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Conversations *with the* President

Everyone in South Africa must respect and uphold our laws

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

THE recent violent protests and criminal acts directed at foreign nationals in parts of our country do not represent the views of South Africa's people nor reflect our government's policy.

These are the acts of opportunists who are exploiting the legitimate grievances, particularly those of the poor, under the false guise of '*community activism*'. Some of these people are assuming functions that only state officials are permitted to perform, including stopping people to check identification and conducting searches of private property. Such lawlessness will not be tolerated, regardless of who the perpetrators or victims are.

At the same time, as a society, we need to deal decisively – and within the law – with the challenge of illegal immigration, which risks our social stability, governance and national security. Undocumented migration places strain on healthcare, housing and municipal services, particularly in poor communities.

It distorts the labour market. In a country with high unemployment, some employers are exploiting undocumented, cheaper foreign labour over hiring citizens and paying them legal wages.

Not only is this fuelling social tension, it is actively undermining our labour protection regime and eroding the hard-won rights of workers.

In tackling illegal migration, we are balancing our constitutional and international obligations with safeguarding national security.

The Border Management Authority (BMA) and the Defence Force are strengthening border security and combating illicit cross-border activity. We commend the BMA for successfully intercepting some 450,000 people trying to enter South Africa illegally in the past financial year. As we strengthen our borders, we continue to reform our migration and citizenship framework.

We are stepping up workplace enforcement against employers who hire undocumented foreign nationals in violation of labour and immigration laws.

We announced in the State of the Nation Address that we would be hiring up to 10,000 inspectors through the Department of Labour and Employment to ensure that our labour and immigration laws are adhered to. We continue to arrest and deport undocumented foreign nationals in accordance with the law, as we take forward the fight against corruption within the immigration system.

This is a society-wide challenge in which the private sector and government should all play a constructive part. South African citizens who collude with undocumented foreign nationals in fake marriages, the illegal sale of state-subsidised housing or accepting bribes to facilitate access to social services only deepen the problem. Many South Africans are exploiting undocumented labour in households and in the informal sector.

As a country, we must reject attempts to damage our country's international reputation and to undermine the solidarity that has defined South Africa's relations with the rest of Africa since the

dawn of democracy.

Since 1994 we have actively advanced a culture of human rights, all the while deepening the cause of African integration, cooperation and solidarity. We have a strong refugee protection framework that prioritises integration of persons displaced by conflict, war and persecution.

Refugees are not confined to camps, as happens in some other countries. In South Africa, they are able to live in communities, participate in the economy and access services like health-care and education.

South Africa continues to play its part in deepening regional economic integration and travel. Last year alone, visitors from African countries accounted for just over 8 million of a total of 10.5 million tourist arrivals.

South Africa invests significantly in strengthening academic, cultural and institutional ties with the rest of Africa through hosting students and academics from Africa in our universities, through people-to-people ex-

changes and though our hosting of the Pan-African Parliament.

Our demonstrated commitment to deepening African integration and solidarity should not be undermined by isolated acts of criminality.

South Africa is not unique in confronting the pressures associated with undocumented migration. Many countries across the world, including in Africa, are themselves grappling with similar tensions. This calls for cooperation and understanding between countries on the continent and further afield.

Like every other country in the world, we will continue asserting our sovereign right to regulate migration, secure our borders and enforce our laws. We must make it clear that there is no place in South Africa for xenophobia, ethnic mobilisation, intolerance or violence.

Everyone in South Africa is bound by the same laws and we are committed to ensure that they are respected and upheld by citizen and foreign national alike. ■



Statement by the Secretary-General of the African National Congress, FIKILE MBALULA, on behalf of the National Officials, on the Outcomes of the Special Meeting of the National Executive Committee following the Constitutional Court Judgment on the Section 89 Matter

FELLOW South Africans. Distinguished members of the media. Comrades. The African National Congress comes before you at a moment of significance in our young democracy, and we begin by thanking each of you in the media for being present at this briefing. Your work as the medium – eyes and ears of our people is part of the constitutional fabric of this Republic. We thank you for the discipline and seriousness with which you cover the affairs of our movement and our country, and we welcome you to this briefing of the African National Congress, we have just concluded our Report to the National Executive Committee.

Allow me, before I turn to the substance of the National Executive Committee deliberations, to direct very particular appreciation to the Honorable Chief Justice of the Republic, Justice Mandisa Maya, and to her sister and brother Justices of the Constitutional Court. On Friday the 8th of May 2026, the Constitutional Court delivered a complex judgment on a matter of significant constitutional importance. The Honourable Chief Justice delivered that judgment with an even tone and an admirable, teachable temperament that this country can and must learn from. Hers is the leadership of a stateswoman of the law. Hers is the example to which every offi-



cer of our courts, every Member of Parliament, every public servant, and indeed every cadre of our movement can aspire.

