



ANC TODAY

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20–26 March 2026

Conversations *with the* President



Every person must be able to live in dignity, comfort and peace

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

THIS year, we mark three decades since South Africa adopted its democratic Constitution. The Constitution is more than the supreme law of the land; it is a solemn promise that never again should any person be stripped of their humanity and dignity.

Later this week, on 21 March, we will observe Human Rights Day. As we celebrate the rights we have enshrined in our Constitution, we also recall the events at Sharpeville on that day in 1960 when apartheid police opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing 69 people and injuring many more.

As we observe this day, we must reflect on whether we are fulfilling the promise contained in our

Constitution.

Of all the values enshrined in our Constitution, one of the most fundamental is the advancement of human dignity. It is the foundation on which the rights to equality, to freedom from discrimination, to education, to health, to a safe environment and others are built. It is the idea that every person possesses an inherent worth that must be respected and protected.

This is a right that must be preserved in all circumstances.

In our Constitution, human dignity is not an abstract ideal, but a concrete right that has meaning in people's daily lives. The right to dignity is operationalised through law, institutions and

policies. Our courts continue to assert this right and, where necessary, order government and those in power to take measures to enhance people's dignity.

Protecting a person's right to dignity is not limited to the way people treat each other. It is also about improving the circumstances in which people live. It lies at the heart of the policies and programmes of this government and of the work of many organisations and individuals across society.

Since the adoption of our Constitution, indeed since the advent of our democracy, we have worked to restore the dignity of all South Africans. Millions of South Africans have access to water, electricity, healthcare, education and

social support that were denied to them under apartheid.

This work, which we have undertaken together as a society, has enhanced the human dignity of children, who are supported by a child support grant, who have access to early childhood development, who attend fee-free schools, who receive school meals and who will be able to access funding to study at a university or college.

The provision of housing, water and electricity has changed the lives of families across the country, reducing poverty and improving their quality of life.

Human dignity also means that people have to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and that shape their country. That is why it is so important that democratic institutions are built and defended. And that a free media, an independent judiciary and a vibrant civil society reinforce accountability.

We know that our work is far from complete. Poverty, inequality and unemployment remain stubborn obstacles to the full realisation of human dignity for ev-



ery South African. Closing those gaps is a constitutional imperative that belongs to all of us.

That is why we are working even harder to accelerate the momentum of economic recovery, so that our economy can grow faster, create employment and reduce poverty.

When we mobilise investment to build factories or open mines to create jobs and opportunities for emerging businesses, or when we build new roads and revitalise hospitals, we are working to-

wards a society in which everyone has dignity.

When we lay new pipes to bring water to outlying villages or repair ageing water infrastructure in cities and towns, or when we restore the supply of electricity to communities, we are advancing the right to dignity.

As the global economic outlook becomes increasingly uncertain, we must hold fast to the path we are on. We must sustain our massive investment in infrastructure, continue with far-reaching reforms in energy, water and logistics, overhaul our skills development system and expand support to small businesses.

On Human Rights Day this year, let us rededicate ourselves to the Constitution and to its most cherished principles. Let us resolve in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities to treat every person with the dignity that is their right – and let us never stop working until we have ensured that every person can live in dignity, comfort and peace.



**Celebrating
30 years of the
Constitution.**

**South Africa's
Constitution –
the heartbeat
of our nation**



The African National Congress Mourns the passing of **Nicholas “Fink” Haysom**

■ By **ANC SECRETARY GENERAL FIKILE MBALULA**

THE African National Congress (ANC) mourns the passing of Comrade Nicholas “Fink” Haysom, a principled lawyer, committed anti-apartheid activist and international public servant whose life was dedicated to justice, reconciliation and peace.

Comrade Haysom emerged as a courageous student leader during one of the most repressive periods of apartheid, serving as President of NUSAS in 1976 at a time when the organisation faced severe repression. For his activism, he endured repeated detention, including solitary confinement, yet remained steadfast in his opposition to injustice.

In the democratic era, he played a central role in shaping South Africa’s constitutional order, serving as Chief Legal and Constitutional Adviser to President Nelson Mandela during the formative years of our democracy. His legal insight and political maturity contributed meaningfully to laying the foundation of a constitutional state rooted in equality, human dignity and the rule of law.

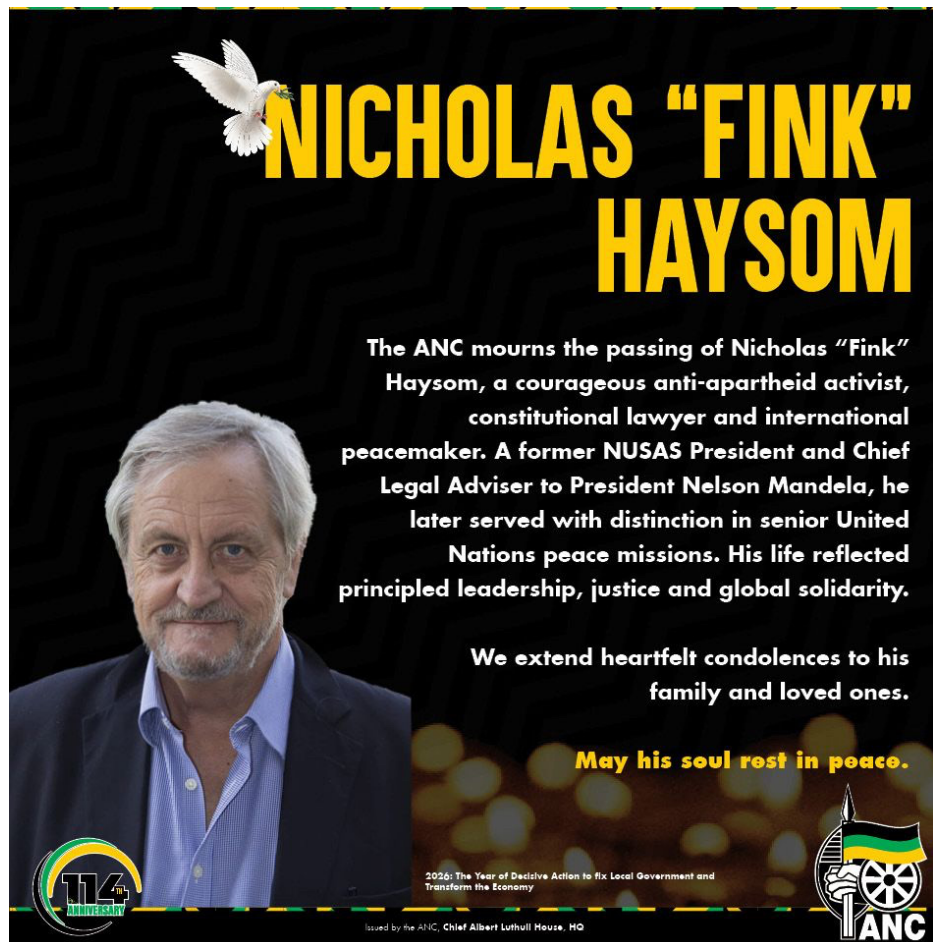
Comrade Haysom carried the values of our struggle beyond our borders into the international arena through senior leader-

ship roles within the United Nations. Whether in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia or Iraq, he consistently advanced dialogue over conflict and institution-building over instability. His work reflected the internationalist tradition of our liberation movement.

The ANC honours Nicholas Haysom as a patriot who under-

stood that peace is not passive, but constructed through courage, intellect and moral conviction.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, loved ones, comrades and colleagues across the world who walked this path of justice with him and may his soul rest in peace, and his legacy continue to inspire those who labour for freedom and peace.



NICHOLAS “FINK” HAYSOM

The ANC mourns the passing of Nicholas “Fink” Haysom, a courageous anti-apartheid activist, constitutional lawyer and international peacemaker. A former NUSAS President and Chief Legal Adviser to President Nelson Mandela, he later served with distinction in senior United Nations peace missions. His life reflected principled leadership, justice and global solidarity.

We extend heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones.

May his soul rest in peace.

2026: The Year of Decisive Action to fix Local Government and Transform the Economy

Issued by the ANC, Chief Albert Lutulu House, HQ

Statement by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres - on the passing of Nicholas “Fink” Haysom

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Nicholas “Fink” Haysom – a principled lawyer, tireless peacemaker, and steadfast champion of the values of the United Nations.

Mr. Haysom devoted his life to justice, dialogue, and reconciliation -- from his central role in South Africa’s democratic transition – serving as Chief Legal and Constitutional Adviser to President Nelson Mandela – to years of leadership in UN posts in some of the world’s most complex and fragile settings, most recently as the head of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan.

In every task, he combined deep legal insight with sound political judgment and an unwavering dedication to improving the lives of people.

The United Nations mourns the loss of a remarkable colleague, friend and mentor. The legacy of Nicholas Haysom will endure in the peace processes he advanced, the institutions he strengthened, and the principles he helped bring to life around the world.

I offer my deepest condolences to his family and loved ones, and to all our colleagues who had the privilege to be inspired by him in the pursuit of peace.

Brussels, 18 March 2026



Nicholas
Haysom



The PEOPLE'S MARCH
21 MARCH 2026

In Defence of Our Sovereignty and Democratic Gains

#WeWillNotBeBullied
#DefendOurSovereignty
#MarchForSouthAfrica

START Mary Fitzgerald Square
Queen Elizabeth Bridge
Peoples Park, Constitutional Hill **END**

TIME 08H00

SANCO **COSATU** **SACP** **ANC**

Water Crisis: Government accepts Its responsibility and is acting decisively

Abridged version of the speech delivered by **DAVID MAHLOBO**, Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation at the **UNISA Water Imbizo**

NATIONAL Water Month is a national call to action. It reminds us that in a water-scarce country such as ours, water security can never be understood as government's responsibility alone. It is a collective national duty.

