life in both the developed and the developing worlds. In many countries, 14 March (3/14) is already celebrated as Pi Day because π , one of the world’s most widely-known mathematical constants can be rounded to 3.14.

4 March

World Obesity Day

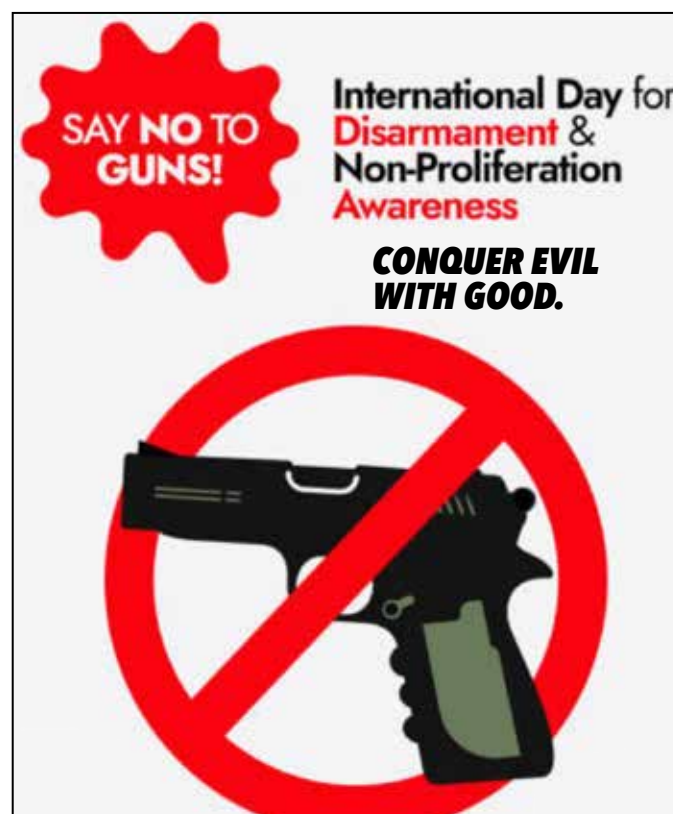
World Obesity Day was established in 2015 as an annual campaign with the goal of stimulating and supporting practical actions that will help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight and reverse the global obesity crisis. *“Half of all adults in South*

Africa are overweight (23%) or obese (27%). And the World Obesity Federation anticipates an additional 10% increase (37%) in obesity among adults by 2030. Overweight and obesity hugely increase the risk of non-communicable diseases.”

5 March

International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness

Since the founding of the United Nations, multilateral disarmament and arms limitation have been central to the Organization’s efforts to maintain international peace and security. Weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, continue to be of primary concern, owing to their destructive power and the threat that they pose to humanity. The excessive accumulation in conventional weapons and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons jeopardize international peace and security and sustainable development, while the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is seriously endangering civilians. New and emerging weapon technologies, such as autonomous weapons, have also received attention in recent years. The International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness plays a role in deepening the global public’s understanding about how disarmament efforts contribute to enhancing peace and security, preventing and ending armed conflicts.





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