In a few short months, the people of South Africa will mark the thirtieth anniversary of our Constitution, that document born of the negotiations led at Kempton Park and consolidated by the Constitutional Assembly, which gave us, in 1996, our supreme law. The African National Congress is the movement that, with the people of South Africa, wrote this Constitution. The African National Congress is the movement that honours it. The example of the Honourable Chief Justice this past Friday is the example of South Africa at its best, a nation in which the courts speak with mea-

sured authority, the political institutions respond with maturity, and the people retain their faith in the institutions they helped to build.

The Chief Justice's example tells us that we are, in this thirtieth year of our Constitution, together in building this country. The issues of law that arise from time to time, including the one that brings us before you tonight, are being resolved not as moments of crisis but as moments of growth, moments through which our young democracy is strengthened, through which the firm constitutional Republic envisaged in the Freedom Charter of 1955 is brought ever closer to its fullest expression. Every judgment of our courts, including the judgment of this past Friday, is part of

that growth path.

The African National Congress stands behind that growth path. The African National Congress will continue to stand behind that growth path.

I now turn, comrades and friends, to the substance of the matter. The National Officials of the African National Congress have, over the past three days, met to consider the judgment of the Constitutional Court in detail. We received the considered opinion of senior counsel. We tabled a Report to the National Executive Committee. The National Executive Committee has met in Cape Town, has considered our Report, and has just risen with its decisions.

The first thing the African National Congress wishes to communicate to the people of South Africa, plainly and clearly, is what the Constitutional Court did and did not order on Friday. The Constitutional Court did not order an impeachment trial of the President. The Court did not find the President guilty of anything. The Court did not direct that the President be removed from office. The Court did not endorse the findings of the Section 89 Independent Panel. The judgment, in the words of the Honourable Justice Majiedt in the third of three judgments, is concerned with the procedural conduct of the National Assembly and the rules under which it acted. It is not, in any respect, a finding on the merits of the matter.

What the Court did do, the Court did with the precision and care that we have come to expect from our Constitutional Court. The Court declared one rule of the National Assembly; Rule 129i; to



be inconsistent with the Constitution. The Court set aside the resolution of the National Assembly of 13 December 2022. The Court read in an interim text to fill the gap until the National Assembly itself amends its rules. And the Court referred the Independent Panel report to an Impeachment Committee that must, in the first instance, be constituted under the corrected rules. The work of the National Assembly therefore now follows the working of its own rules. That is the architecture of the Constitution. That is the constitutional Republic in operation.

The next operative step under the Rules of the National Assembly is the work of the Subcommittee on Review of National Assembly Rules. That Subcommittee must, in the first instance, draft a new and permanent Rule 129i that gives effect to the judgment. The Rules Committee will then consider that draft. The House will then adopt it. The Speaker of the National Assembly, the Honourable Thoko Didiza, will then programme the further steps. The African National Congress respects the constitutional independence of the Speaker and her programming of the work of the House. We will participate in

every step of that process – fully, constructively, and with the discipline and dignity that this movement has always brought to work of the people's Parliament.

Allow me now to speak to a question that has occupied the press in the days since the judgment was delivered. The President of the African National Congress, who is also the President of the Republic, has; like every citizen of our beloved country; the right to a fair hearing and the right to seek judicial review where it is available to him. The Constitutional Court itself, at paragraph 139 of the lead judgment, expressly preserved the path of review of the Independent Panel report. After receiving and carefully considering the senior counsel opinion, the National Officials have recorded our unanimous support for the President's decision to lodge that review application in the High Court at Pretoria, accompanied by any other legal procedures as his lawyers may advise. The National Executive Committee has, this evening, endorsed that approach unanimously.

I want to be very clear about something, on behalf of the African National Congress. The exercise of constitutional rights by a

citizen of the Republic, including a citizen who holds the office of President, is not an evasion of accountability. It is the substance of accountability. Accountability under our Constitution is exercised through institutions and through the rights those institutions guarantee. To suggest that the President should not exercise the constitutional remedies that the Court itself preserved is to suggest that the office of President strips a person of rights that every other South African enjoys. That is not the position of our Constitution. That is not the position of the African National Congress, the movement that helped to write that Constitution.

I now wish to put a matter that the public discourse has been speculating about, firmly and finally to rest. The National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, in the meeting that has just risen, did not consider and was not asked to consider; the recall of the President of the African National Congress. Resignation was not on the table. None of those matters were on the table. The National Executive Committee reaffirmed, in clear and unambiguous terms, its full and continuing support for the

President of the African National Congress, Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa, as the leader of this movement and, in that capacity, as the leader of the Government of National Unity.