South Africa is a water-scarce country. Our country receives significantly less rainfall than the global average, and that rainfall is unevenly distributed across geography and across seasons. Yet it is important to assure the nation that, at a macro level, South Africa's raw water resources remain broadly in balance with current demand. There is therefore no basis for alarmist claims of an immediate national water collapse.

In many parts of the country, dam levels remain relatively stable and the national system continues, under normal operating conditions, to have sufficient water to meet existing requirements. The shortages we are experiencing are, in the main, localised and unevenly distributed. They often arise not from an absolute absence of water at national level, but from a combination of drought impacts, infrastructure constraints, rising demand, delayed augmentation projects, high levels of non-revenue water,



illegal connections, and operational weaknesses in municipal distribution systems.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that this relative national balance cannot be taken for granted. It could deteriorate rapidly if supply contracts while demand continues to rise due to population growth, urbanisation, economic expansion, inefficient water use, worsening physical losses, catchment degradation and the intensifying impacts of climate change.

The question before us is not whether South Africa faces a wa-

ter security challenge. The real question is whether we will summon the political will, institutional discipline, scientific innovation and social solidarity necessary to overcome it. I believe we can and we must.

Water security is not a narrow sectoral issue. It is a fundamental prerequisite for food security, public health, industrial development, ecological sustainability, social stability and human dignity. Without water security, there can be no meaningful economic transformation, no resilient municipalities, no inclusive development and no better life for all.

NATIONAL WATER MONTH

1 - 31 MARCH 2026

WHERE WATER FLOWS, EQUALITY GROWS



WATER ROLE IN GENDER EQUALITY

This is why the Constitution places such profound importance on water. Section 27 guarantees everyone the right to have access to sufficient water. Water is therefore not merely a utility. It is a constitutional imperative, a developmental imperative and a strategic national asset.

Our water challenges are visible in the daily lived experiences of our people – when taps run dry in cities, townships and rural villages; when communities rely on tankers and boreholes as emergency stop-gap measures; when wastewater treatment works fail and contaminate rivers; when infrastructure leaks at unsustainable levels; and when residents lose trust in the quality of water from their taps.

In many parts of the country, we are dealing with the cumulative effects of years of underinvestment in maintenance, delayed refurbishment, weak asset management, declining technical capacity, financial instability in municipalities, governance failures, and in some cases, criminality, vandalism and corruption. In short, we face both a water resource challenge and a water governance challenge.

One of the starkest indicators of the crisis is non-revenue water, which stands at approximately 47% nationally. This means that nearly half of the water treated and introduced into our systems is lost through leaks, illegal connections, faulty metering, poor billing systems and weak revenue collection. This is not merely a technical problem. It is a service delivery crisis, an economic crisis, a governance crisis and a moral crisis in a water-scarce country.

We must also acknowledge the growing threat of criminality in the water sector. Organised syndicates are increasingly targeting pump stations, pipelines, electrical infrastructure and other strategic water assets. Water assets are not ordinary public assets. They are strategic national assets and government is intensifying collaboration with law enforcement agencies to protect them.

Despite the severity of the crisis, South Africa is not powerless. We have world-class engineers, hydrologists, chemists, microbiologists, planners and data scientists. We have strong public entities in critical parts of the value chain. We have a consti-

tutional framework that provides clarity of mandate. And we have research institutions and universities capable of generating tested, evidence-based solutions.

Government accepts its responsibility and is acting decisively. As President Cyril Ramaphosa made clear in the 2026 State of the Nation Address, water security is among the most urgent priorities facing our country. That is why the President announced the establishment of a National Water Crisis Committee, chaired by the President himself, to coordinate interventions, finalise a National Water Action Plan, and prioritise support in the most stressed areas.

Work is advancing with a clear focus on stabilising vulnerable systems, improving municipal performance, accelerating infrastructure delivery, protecting strategic water assets, and addressing criminality, governance failures and systemic inefficiencies.

As the Department of Water and Sanitation, we are intensifying work across multiple fronts: accelerating bulk water and distribution infrastructure; strengthening dam safety, refurbishment

and augmentation programmes; supporting municipalities through technical interventions and regulatory oversight; improving water board performance; enhancing water quality monitoring; reducing non-revenue water; improving project preparation and infrastructure planning; confronting maladministration; and advancing long-term climate resilience through reuse, groundwater development, catchment restoration and desalination where appropriate.

Over the medium term, government has committed more than R156 billion in public funding to water and sanitation infrastructure over three years. But let us internalise this truth: infrastructure and funding, while essential, are not enough. Concrete and steel matter, but they do not solve water insecurity on their own. Without governance, maintenance, operational excellence, technical capability, data, scientific evidence and innovation, infrastructure alone cannot deliver sustainable outcomes.

The water crisis cannot be resolved by government acting alone. It cannot be resolved by municipalities acting alone, or by universities acting alone, or by the private sector acting alone. It requires a whole-of-society response – government, universities, science councils, water boards, municipalities, industry, civil society, organised labour and communities acting as a coordinated national system.

Higher education institutions must not be treated as peripheral commentators. They must be embedded in the solution architecture as strategic national think tanks and active partners in solving South Africa's water crisis.

The future of water security will not be built only with dams, pipelines and treatment works. It will also be built with sensors, data systems, materials science, real-time monitoring, treatment innovation, predictive analytics and interdisciplinary research. The future belongs not only to those who build more infrastructure, but to those who build smarter systems.

We acknowledge the valuable role already being played by universities and research organisations. But these innovations must not remain confined to laboratories, papers and pilot projects. They must move from research to implementation.

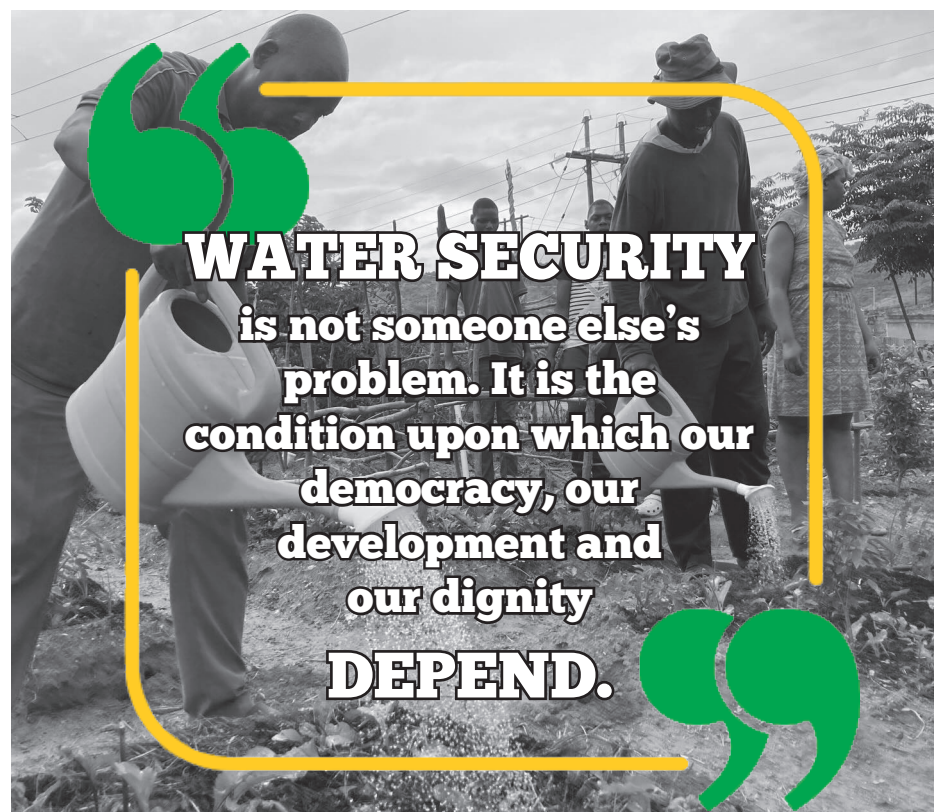
South Africa does not suffer from a shortage of ideas. Too often, it suffers from a shortage of institutional translation. The gap between research and implementation remains too wide.

The state must become more

receptive to evidence, and academia more responsive to implementation realities. The water sector will not be rebuilt by budgets alone. It will be rebuilt through technical excellence, ethical leadership, institutional discipline and scientific partnership.

Despite the severity of the challenge, I remain optimistic. Let us not confuse crisis with collapse. Let this Imbizo be a national turning point. Let it deepen the compact between government and higher education, generate practical and scalable solutions, and remind every citizen that water conservation is a patriotic duty.

Water security is not someone else's problem. It is the condition upon which our democracy, our development and our dignity depend. By acting decisively, collectively and intelligently, we can ensure that future generations inherit not a system in decline, but a water sector that is resilient, sustainable, innovative and just.





The rot within: Porous borders and the betrayal of public authority

■ By **BUSANI NGCAWENI**

THERE are moments in a nation's history when the gap between how institutions are meant to function and how they actually operate becomes impossible to overlook.

The revelations from the Madlanga Commission and the ad hoc Parliamentary committee on allegations of capture of the South African Police Service (SAPS) provide such moments.

We cannot simply stand aside and ignore the broader challenge of securing our institutional borders and the ethical parameters for the exercise of public authority.

The unfolding inquiries (to spare

the reader more anguish, I have deliberately excluded the disappointment from the NDPP interviews and the embarrassment from the Justice Nkabinde Commission) have exposed more than individual misconduct; they point to something more systemic.

The operationalisation of established parameters that regulate entry into public institutions, discipline behaviour and preserve the ethical distance between officials and private interests appears to have weakened.

On the surface, these institutions appear functional, with offices staffed by decorated officials, procedures published and au-

thority appearing intact. Yet the internal organisational logic that links inputs to the public value for society quietly changes.

Porous borders allow the wrong people to enter, improper behaviour to persist, public funds to go to waste and unsuitable relationships to take root.

The evidence emerging from the inquiries raises three core questions:

- Firstly, what is the worth of qualifications when those who hold them behave in this way?
- Secondly, what do these officials understand their mandates to be when they spend

energy on activities unrelated to their duties?

- Thirdly, how do senior professionals become so entangled with the very criminal networks they are meant to stop?

These questions are not simply moral imaginations from Inanda, where morality long met the incinerator. They reveal a deeper problem with how safe and reliable entry points into the state and across different levels of authority are maintained.

Qualifications and the border of entry

Every professional bureaucracy depends on a border that regulates entry into authority. Recruitment systems, qualification requirements and vetting processes exist to ensure that those entrusted with public power possess the competence and judgement required to exercise it.

The testimony emerging from the inquiries in question suggests that this border has become unreliable.

Many of the officials whose conduct has been scrutinised are not poorly educated individuals unfamiliar with the law. They are senior professionals.

They understand investigative procedures, legal standards and institutional rules. In other words, they possess the technical knowledge that qualifications are meant to signal.

Yet that knowledge (and prior experience) has not prevented misconduct. In some cases, it appears to have enabled it.

Consider testimony concerning

Brigadier Rachel Matjeng, who is alleged to have performed cosmetic surgery to enhance her appearance and was accused of receiving substantial payments and gifts from an alleged crime figure.

Her defence did not centre on denying the transactions but on a reinterpretation of the relationship as a personal romantic connection.

This was not the reaction of someone unfamiliar with the consequences of corruption. It reflected an understanding of how ambiguity could be introduced into the evidentiary record.

Many other “qualified” generals and executives from Ekurhuleni municipality have embarrassed their professions by presenting underwhelming testimonies that should not be expected from people with their glossy profiles.

To make things worse, they repeatedly lied under oath, in full view of their families.

They invented terminologies to water down the meaning of bribes. Such admissions are

striking not only for their illegality but also for the profound lapse in professional judgement they reveal.

These episodes also reveal a misunderstanding about what it means to qualify for public authority. Academic credentials and experience are only one component of professional suitability.

A degree may demonstrate technical knowledge, but it does not by itself establish judgement, discipline or the ability to resist improper influence.

In positions of public authority, qualifications must extend beyond formal education to include evidence of and the propensity for ethical reasoning, as well as the capacity to fully appreciate one’s core legal mandate and public expectations.

The true test of professional fitness is not only what one studied, but also how one behaves when confronted with opportunity, temptation, and power. Sometimes, it is the most educated who commit the ghastliest acts in society.



Education does not immunise individuals against the abuse of authority. In some cases, it seems to equip them to exercise that abuse with greater sophistication.

We have seen this in the private sector as well, in big names such as Enron, KPMG, Tongaat-Hullet and Steinhoff.

There are moments when training is not the intervention required to restore the ethic of service or the diligence of execution. What is required instead is the removal of power itself.

Some individuals have reached the limit of what they are willing to learn.

When that point is reached, the appropriate response is institutional rather than pedagogical. They must be left without the authority they have shown themselves unable to wield responsibly.

The crisis of qualifications, therefore, reveals something deeper.

When recruitment systems cannot reliably distinguish between competence, fit for purpose, and reputation, credentials become decorative rather than diagnostic. The border of entry becomes porous.

Performance and the border of accountability

The second boundary of a functioning bureaucracy is accountability. Authority must be disciplined by continuous evaluation of performance and fidelity to mandate. In the civil service, performance is not simply an activity; it is the alignment between action and purpose.



The mandate of law enforcement institutions is straightforward. They exist to investigate crime, protect citizens and uphold the rule of law.

The testimony presented to the inquiries suggests that some officials have quietly reinterpreted this mandate, alongside their compromised counterparts in the prosecuting authority.

Activities that should be peripheral to the outcomes become a central preoccupation.

Protecting criminal networks, manipulating investigations or exchanging favours appear to have become routine practices rather than aberrations.

Meanwhile, the formal responsibilities of policing and prosecuting remain in place as institutional cover.

The troubling aspect of this pattern is that many implicated officials demonstrate a clear understanding of their duties when questioned under oath. Their testimony reveals familiarity with procedures, reporting structures and investigative protocols.

Entanglements and the ethical border

The third border of public authority is ethical distance. Officials must maintain a clear separation between their professional responsibilities and the interests of those they regulate or investigate. The evidence emerging from the inquiries suggests that this ethical border has also weakened.

Entanglements between law enforcement officials and criminal networks rarely emerge suddenly. They develop gradually.

Professional proximity produces familiarity.

Familiarity produces normalisation. Favours are exchanged. Soft loans are offered. Gifts are accepted. Situationships emerge.

Over time, these relationships shift from professional interaction to personal dependency.

Once money has changed hands or confidential information has been shared, the official becomes vulnerable. The relationship ceases to be voluntary. It becomes a mechanism of control.

As Kgalema Motlanthe once said, it is dangerous to put money into your pocket that does not belong to you. It quickly changes colour and blends with yours. You will then spend it all as if it were yours. At that point, the official no longer protects the institution. They protect themselves.

Public figures such as Paul O'Sullivan, whose career has intersected with entities including Airports Company South Africa, illustrate how reputational influence can substitute for relevant expertise when institutional gate-keeping is weak.

Highly decorated officials may remain in positions of authority despite persistent evidence of unsuitability and poor performance.

Without rigorous assessment of fitness for purpose and effective performance management, titles accumulate while competence erodes.

The result is an institution that appears intact but has lost control over its own boundaries. A soft internal organisation with weak borders that has an exter-

nal veneer of hardness.

Restoring the Borders of the State

The despair many citizens feel when confronted with these revelations is understandable. Yet professional bureaucracies are not accidents; they are institutional constructions.

Countries such as Singapore, Denmark, Estonia and Chile demonstrate that public administration can be anchored in meritocratic recruitment, disciplined accountability and strong ethical norms.

Their experience demonstrates a simple principle: qualifications matter only when embedded within institutions capable of enforcing standards.

Naturally, the core challenge remains that when institutions become soft, it is often very difficult to make them function as they should without some tough, decisive action.

We cannot allow people to hide behind their abilities to sophisticatedly manipulate the interpre-

tation of parameters and standards that need to be adhered to.

Recruitment must be transparent. Performance must be measured. Ethical breaches must carry consequences.

Most importantly, the state's borders must be defended continuously. When those borders hold, qualifications signal genuine competence, mandates remain clear and professional distance is preserved.

The challenge revealed by the Madlanga Commission and the parliamentary committee is therefore not merely the exposure of wrongdoing. It is the restoration of the borders that makes professional public service possible.

Without those borders, the machinery of the state may continue to operate. But it will no longer reliably serve the authority it was created to uphold.

Busani Ngcaweni is with the Centre for Public Policy and African Studies at the Johannesburg Business School.



21 March 1960, the day the badge of slavery was dumped – **FOR DIGNITY AND FREEDOM**

■ By **GEORGE MAGOMA and MANGALISO “STALIN” KHONZA**

THE month of March is no ordinary calendar period in South Africa but a history written in the blood of our martyrs who in the face of a heavily armed regime, made a bold choice. Freedom or death!

On this tragic day of the 21 March 1960, a day etched indelibly in the epitaphs and annals of our liberation history, the oppressed rose to unchain themselves from the mortifications of the odious pass laws and the Group Areas Act, a repressive legislation that restricted movement and propagated a divisive system of separate development inimical and pestilent to a united, free and democratic state advocated by the liberation movement, and a culture of human rights, which is a foundational plinth of the modern day democratic South Africa.

This is no ordinary day, but a day when the “*dompas*”, a badge of slavery was dumped and burned as an act of defiance and rejection of apartheid as a crime against humanity in quest for freedom and the extrication of the oppressed masses from the cesspool of indignity.

South Africa’s history is written in blood and pain, laden with atrocities of a brute state. It is the valiant resistance and the epic



21 MARCH | HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

struggles of the generation of 1960 that changed and shaped the course of history, culminating in the dawn of the democratic sun in 1994, free and regular elections which legitimizes the state based on the will of the people and the adoption of the Constitution that we enjoy today.

This day amplified the 1956 march of women who dared the system, chanting “*Wa thinta abafazi wath’ umbokodo*” in protest against the repulsive pass laws. These struggles are intrinsically interwoven, an unbreakable umbilical cord that birthed our humanity, tied to a dream of a National Democratic Society (NDS) advanced through the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as a potent weapon to reverse the legacy of colonialism, land

dispossession, inequality and to push back the frontiers and vestiges of apartheid that are an ugly face of society.

It is this democratic sun and the 30 years of the adoption of the Constitution that warms us today, free from the heavy albatross and shackles of slavery. The country walked many thorny years to freedom, yet the vestiges of apartheid are patent and palpably visible, nudging us into action, a renewed energy for the unity of the country, non-racialism and the country devoid of the indignity of unemployment and poverty.

Today we commemorate this day under a different set of conditions, compared to 30 years ago in 1994. We are reminded of a

constitutional milestone when on the 8 May 1996 the Constitutional Assembly adopted the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and signed into law on the 10 December 1996 in Sharpeville, Sedibeng. Why Sharpeville?

This was in honour of those who suffered for justice and freedom in our country as advocated by the Constitution. The sixty nine martyrs that lay in the cemetery of Vuka, painfully adorning Sharpeville, their gravestones a painful reminder of the lives lost and the river of blood that profusely flowed on the streets Sharpeville in 1960. The events of Sharpeville became a turning point in the struggle for freedom, justice and human dignity in our country.

Why an emphasis on the Republic? South Africa became a republic on 31 May 1961. Following a 1960 white-only referendum, the Union of South Africa severed ties with the British monarchy. This transition marked a drastic shift toward increased Afrikaner nationalism and institutionalised apartheid.

The 1961 republic was not a republic in the elementary and democratic sense as it excluded the black majority from the universal franchise restricted only to whites as a continuation of the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging, a period of betrayal and land dispossession. It is a fallacy and distortion of history that in 1961 South Africa became a Republic. It was a minority regime, not a people's government.