The President of the African National Congress holds his office on a mandate from the branches of the African National Congress. Those branches elected him to a five-year term at the 55th National Conference at Nasrec in December 2022. The next National Conference of the African National Congress is in December 2027. The mandate of the President from the branches of the African National Congress is intact. We will not, as a movement, allow speculation in the press, however energetic, to substitute for the constitutional moments of our movement; and those constitutional moments are the conferences of the African National Congress, the deliberations of the National Working Committee, and the considered decisions of the National Executive Committee.

The President of the African National Congress is also the President of the Republic of South Africa, elected by the National Assembly under section 86 of the

Constitution following the May 2024 general election. He was elected on the platform of an African National Congress whose voters, across every province and every community of our country, returned the movement to government; though to government in a new form, that of the Government of National Unity that the African National Congress holds together with our nine partners in the Statement of Intent of 30 June 2024. The President's mandate from the people of South Africa, given through the ballot, is a mandate to do the work of the State. That mandate is intact. The President will continue to do the work of the State on behalf of the people who entrusted him with that mandate.

And so, comrades, members of the media, fellow South Africans, the work continues. The African National Congress, on the 8th day of January 2026, declared this year the Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy. The work of that declaration continues uninterrupted by the events of this past Friday. The branches of the African National Congress are being rebuilt as activist branches across the length and



breadth of our country. The manifesto consultations are on course. The candidate selections are in train. The 4th of November 2026; the day on which the people of South Africa will go to the polls in the Local Government Elections; is the focus of our movement's daily work.

The judgment of the Constitutional Court does not interrupt the work of the State. The judgment of the Constitutional Court does not interrupt the work of the branches. The judgment of the Constitutional Court does not interrupt the work of the Government of National Unity. The parliamentary process that the judgment has activated will run its course. The legal process that the President has the right to pursue will run its course. Both processes will be conducted with the dignity, the seriousness, and the constitutional fidelity that the people of South Africa expect of their institutions. And while those processes run their course, the work of governing and the work of building a better life for our people will not pause for a single day.

Allow me to close where I began. The example of the Honourable Chief Justice Mandisa Maya, on Friday the 8th of May 2026, is the example of South Africa at its best. In a difficult matter, our highest Court spoke with measured authority. Our Parliament will, in the weeks ahead, do its work in the same spirit. The President of the Republic will continue to do his work in the same spirit. The African National Congress, the oldest national liberation movement on the African continent, will continue to do its work in the same spirit.

Together, as a movement, as



a Government of National Unity, and as a nation, we will walk through this moment as we have walked through every moment of our young democracy — with discipline, with dignity, with humility, and with our eyes fixed on the better future our forebears taught us to imagine.

Comrades, members of the media, fellow South Africans, we stand at a defining moment of our democracy. Our people are watching. History is calling. The future is waiting. The African National Congress will be there to meet them; at the Constitutional Court, in the National Assembly, in the Government of National Unity, and at every branch in every community of this country we love.

The system of governance, the State established by the ANC from 1994 is working the way it was designed to work; Our democracy, our constitutional democracy is strong, it will remain strong under the ANC. Rights will be protected. There shall be accountability for all. No one is above the law and none one is under the law. We are equal. What it good for one, must be good for the other.

The President's rights with personhood are also contained in the Constitution. The ANC wants

to make it clear that; we are in our renewal and regeneration people's needs first. Economic transformation first, No retreat.

On the Eastern Cape PEC and Gauteng PTT

The African National Congress is functioning well in Eastern Cape, in Gauteng, or anywhere else. The ANC Constitution is designed to respond to human beings, to nature and realities of life and of politics. The National Executive Committee has, in line with the Constitution of the African National Congress, approved the regularisation of organisational business in these two provinces through the establishment of Provincial Task Teams in the place of Provincial Executive Committees whose terms have expired without a Provincial Conference having sat.

This is the normal course of business of our movement in such circumstances. It is exactly what the Constitution of the African National Congress provides for. The governments of these provinces are not affected by these organisational matters of the Movement, the work of the State continues. The National Working Committee will, on Monday, consider the compositions of the two Provincial Task Teams. ■

Recognising Dr Tlou Cholo

A Call to Action

Speech by **SNUKI ZIKALALA, ANC Veterans League President**
at the **Centenary Birthday Celebration of Dr Tlou Cholo**

9 May 2026

DEAR Comrades, today we gather in a deeply historic and emotional moment to celebrate the centenary of one of the stalwarts of our liberation struggle – Dr Tlou Theophilus Cholo.

But before I honour him, we share with you our views on the outcome of the Constitutional Court judgement on Friday, 8th May. There are individuals celebrating and hysterical about the Constitutional Court judgment, but we say we should give parliament a chance to process the outcome.