This myth was corrected on the 27 April 1994 when the seed of the Freedom Charter that **"The People Shall Govern"** germinated, and when the midwives of the



generation of the 1956 Women's March delivered a government based on the express will of the people. It marked the end of an abominable system of apartheid.

In 1994 South Africa became a republic, every citizen free from apartheid, including those chained by narrow nationalism, white supremacy mentality and separate development. This was confirmed by Nelson Mandela, uttered on the podium of freedom we he said *"Those who sought their own freedom in the domination of others were doomed in time to ignominious failure. Out of such experience was born the understanding that there could be no lasting peace, no lasting security, no prosperity in this land unless all enjoyed freedom and justice as equals."*

1996 was a watershed moment with the signing of the Constitution, repealing all apartheid laws. The death penalty was a weapon used by the apartheid legislation

and courts to silence its opponents. Many walked the dreaded fifty two steps of the Pretoria Prison gallows to the fate with the noose man.

Their sacrifice was not in vain. The ideals that inspired that struggle were captured in the Freedom Charter, which proclaimed, amongst others, that *"The People Shall Govern."* Those principles were later entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which remains the supreme law of our land.

At the heart of the Constitution lies Chapter II, the Bill of Rights, which affirms the dignity, equality and freedom of all who live in South Africa.

The draconian apartheid laws were written and repealed when the death penalty was officially abolished in South Africa on June 6, 1995, following a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in the case of *S v Makwanyane* and

Mchunu. In the case, the court declared capital punishment unconstitutional, as it violated fundamental rights to life and dignity. The ruling found that the death penalty was cruel, inhuman, and degrading. The decision immediately stopped the execution of 453 people on death row.

This case came late. Apartheid had on its deadly path slaughtered hundreds of freedom fighters. Others cannot be accounted today as they lay deep under unmarked graves with shrieking yet unheard voices crying for justice. In the noose man's list were the names Sharpeville Six, condemned to the gallows in the aftermath of the rejection of Bantu administrations as apartheid tentacles in favour of a democratic local government, a system that is people-centred and people-driven, which by its close proximity to the people, remains a strategic service delivery vehicle.

The list is long, comprising of Solomon Mahlangu, the Cofimvaba Six, Vuyisile Mini, Wilson Khayingo, Zinakile Mkaba and many others who fought for our human rights. Their names are enshrined on a wall at the Pretoria prison museum, immortalising our martyrs, reminding us that our freedom was not an altruistic act but a product of human resilience and defiance.

In the year of 30 anniversary of the Constitution, a legal framework steeped in human rights, the ANC declared 2026 at "The Year of Fixing Local Government", to provide basic services, invest in people, human dignity, the democratisation and strengthening of local government to discharge its legislative service delivery mandate.

The ANC commemorates the

Human Rights Month under the theme **"Defending Our Sovereignty and Democratic Gains."** This is a clarion call to action, a moment to reflect on the sacrifices that secured our freedom and to recommit all South Africans to defend the democratic gains achieved through decades of struggle.

The Bill of Rights is not merely a legal framework; it is a living covenant between the democratic state and the people. It embodies the aspirations of generations who fought against apartheid, many of who paid the ultimate price so that future generations could live in a society founded on justice, equality and human dignity.

As we mark three decades of constitutional democracy, the ANC reaffirms that the rights contained in the Bill of Rights must find practical expression in the daily lives of the people. The commitments outlined in the recent State of the Nation Address and the 2026 National Budget

are directed at fulfilling these constitutional obligations.

The Human Rights Month comes in the year of a budget that is people-oriented, a catalytic tool of transformation and development. As a change agent, pillared on our priorities, this budget drives our vision, affirms, a developmental path that drives economic inclusion, job creation and social protection.

It is in furtherance of the priorities of our election manifesto, the objectives upon which the organisation pivots, the essence underpinning our existence, and most importantly, the mandate entrusted by the people and a dream of a better life for all.

By strengthening state capacity, investing in network industries such as energy, logistics and water, and supporting vulnerable communities through the social wage, the democratic state continues to give practical meaning to the vision of the Freedom



**Celebrating
30 years of the
Constitution.**

**For 30 years our
Constitution has
protected your rights.
Now it's your turn to
protect its values.**



Charter that the people shall share in the country's wealth.

Human Rights Month reminds us that the Constitution affirms not only the rights of individuals, but also the collective rights of our nation. South Africa's sovereignty, territorial integrity and right to self-determination remain the fundamental pillars of our constitutional democracy.

Our country is a sovereign state with regular free and fair elections, a vibrant and independent media, constitutionally protected rights and an unwavering commitment to transformation and redress the injustices of colonialism and apartheid.

The defence of sovereignty is not an abstract diplomatic posture, but a lived historical lesson etched in our own painful past. Apartheid was sustained not only by internal brutal repression, but by external alliances that supported a minority regime. It de-



nied the majority their right to self-determination by imposing a system sustained by global capitalism and international complicity. The struggle against apartheid was therefore also a struggle for sovereignty and the right of the people to determine their own destiny.

As we stand firm in defence of

our democratic gains, we recognise that the erosion of sovereignty remains a global threat. From the resilience of the people of Cuba and Venezuela under coercive economic pressure, to the quest for stability and self-determination in South Sudan, and the ongoing struggles of the people of Palestine and Iran against interventionist pressures, we are reminded that imperialism undermines the principles of equality among nations.

Sovereignty cannot be selective, it must apply equally to all the citizens of the world, especially those historically subjected to colonialism, occupation and exclusion from global power. To defend our own democracy is to stand in solidarity with all oppressed people of the world seeking peace.

As the nation commemorates Human Rights Month and thirty years of our Constitution, the message remains clear, South Africa is a sovereign democratic nation. Our democracy is not for sale and our sovereignty will never be compromised. We are solidly firm that **"We will not be bullied"**.



Celebrating 30 years of the Constitution.

Your dignity isn't up for debate - its protected by our Constitution, speak up: demand your dignity – its protected by our Constitution



Make the NDP Stronger, Bolder and More Developmental

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

THE National Development Plan (NDP) remains one of the most important democratic instruments South Africa has produced. It was never intended to be a shelf document, nor a ceremonial text to be quoted on anniversaries and ignored in practice. It was meant to be a national covenant: a long-term framework to overcome poverty, reduce inequality and unemployment, and build a capable state and a capable nation. Even its own official reviews do not call for the NDP to be abandoned. They call for it to be strengthened, sharpened and implemented with far greater discipline, coherence and courage.

We must therefore begin in the correct political and intellectual place.

The NDP has not underperformed because planning was a mistake. It has underperformed because the country did not build the political, economic and institutional machinery necessary to carry the plan through. The social vision was broadly correct. The implementation architecture was too weak. The economic framework was too orthodox. The state system was too fragmented. And the planning-to-budgeting chain was too incoherent.

The numbers now speak with

brutal clarity. The 2023 Ten-Year Review showed that the NDP's target of average GDP growth of 5.4 percent was nowhere near being met. Instead, growth was 0.8 percent (2018), 0.9 percent (2021) and 1.1 percent (2022) in successive review years. Gross fixed capital formation, which should have risen from 19.3 percent of GDP to 30 percent, instead fell to 13.1 percent in 2021 and 14.1 percent in 2022. Unemployment, meant to fall from 25.4 percent to 6 percent by

2030, rose to 32.9 percent. Employment was supposed to reach 24 million jobs, but stood at only 16.1 million.

The 2026 monitoring report confirms that the country remains badly off course. In 2025, official unemployment still stood at 33.2 percent. Gross fixed capital formation reached only 17.1 percent of GDP, far below target. Public sector investment was only 4.1 percent of GDP against a 10 percent target. GDP per capita was



about R75,135 against a 2030 target of R110,000. Poverty also worsened, with 23.3 percent of the population below the food poverty line and 47.5 percent below the lower-bound poverty line. These are not abstract ratios. They are the daily lived experience of households facing joblessness, food pressure, transport burdens, service delivery failures and declining hope.

But if we are honest, the warning signs came early. In fact a document prepared for the Alliance Economic Summit in 2013 also set out the reasons why the NDP was doomed to fail. The National Planning Commission's handover report made it clear that the country's economic and social trends were moving off the trajectory envisaged in the NDP, and that the planning system itself was not serving developmental objectives effectively. It warned that planning had too often become a compliance exercise that consumed time yet delivered limited developmental impact. It also argued that the country urgently needed to revisit the economy chapter of the NDP and adopt a renewed bottom-up economic strategy focused on inclusive growth, vulnerable groups and anti-poverty action.

That is the heart of the issue. We should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The NDP's constitutional vision remains vital. Its concern with poverty, inequality, state capacity, social cohesion, education, infrastructure and human development remains absolutely relevant. The problem is that the economic engine and implementation system have been too weak to carry that vision. The next phase must therefore not be about abandoning the NDP. It must be about making it stronger,



more developmental and more implementable.

There are five areas where this strengthening is now unavoidable.

The **first** is that **we must move from passive macroeconomic management to developmental macro-financial coordination.** One of the most important NPC reports produced in 2025 argues that post-apartheid South Africa never established a system of macro-financial governance capable of coordinating public, private and hybrid balance sheets towards transformation. Instead, the state tried to transform society through isolated tools such as fiscal stimulus, regulation, subsidies, BEE and monetary targeting, without changing the deeper structure of financial power. The result has been underinvestment in fixed capital, poor coordination between DFIs, municipalities, SOEs and departments, and weak discipline over private capital, which has often sought offshore returns instead of domestic productive reinvestment.

This is not a minor technical point. It is central. If our fiscal policy, monetary policy, infrastructure planning, pension savings,

DFI mandates and SOE balance sheets are not aligned behind productive transformation, then the NDP remains aspirational rather than operational. That is why the financial architecture report proposes concrete reforms: DFI-SARB alignment that could expand developmental balance sheets to roughly R1.4 trillion; reform of pension fund rules that could unlock a R1 trillion project pipeline; a guarantee company to unlock R50 billion in infrastructure investment; and SOE balance-sheet reforms to crowd in capital while retaining public control. These ideas deserve urgent national attention.

The **second area is investment.** No country can seriously speak of structural transformation while investment remains this low. The 2022 and 2026 monitoring reports both show a long decline in investment and point to weak confidence, constrained public finances, project delays and declining public capital spending. That alone explains a substantial part of why employment, growth and industrial diversification have lagged. South Africa cannot social-policy its way out of a weak productive base. We need much higher fixed investment in energy, logistics, digital infrastructure, water systems, industrial corridors and urban restructuring. Investment must again become the centre of economic strategy.

The **third area is reindustrialisation.** The NDP cannot succeed in a deindustrialising economy. If we remain trapped in low-investment, low-productivity, highly concentrated patterns of accumulation, we will continue to produce exclusion at scale. The country needs sectoral missions rooted in localisation, beneficiation, agro-processing, pharma-

ceuticals, digital capability, green industry, rail and logistics renewal, and African export expansion. This is not nostalgia for old industrial policy. It is recognition that inclusive growth requires a stronger productive economy. The reviews also point to concentration, collusion, infrastructure weakness and misallocation of capital as major structural obstacles.

The **fourth area is the cost of living for the poor**. The NDP often gets discussed in macro terms, but one of the most practical insights from the NPC's work is that inequality can be reduced not only by raising incomes but also by reducing the costs that punish the poor. The cost-of-living report found that food prices rose faster than many other prices since 1994, and that high concentration in the food value chain contributed to this burden. It also found that commuter transport remains a major drain on poor households, with workers often spending more than an hour each way travelling, and that the housing subsidy system continues to push many poor households far from economic centres.

That means the next NDP phase must put the reduction of food, transport, energy and service costs at the centre of economic policy. Cheaper public transport, better located housing, more reliable municipal services, stronger market intervention in food systems and spatially targeted investment are not side issues. They are core developmental economics.

The **fifth area is the planning and budgeting system itself**. Here we must be direct. The NDP will remain weakened unless the annual governance, planning and budget cycle across all



three spheres is fundamentally aligned. Municipal IDPs, with real ward-level public participation, must be directly linked to the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) which is a detailed annual performance (operational) plan for implementing services using the approved budget. District and metro "One Plans" must then aggregate and integrate those priorities. Provincial departments' Annual Performance Plans and strategic plans must be aligned to that evidence. National departments' APPs, MTEF allocations and strategic priorities must then be forced into measurable coordination with the revised NDP. The official documents are already clear that weak alignment between planning and budgeting cycles, silo-based planning, lack of integration across the three spheres, and inadequate public participation have been major obstacles. Ideally we must know and prioritise both public and private socio-economic investment and development footprint in each of voting districts across all our wards.

This is where the President must now act. The NPC's own implementation pathway document says that the Presidency has the leadership role in driving coherence, coordination and integration, supported by DPME and the NPC, and it explicitly says that credible implementation mechanisms may require a Presidential assertion of renewed consensus and compacting around big themes with defined schedules. That call should now be taken seriously.

President Ramaphosa should therefore initiate a bold new NDP renewal process, not to replace the Plan, but to rescue and strengthen it. This process should do five things: reopen and revise the economic chapter; align macroeconomic, fiscal and monetary architecture with developmental investment; legislate and enforce the integration of planning, budgeting and accountability across the three spheres; identify a limited set of catalytic missions with hard timelines; and create public dashboards so that citizens can track progress municipality by

municipality and sector by sector. The service delivery advisory is explicit that the time for diagnostic lamentation has passed and that what is now required is coordinated, courageous action with clear accountability, stronger municipal governance and better alignment of fiscal, spatial and planning systems.

There is also a wider lesson from countries that take planning seriously. As China enters its 15th Five-Year Plan period, its official framework is explicitly linking growth, research & development, major projects, public well-being and implementation discipline over a defined five-year cycle. Whatever our different political systems, the lesson is obvious: planning works when it is tied to financing, projects, measurable targets and state discipline. South Africa should not copy another country. But we should learn from the seriousness with which planning can be linked to execution.

The ANC must now lead this next phase with confidence and courage. Defend the NDP, yes. But defend it by improving it. Honour it by making it more developmental. Rescue it by aligning it to a new economic architecture and a real implementation state.

Our people do not need another paper plan that remains above their heads. They need a plan that reaches the ward, the township, the village, the factory floor, the taxi route, the clinic, the school and the household budget. Let's plan for hope through action.

That is the challenge of this moment.

And that is the leadership the ANC must now provide.



Discipline in acts, messaging and communication is **fundamental to brand ANC**

■ By **LUMKO MTIMDE**

IN the last few years, the African National Congress (ANC) at its congresses resolved and emphasized a “renewal” process to address corruption, disconnect from the people, wrongdoing, ill-discipline, unethical behaviour, with expectations for leaders to be “civilized” and avoid public insults of comrades.

It was no accident that the ANC, in its January 8th Statement of 2025, declared that year as **THE YEAR OF RENEWAL TO MAKE THE ANC A MORE EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT OF THE PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THE VISION OF THE FREEDOM CHARTER: THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN! THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!**

Notwithstanding this, we have seen continuing un-ANC behaviour, from criminal acts like some leaders wanting to take and use citizens IDs without their knowledge and consent, channelling municipality monies to individuals whilst municipalities lack infrastructure and service delivery, to undermining and taking citizens (in particular, needy communities) for granted through telling them, “one loaf means a lot”, to saying trade unionists are not having responsibilities, saying “I have since realised that people who call others ‘neoliberal’ have no responsibility at all”, etc. We must always remember based on the ANC Constitution, policy documents, and discussions on organisational renewal;

the expected behaviour of ANC leaders is rooted in principles of revolutionary morality, discipline, and selfless service to the people of South Africa. Leaders are expected to act as stewards of the movement's legacy, when helping needy, do it with care, sensitivity, prioritizing collective interests over personal gain. When leaders are under pressure regarding policy options, leaders should understand and appreciate the challenges faced by the poor, rural and working class, the cost of living and the balancing act required, therefore not dismiss critics.

It is important to appreciate that during this phase of renewal and rebuilt, a lot is happening as part of the fight against crime and corruption, a number of individuals have been found guilty by Courts of Law and others are being probed through further interventions like Zondo and Madlanga Commission. Society is shocked hearing some of what is happening where more than R300 millions from municipalities is collected for corruption.

We need, as ANC cadres, to be focusing our energies on asking ourselves the question President Thabo Mbeki keep asking on whether we are indeed genuine ANC members, when he reflects and express concerns on the state of the organisation. Indeed, we need a renewal process that ensures that we are all genuine members and leaders of the ANC. We must cleanse the ANC against the dangers of patronage and self-enrichment, of opportunistic members who abandon the party for personal gain. Of course, as cdes like Joel Netshitenzhe warned that *"The beneficiaries of corruption and state capture will not give up without a fight."*, our country could not afford to be



complacent, the fight continues and renewal is non-negotiable and irreversible.

South Africa expects ethical leadership and integrity, this even more from an organisation which is a leader of society. **Leaders must act with honesty, integrity, and selflessness, avoiding the use of brand ANC and their official status for personal enrichment.** ANC need and must ensure disciplined and accountable leaders to the membership, adhering to the rule of law, abiding by the decisions of the majority and higher structures, and avoiding public infighting or damaging the reputation of the organisation.

We must continue invest in renewal, rebuilding, unity, cadre development, delivering on our mandate to the people and foster a culture of service, rather than using positions for self-enrichment, and to mentor new members. The ANC must continue to prioritize the needs of the poor and work towards achieving social justice and economic transformation. We must all be about enhancing and fast-tracking service delivery. The digital economy presents opportunities for improving efficiencies, effective and impactful performance. This was clearly outlined in the report of the Presidential Commission

on the Fourth Industrial Revolution established by President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa on the 07th February 2019. The report recommended actions to assist government to leverage on their opportunities presented by the digital era and address challenges posed by it.

Let us use this moment to self-reflect, self-correct, and renew ourselves, allowing the ANC to lead and address challenges (such as unemployment, crime, and corruption), and sharpen its capacity to deliver on the aspirations outlined in the Freedom Charter and its broader mission of social transformation. Our deployee's should be preoccupied by *"what is to be done"* to use new technologies and opportunities brought by digitisation and digitalisation to improve provision of services, be it for food security, economic transformation, data revolution and protection, etc. We must maximise the use of the limited resources to improve infrastructure, grow an inclusive economy, create jobs and employment for our youth and invest on entrepreneurship, reskilling and upskilling for the future of work. ANC members and leaders must be disciplined, sensitive in their communication, adhere to the principles of communication, operate within the discipline and policies of the organisation, adhere to the ANC policy on social media and communication regarding responsible communication and respectful expression of viewpoints. Any departure from the ANC communication framework, risks wrong messaging and causing unintended consequences by ANC members and leaders.

Lumko Mtimde is an ANC member, writing in his personal capacity.

IS RAMAPHOSA A LAST SOLDIER STANDING?

■ By **SELLO SHAI-MORULE**

THE homecoming of Rev. Jesse Jackson coincided with both the start of Human Rights Month in SA and occurred on the eve of International Women's Day respectively. The funeral was branded a "homecoming" because it was held in Chicago, where Jackson had lived for decades and founded the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, a civil rights organisation. The event drew thousands of mourners, including three former US presidents, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden, and African National Congress and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who praised Jackson's tireless efforts to end apartheid in South Africa. Is President Ramaphosa the last soldier standing for justice and equality? Only time will tell, but Africa's moment is near. I believe it's a sign that Africa's time to rise is now or never.

As we reflect, let us remember women worldwide who still face immense challenges in justice, equality, and human rights. The triple threats against women persist, but visionaries like Jackson, Mandela, Sankara, Luther, Lumumba, Machel, Gaddafi, Kaunda, Nyerere and Tambo fought tirelessly, bringing us closer to women's emancipation and freedom by day. Their legacy inspires us to keep pushing forward. Today, we honour their work and acknowledge the ongoing strug-



gle for women's rights. As we bid farewell to Rev. Jackson, let's salute the 15,000 women who marched in New York City in 1908, demanding better working conditions, voting rights, and equality. Let's also remember Clara Zetkin, who proposed a global day for women's rights, and the 100 women from 17 countries who made the first International Women's Day a reality on March 19, 1911, which led to the UN officially recognizing IWD in 1975, and this important day is now celebrated worldwide on March 8.

Again, March 21, 1960, is a pain-

ful reminder of our history, a day 69 natives were brutally killed by colonizers who claimed authority over them. The month of March shall remain important and memorable in our calendar as a reminder of the painful history of those whose only sin was to wear a darker skin than their oppressor. The global farewell of this renowned American civil rights activist, politician, Baptist minister, Martin Luther King Jr. continued to place Africa on the world stage. The funeral was an opportune moment for President Ramaphosa to claim one of our own uncompromisingly, without seeking permission from anyone

on behalf of the populace of the African soil. Rev Jackson played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement and his true feelings of love to the people of South Africa and Africa shall remain engraved in our hearts. His relationship with Africa was sealed with blood.

The funeral was a celebration of Jackson's life and legacy, with

many speakers highlighting his commitment to justice, equality, and human rights. He was a prominent figure in the fight against racism, advocating for social justice, and promoting economic empowerment for African Americans.

I am reminded of a saying "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country". This phrase,

that originate from the Bible (Matthew 13:57, Mark 6:4, Luke 4:24, and John 4:44), means people often don't appreciate someone's value or achievements in their own hometown or community, but others from elsewhere recognize it.

To this day in South Africa, we see many ill-informed citizens criticizing President Cyril Ramaphosa, often forgetting the country's global context. South Africa's freedom was realized thanks to international solidarity and the ANC's fight against Apartheid. The current government, led by President Ramaphosa, since 1994, serves all South Africans, unlike the previous regime that served a minority.

The question we need to answer currently, "Is President Cyril Ramaphosa the last soldier standing?" This question must be answered by all of us in Africa. Why is the silence of 54 Presidents of Africa so loud when people of the Middle East are butchered for many centuries and only President of South Africa's deeds speaks louder than words daily? Western Sahara remains a disputed territory in North Africa, claimed by Morocco and the Polisario Front, which seeks independence. The lonely voice of South Africa and the few won't see Western Sahara realise the right to self-determination soon. The international community must continue to be involved so that Western Sahara ceases to be Africa's last colony, and the Polisario Front must be recognized as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people. Human rights abuses, displacement, and exploitation of natural resources, including phosphates, fisheries, and potential oil reserves must stop at once.



A clarion call must be made to Algeria's Abdelmadjid Tebboune, Angola's João Lourenço, Benin's Patrice Guillaume Athanase Talo', Botswana's Duma Boko, Burkina Faso's Ibrahim Traore, Burundi's Évariste Ndayishimiye, Cabo Verde's José Maria Pereira Neves. Cameroon's Paul Biya, Central African Republic's Faustin-Archange Touadéra, Chad's Mahamat Déby, Comoros's Azali Assoumani's Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)'s Alassane Dramane Ouattara, Democratic Republic of the Congo's Félix Tshisekedi, Djibouti's Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, Egypt's Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema and Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki to speak. Why is their silence is so loud?



A question need to be asked of Eswatini (Swaziland)'s King Mswati III, Ethiopia's Taye Atske Selassie, Gabon's Brice Oligui Nguema, Gambia's Adama Barrow, Ghana's Nana Akufo-Addo, Guinea's Mamady Doumbouya, Guinea-Bissau's General Horta N'Tam, Kenya's William Ruto, Lesotho's Sam Matekane (Prime Minister), Liberia's Joseph Boakai, Libya's Mohamed Yunus, Madagascar's Andry Rajoelina and Malawi's Lazarus Chakwera whether the battle cry "Mayibuyi-Africa (Africa comeback from the colonizers) is real or is just lip service?

In the near future we want to hear Mali's Colonel Assimi Goïta, Mauritania's Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, Mauritius's Prithvirajsing Roopun, Morocco's Aziz Akhannouch, Mozambique's Filipe Nyusi, Namibia's Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Niger's Abdourahmane Tchiani, Nigeria's Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Rwanda's Paul Kagame, São Tomé and Príncipe's Carlos Manuel Vila

Nova, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic's Brahim Ghali, Senegal's Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Seychelles's Wavel Ramkalawan, Sierra Leone's Julius Maada Bio, Somalia's Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, South Sudan's Salva Kiir Mayardit, Sudan's Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Tanzania's Samia Suluhu Hassan, Togo's Faure Gnassingbé, Tunisia's Kais Saied, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Zambia's Hakainde Hichilema and Zimbabwe's Emmerson Mnangagwa En Masse together with all 54 African leaders calling en mass on all soldiers to stand up and wrap Africa and the world with a cottonwool.

The answer is President Cyril Ramaphosa's stance on global issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict, Russia-Ukraine war, silencing the guns in Africa, globally and Western Sahara reflects South Africa's historical context and its struggle against apartheid. His approach is shaped by South Africa's struggle history, the country's fight against apart-

heid and colonialism informs its perspective on global justice and self-determination. The other issue is African's marginalization. SA's experiences with colonialism and apartheid drive its push for equitable global governance and African unity. On the issue of the looting of Africa's resources, South Africa's history of resource exploitation fuels its advocacy for fair resource management and economic justice.

Therefore, Ramaphosa's bravery lies in confronting powerful nations, prioritizing principles over pragmatism. His approach is rooted in SA's values of human rights, democracy, and solidarity with marginalized groups. Hence the world sees him as the last soldier standing. We call upon all African soldiers to stand-up and be counted. This future is not ours but borrowed from our children.

Sello Shai-Morule is a Public Servant and Social Activist. He writes in his personal capacity.

When Human Decency Passes On

A Tribute to Prof. Nicholas Fink Haysom

■ By **BOITSHOKO MOKGATLHE**

When human decency passes on,
you wonder how the world endures its own weight.
How it continues to turn,
as though nothing sacred has been lost.

It is not often that we encounter
decency, fully formed—
not performed, not proclaimed—
but lived, quietly, in the spaces between duty and grace.

I remain suspended in disbelief,
a silence that refuses comfort.
For Fink was, above all things, a decent man.
A man who believed in this continent,
not as an idea, but as a living promise—
one he chose, again and again, to serve.

He loved deeply—
as a husband, as a father—
finding time, even within the weight of history,
to stand by still waters
and teach his sons how to fish,
while gently preparing them
for the storms of the world. His smile, always refreshing
when he spoke of his love for Delphine.

TRIBUTE

He carried kindness without spectacle,
wore wisdom without arrogance.
Unassuming in presence,
yet vast in understanding.

When he spoke of great leaders he had known,
like late Presidents Nelson Mandela and Mwalimu Nyerere,
his voice would soften,
his gaze turning inward—
as though reflecting not just on them,
but on the quiet ideals he, too, embodied.

He laughed easily,
and in that laughter
he made the world feel lighter,
made people feel seen,
made difficult rooms feel human again.

To work beside him
was to confront your own limits—
for how does one advise a mind so measured,
so deeply attuned to the complexities of men and nations?
And yet, he made space,
he listened,
he guided without diminishing.

He understood this world
in ways many of us only strive to grasp.
He understood broken places
not as lost causes,
but as unfinished stories.

From distant lands to this continent's heart,
his service was unwavering—
each task carried
as though the fate of humanity
rested quietly upon it.

And perhaps, in his way,
it did.

Now, the world feels altered—
not because it has stopped,
but because something within it has.

A rare kind of goodness
has taken its leave.

And so we do not only mourn—
we bear witness.
We remember.
We carry forward
what he so effortlessly gave.

Rest gently, son of the soil.
Your decency remains—
not buried,
but planted.

And in time,
may it rise again in your sons and indeed all of us
who had the honour to serve beside you.

Hamba kahle, mnumzana.

Boitsho Mogathe

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

21–27 March 2026

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

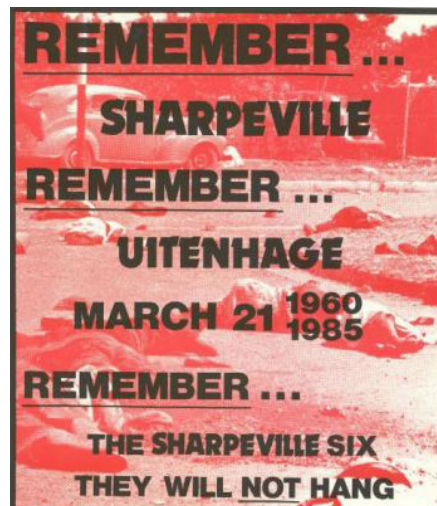
21 March 1903 JB Marks born



John Beaver (JB) Marks, teacher, trade unionist and political activist was born in Ventersdorp, Transvaal (now North West Province) on 21 March 1903. He was the seventh child of an African railway worker, John Thelelwa Marks, and Betty Esau, who was of White descent. He joined the ANC and became president of its Transvaal branch. In 1928 he was recruited to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) by Brian Bunting, was elected to its Central Committee in 1932, and eventually became its Chairperson. He was also active in the labour movement, elected as President of the African Mineworkers Union in 1942. JB Marks was one of the leaders of the Defiance campaign, was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, listed as a co-conspirator in the Rivonia trial and asked by the ANC NEC to leave to help establish the movement in exile, where he served as ANC

Treasurer General. He died on 1 August 1972 after a severe illness, and was buried in Russia. His remains were repatriated and reburied in 2015.

21 March 1961 Sharpeville and Uitenhage Massacres



During peaceful anti-pass law protests, organised by the PAC, protesters were gunned down by the apartheid government in Sharpeville, with 69 people killed. The massacre became a tipping point in South African history, and in the aftermath liberation movements launched the armed struggle.

21 March 1975 Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement formed

The Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement was founded on 21 March 1975 at KwaN-

zimela, in Northern Kwa-Zulu. Inkatha emerged, along with the Black Consciousness Movement, to fill the vacuum in Black politics caused by the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). It was the precursor to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

21 March 1985 Funeral goes shot on 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre

On this day, residents from Uitenhage attended a funeral of one of six residents killed by apartheid police the week before. On the way from the graveyard to the house of a resident in Langa, police blocked attendees with armoured vehicles and opened fire, killing 35 people and injuring 27 others. Ironically, this day was also the 25th commemoration of the Sharpeville massacre.

21 March 1996 SA Human Rights Commission sworn in

Parliament established the Human Rights Commission to promote and protect human rights. It is empowered to investigate violations and advise government on implementation of human rights. On 21 March 1996, Human Rights Day, members of the Human Rights Commission were sworn in. Dr. Barney Pityana was its Chairman and Ms Shirley Mabusela deputy

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

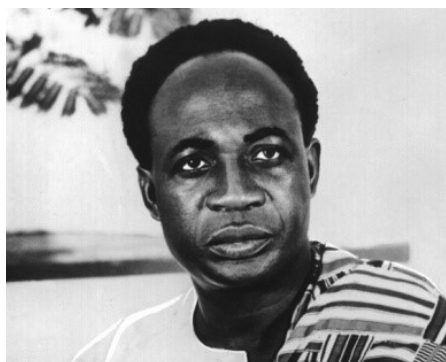
chairperson. Other members of this first SAHRC include Dr. Max Coleman, Rhoda Kadalie, Helen Suzman, Brigalia Bam, Adv C. De Jager and Anne Routier.

22 March 1945 Arab League formed

The Arab League was formed by Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Yemen, with the objectives to promote economic growth in the region, resolve disputes between members, and coordinate political aims. The Arab League formed a common market in 1965, and by 1999 Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Syria, and Yemen were members; the dream of a full common market was never reached, but over time reduced customs duties and taxes amongst member countries. The 22 Members states of the Arab League as of 2018 are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

22 March 1961 Nkrumah calls for sanctions against Apartheid South Africa

In the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre, Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana and one of the founders of the Organisation



of African Unity (OAU) called for the 'total political and economic sanctions' against apartheid South Africa.

22 March 1985 Treaty to Protect the Ozone Layer signed

The ozone layer protects the earth from excessive ultraviolet radiation which could cause mutations and damage in human, animal and plant cells. In 1974 scientists published their first scientific hypotheses that chemicals, particularly chlorofluorocarbon gases (CFC), could remain trapped in the stratosphere for decades or even centuries, release chlorine and thus break down the ozone layer. The Vienna convention signed on 22 March 1985 is a multilateral environmental agreement in which "states agree to cooperate in the relevant research and scientific assessment of the ozone problem, to exchange information and to adopt appropriate measures to prevent activities that harm the ozone layer." This treaty is seen as one of the successes of multilateral cooperation, leading to drastic reduction in the production of CFC gasses.

23 March 1960 Robert Sobukwe and others charged after anti-pass protests

PAC president, Robert Sobukwe, PAC national secretary, Kitchener Leballo and eleven others were charged with incitement to riot, following anti-pass protests.

23 March 1984 Dorothy Nyembe released from prison

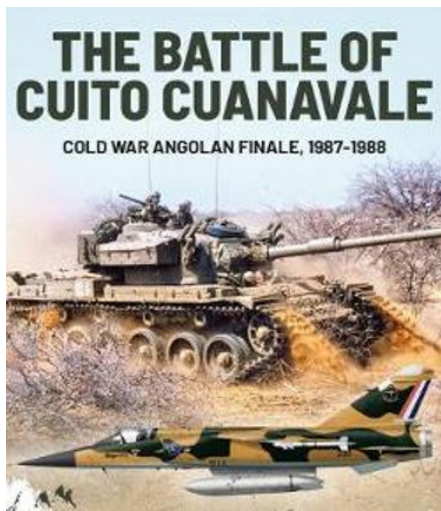
Dorothy Nyembe, a leader of the Cato Manor protests was re-



leased from prison. She went on to become one of the leaders of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), an affiliate of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Before her imprisonment, she was a founder of the ANC Women's League in Cato Manor in 1954, led the Natal contingent of women to the 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings, and became ANCWL Natal President in 1959 where she led the League in the potato boycott against poor treatment of prisoners on farms. Dorothy Nyembe was amongst the first Umkhonto we Sizwe recruits in 1961. Her release on 23 March 1984 came after she was sentenced to 15 years in prison for harboring Umkhonto we Sizwe members. After the first democratic elections of 1994, she was one of the pioneer Members of Parliament and one of the founding mothers and fathers of the South African democratic constitution. Mam Nyembe passed on in 1998.

23 March 1988 Battle of Cuito Cuanavale ends

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which saw on Angolan soil the



epic battle between the South African apartheid forces, which backed UNITA, and the Angolan government forces, supported by the Cubans with over 300,000 troops, ended on this day in March 1988 in defeat for the Boers. The battle is regarded as the second largest battle after the World Wars, and part of the apartheid government's Border Wars started in 1966, for which it conscripted white South Africans. The defeat of the South African Defence Force marked a turning point, forcing the apartheid regime to sign the Angolan peace accords in 1988.

23 March 1991 SAFA founded



The South African Football Association (SAFA) was founded on 8 December 1991 after a long period of racial segregation. SAFA's inaugural conference in Johannesburg was chaired by Interim Chairman, Mr Mluleki George,

of the National Sports Congress (NSC). Four disparate units came together to form the organisation in Johannesburg to set South African football on the road to a return to international competition after a lifetime of apartheid in soccer. These four entities were the Football Association of South Africa (FASA), the South African Soccer Association (SASA), the South African Soccer Federation (SASF) and the South African National Football Association (SANFA), who later withdrew from the process only to return again two years later. The proposal for SAFA to apply for CAF membership was taken at this congress.

24 March 1855 Olive Schreiner, feminist and author born

Author, feminist, intellectual and anti-war campaigner Olive Emily Albertina Schreiner (1855-1920) was born on this day at the Wesley Missionary Station in Wittebergen near Herschel and grew up in Cradock, Eastern Cape. A campaigner against the excesses of the Anglo Boer War, she is the author of the South African classic, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), as well as *Women and Labour* (1911), and a host of other works. She was a prolific letter writer and over 5000 of her letters, written between 1871 and 1920 are available online at www.oliveschreiner.org.

24 March 1961 Establishment of Ciskei as a bantustan

Ciskei was established as one of the bantustans, part of the apartheid government's separate development policy, which along with the Land Acts of 1913 and 1923, and the Group Areas Act, saw black people restricted to ownership of 13% of the land. In

1972 Ciskei became a self-governing territory with Zwelitsha as capital, and granted 'independence' in 1982. The Bantustan system was met with resistance from the onset, gaining momentum after the formation of the Border region of the United Democratic Front in 1983, and finally abolished in 1994.

25 March 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act passed

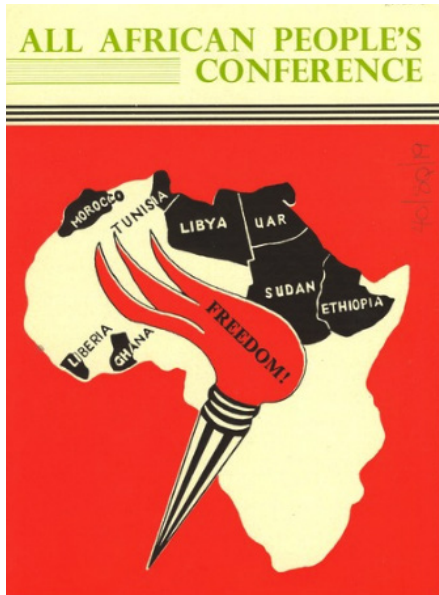
The British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, which outlawed the slave trade within the British empire, but not slavery. An act abolishing slavery was only passed in Britain in 1834. According to the UK government archives, 3.1 million African slaves were transported to its various colonies in the Americas, Caribbean and other countries, of which only 2.7 million arrived alive over the 300 years of the slave trade. London, Bristol and Liverpool were the most important ports for the British slave trade.

25 March 1957 European Economic Community formed

The Community was a precursor to what is today known as the European Union, and was formed initially by six countries. The founding members of the Rome Treaty were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. The United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland joined in 1973, followed by Greece in 1981 and Portugal and Spain in 1986. Its initial aim was to bring about economic integration, including a common market and customs union, among its six founding members. On 10 December 1991, the EEC transformed into the European Union with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.

25 March 1961

All-in African Conference starts in Pietermaritzburg



The two-day All-in African Conference – with 1,400 delegates from 145 religious, cultural, peasant, intellectual and political bodies – was hosted in Pietermaritzburg. The conference called for a national convention of elected representatives of all adult men and women, regardless of race, colour or creed. Nelson Mandela was appointed secretary of the National Action Council. The conference was held four days after the first anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre.

25 March 1995

Wiki web introduced

Ward Cunningham introduced the wiki, or user-editable website. A wiki is a web-based tool that can be used by educators, students, businesses and staff to work collaboratively to create materials, resources and instructional presentations. Known for their simplicity, users can easily add and edit wiki content, creating a group website. Wiki is a Hawaiian term meaning 'quick'. Today, Wikipedia is the world's most well-known and widely used wiki.

25 March 2001

Pedestrian week inaugurated



Pedestrian week (25-31 March 2001) was started by the South African government on this day. According to the UN, each year, over 270,000 pedestrians are killed in road accidents. In South Africa between 35-40% of road deaths are pedestrians. Contributing factors to these high figures, according to the Arrive Alive campaign, include drunk, distracted, reckless pedestrians, poor visibility and state of pavements. The Arrive Alive campaign includes educating children in schools on road safety, and physical infrastructure to encourage safety such as wider pavements, traffic bumps, and pedestrian bridges.

26 March 1881

Youngest judge appointed

Reinhold Gregorowski is appointed a judge in the Orange Free State at the age of 25, making him the youngest judge in SA history. Judge Gregorowski delivered the death penalty in the Jameson Raids, and died in 1922. In 1999, Leona Theron was appointed as judge at the age of 33, making her the second youngest judge.

26 March 1970

Bantustan citizenship law passed

The Black Homelands Citizens Act consolidated colonial land

dispossession, the 1913 and 1926 Land Acts, by making all black South Africans aliens in their own country and citizens of tribal bantustans. By 1979, 17 other enabling laws were passed to enforce the act.

26 March 1979

Egypt suspended from Arab League for peace treaty with Israel

Egypt's President Anwar al-Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed a peace agreement, and was suspended from the Arab League. Sadat and Begin received the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize for this betrayal of the Palestinian people. The League headquarters moved from Cairo to Tunis. It was only readmitted to the Arab League a decade later in 1989.

26 March 1984

Ahmed Sékou Touré passed on



Ahmed Sékou Touré (1922-1984) was a Guinean trade unionist and freedom fighter, who after the independence of Guinea became its first president. Touré, a brilliant organiser and planner, introduced far-reaching reforms to his country. He brought the notorious landlords under the control of the Guinean government and oversaw the distribution of land (and thus effectively, wealth). He was

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

also an avid Pan Africanist and supported the struggles against colonialism across the continent.

26 March 1898 Hunting banned in the Kruger National Park

Hunting in the area now known as the Kruger National Park was banned through a proclamation by the then Zuid Afrikaanse Republic (the Boer republic of Transvaal). First named the Sabie Game Reserve, it was renamed after Paul Kruger in 1926, and opened to the public in 1927. The Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in Africa, 19,633 square kilometres large. At last count, it had 93 mammal, 518 bird and 118 reptile species, including the Big Five: Buffalos, elephants, leopards, lions and rhinos and the Little Five: antlions, eastern rock elephant shrews, leopard tortoises, red-billed buffalo weavers and rhino beetles.

26 March 1956 NAFCOC leader and businessman Sheiks Makhado born

Sheiks Mutondi Makhado, businessman and well-known leader in the area of Black economic empowerment, was born in Johannesburg. He was executive director of NAFCOC (1989-91) and founder of the Retabile Group, with stakes in telecommunications, airlines and casinos.

26 March 2020 SA COVID-19 Lockdown starts

President Cyril Ramaphosa, in a televised announcement to the nation (family meetings) announced a lockdown as part of the National State of Disaster.



The lockdown started at midnight on 26 March and was supposed to end 13 April 2020, but eventually the state of disaster and various lockdowns lasted for 750 days until April 2022.

27 March 1876 Cape Times newspaper hits the streets

This day was the Cape Times newspaper's first day on the streets of Cape Town. It was the first daily newspaper in southern Africa, published as an English language morning newspaper with Frederick York St Leger as editor. It sold for the cheap price of a penny and had been in continuous daily production ever since. The Cape Times: An Informal History, written by Gerhard Shaw was published in 2000.

27 March 1963 Khady Sylla born

Senegalese writer and filmmaker, Khady Sylla was born in Dakar on March 27 1963. Following graduation, she went to Paris and studied philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. Sylla became interested in a literary career, taught basic education to migrant workers and wrote many short stories and a novel before embarking on film production. She is part of an early wave of African women filmmakers. She worked on and participated in different projects. She also taught German at Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal.

27 March 1985 Westdene dam disaster

A bus with 76 learners from Vorentoe High school, Johannesburg plunged into the Westdene dam, killing 42 learners. To this day, the cause of the accident is not known.

27 March 1985 Boesak and Naude arrested for leading protest march



Two anti-apartheid clergy Reverends Beyers Naudé and Allan Boesak, and 200 others protesters were arrested for leading a march through the city of Cape Town to Pollsmoor Prison. They were protesting against the Uitenhage massacre that took place on 21 March 1985 in the township of Langa, and also called for the release of Nelson Mandela. The charges were subsequently dropped, but the South African police kept the two men under surveillance.

27 March 2022 Biniam Girmay wins World title

The Eritrean cyclist, born 2 April 2000 in Asmara, became the first African to win a classic world cycle race, when he led his team to victory in the UCI World championship in Gent-Wevelgem race in Belgium on 27 March 2022. He rides for Intermarché-Wanty (UCI WorldTeam), has won 12 UCI races, and is currently 109th in the UCI Ranking.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

21–27 March 2026

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

21 March
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | Human Rights Day


The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the day the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid pass laws in 1960. In South Africa the day

is also commemorated as **Human Rights Day**. It is a public holiday promoting human rights, constitutional democracy, and dignity, often marked by government-led events and community activities.

21 March
World Social Work Day

World Social Work Day advocates for the important role this plays in ensuring that the needs of vulnerable individuals, families and communities are met.

21 March
World Poetry Day

Every 21 March is World Poetry Day. It is a day to encourage people to read, write, teach, and publish poetry and to recognise the great cultural contribution poetry makes to human society.

21 MARCH
HAPPY HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

"To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

- Nelson Mandela.

Our hopes for a safe and peaceful world can only be achieved when there is universal respect for the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

21 March

World Down Syndrome Day

World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD), 21 March, is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012. Down syndrome is a condition in which a person has an extra chromosome (small “packages” of genes in the body). They determine how a baby’s body forms and functions as it grows during pregnancy and after birth.

21 March

International Day of Forests

The International Day of Forests is held annually on 21 March to raise awareness of the importance of forests to people and their vital role in poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and food security. Forests also provide health benefits for everyone, such as fresh air, nutritious foods, clean water, and space for recreation. In developed countries, up to 25 percent of all medicinal drugs are plant-based; in developing countries, the contribution is as high as 80 percent. (<http://www.fao.org/international-day-of-forests/en/>)

22 March

World Water Day

Today, water is under extreme threat from a growing population, increasing demands of agriculture and industry, and the worsening impacts of climate change. The theme for 2026 is **Water and Gender: Where water flows, equality grows**.

The global water crisis affects everyone – but not equally. Where people lack safe drinking water and sanitation close to home, inequalities flourish, with women and girls bearing the brunt. They collect water. They manage water. They care for people made sick by unsafe water. They lose time, health, safety, and opportunities. And too often, the systems that govern water leave women and girls out of decision-making, leadership, funding and representation. We need a transformative, rights-based approach to solving these challenges, where women’s voices are heard and their agency recognized. All women must be equitably represented at all levels of water leadership – helping design every pipe and policy. And women must drive change in water as engineers, farmers, scientists, sanitation workers and community leaders. In South Africa we are fortunate to have the Department of Water and Sanitation led by a woman minister, Pemmy Majodina. As we face growing risks, from a changing climate and water-related disasters to financing shortfalls, from social norms to governance gaps, we need everybody to play their full part: managing water as a common good and building resilience for the future. This includes engaging men and boys as allies in promoting safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all, and in challenging the norms and behaviours that hold women and girls back. Only then can safe water services meet everyone’s needs – empowering women and girls to lead healthier, more fulfilled lives – and making water a force for sustainable development and gender equality that benefits us all. On World Water Day 2026, let’s explore the critical relationship between water, women, and gender



equality. South Africa faces a complex water crisis, on the one hand we have floods and dams that are full or overflowing, yet we don't have enough water for communities and towns, because our infrastructures have not kept up with population growth and are poorly maintained. There are also areas that face droughts and whole cities that may run out of water. In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa likened South Africa's water challenges to its problems with crime. Water is now the single most important issue for many people, from large cities like Johannesburg to smaller towns like Knysna and rural areas like Giyani, he explained. To ensure water security in the long term, President Ramaphosa said the government is building new dams and upgrading existing infrastructure. *"We have committed more than R156 billion in public funding for water and sanitation infrastructure over the next three years. "The construction of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and other large-scale projects such as the Ntabelanga Dam, part of the Mzimvubu Water Project in the Eastern Cape, is advancing, and we are in the final stages of establishing a National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency to effectively manage and mobilise funding for the country's water infrastructure,"* President Ramaphosa said. The President also announced the establishment of the National Water Crisis Committee. The committee will coordinate government efforts to address the water crisis and deploy technical experts and resources to municipalities facing severe challenges.

23 March

World Meteorological Day

The day commemorates the coming into force of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization on 23 March 1950. The theme for 2026 is *"Observing today, protecting tomorrow"*.

24 March

World Tuberculosis Day

World Tuberculosis Day is commemorated to remind us that tuberculosis remains a global pandemic, amongst the world's deadliest infectious killers, killing up to 4000 a day, although the condition is treatable. The theme of World TB Day 2026 – *'Yes! We can end TB!'* – is a bold call to action and a message of hope, affirming that it is possible to get back on track and turn the tide on the TB epidemic, even in a challenging global environment. With decisive country leadership, increased domestic and



international investment, rapid uptake of new WHO recommendations and innovations, accelerated action, and strong multisectoral collaboration, ending TB is not just aspirational – it is achievable.

24 March

International Day for the Right to Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations

This annual observance pays tribute to the memory of Monsignor Óscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered on 24 March 1980. Monsignor Romero was actively engaged in denouncing violations of human rights of the most vulnerable individuals in El Salvador.

25 March

International Day of Remembrance of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The day remembers those who suffered and died as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, which has been called *"the worst violation of human rights in history"*. Over a period that lasted for more than 400 years, more than 15 million African men, women and children were traded as slaves. No compensation has ever been paid. The theme for 2025 is: *Ending Slavery's Legacy of Racism: A Global Imperative for Justice*.

25 March

International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff members

Observed annually, it commemorates the anniversary of the abduction of Alec Collett, a former journalist who was working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) when he was kidnapped by armed gunmen in 1985. His body was finally found in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon in 2009.



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