The judgment concerns Parliament's failure, not the president's conduct. The court did not say Cde Ramaphosa committed a crime or violated the Constitution. Let us give parliament space to process the judgment.

The President has assured the nation that he remains committed to upholding the Constitution, respecting the judiciary, and reinforcing the principle that no individual is above the law, with all allegations subject to due process.

Comrade Cholo belongs to that generation of courageous patriots who sacrificed comfort, freedom and family life so that South



Africa could one day belong to all who live in it. He stood at the frontline of resistance against apartheid – as a trade union organiser, underground operative, Umkhonto we Sizwe cadre, political prisoner and disciplined servant of the people.

His life reminds us that freedom was not handed to us on a silver platter. It was earned through struggle, sacrifice, pain, imprisonment and unwavering commitment to justice.

Through difficult years on Robben Island and in exile, Comrade Cholo and his generation never

surrendered their belief in a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and united South Africa.

As we honour him in this centenary year, we also recognise that the greatest tribute we can pay to veterans like him is not just in words, but in action.

Today, the ANC Veterans League declares that we are ready to take over the baton of renewal and ethical leadership within the African National Congress and within society at large.

The ANC Veterans League has resolved that we cannot stand on



the sidelines while our movement faces challenges that threaten its moral standing and historic mission. We therefore commit ourselves to becoming active agents of renewal in every branch, region, province and national structure of the ANC.

Our Programme of Action is clear. Over this year, we will be part of ANC branches, intensifying community engagement through door-to-door visits and house meetings.

And we have, and will continue to, arrange public dialogues, webinars, and participation in important national commemoration events – especially the 50th anniversary of June 16th, the 70th anniversary of the Women’s march against pass laws and 30 years of our democratic Constitution.

We are mobilising veterans across the country to strengthen organisational renewal, support effective service delivery, and restore the confidence of our people in the movement of Oliver Tambo, Albertina Sisulu, Billy Nair, Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and Chris Hani.

We are calling on veterans to actively participate in War Rooms, community structures and grassroots campaigns so that we can

respond directly to the concerns of our communities.

We are equally committed to zero tolerance for corruption and criminality. The ANC was built on sacrifice and integrity – not self-enrichment. Veterans of the movement must once again become the moral compass of society. As the conscience of the ANC, we will engage the ANC structures to ensure ethical leadership.

We therefore reaffirm our commitment to ethical leadership, accountability, humility and service to the people. We must also lead by example, because the people of South Africa are looking not only for political leadership but also for moral and ethical leadership.

The Veterans League is growing steadily across the country. Veterans are responding to the call to organise, unite and serve once more. We now have over 8000 members.

But this growth is not about numbers alone – it is about rebuilding trust between our movement and the people. And it is about comrades who have sacrificed for their freedom, realising that the struggle for freedom continues!

Renewal demands participation

in democracy itself. As we approach the upcoming elections, we call upon every South African – especially veterans, youth and communities who cherish democracy – to register and vote.

Voting is not merely a constitutional right; it is a sacred responsibility born from the sacrifices of people like Comrade Cholo and countless others who fought so that every citizen could have a voice.

Let us not allow apathy, division or corruption to weaken the democratic gains achieved through decades of struggle.

Comrade Cholo, today we salute you.

We thank you for carrying the torch during the darkest days of oppression. We assure you that the Veterans League is determined to carry that torch forward with dignity, courage and discipline.

May your centenary celebration inspire a new generation of ethical leaders and committed activists to place South Africa first.

The struggle continues. The renewal continues. And together, we shall rebuild the confidence of our people. ■

Ensuring ethical leadership in the forthcoming local government elections

*Report of the Veterans League Webinar
held on 5 May 2026*

THE ANC Veterans League recently convened an important webinar titled “*Ensuring Ethical Leadership in the LGE2026*,” reflecting on the challenges facing the ANC in the local government elections and the urgent task of rebuilding public confidence in the movement.

The discussions were framed by the important observation contained in the ANC NGC Base Document:

“If the ANC can demonstrably renew itself – for example, by the next election presenting a slate of credible, honest candidates taking visible action against corrupt elements, and highlighting real improvements in communities driven by ANC activism – then public attitudes towards the movement could shift from cynicism to cautious optimism.”

This set the basis for an engagement on how the ANC can strengthen ethical leadership, reconnect with communities and fix local government with councillor candidates rooted in the values and traditions of the movement.

The ANC Election Committee’s rules, guidelines, and procedures for the nomination of candidates are a commendable demonstration of the ANC’s determination to

ensure that the best, most honest, and ideologically committed leaders are chosen to serve and held accountable as public representatives.

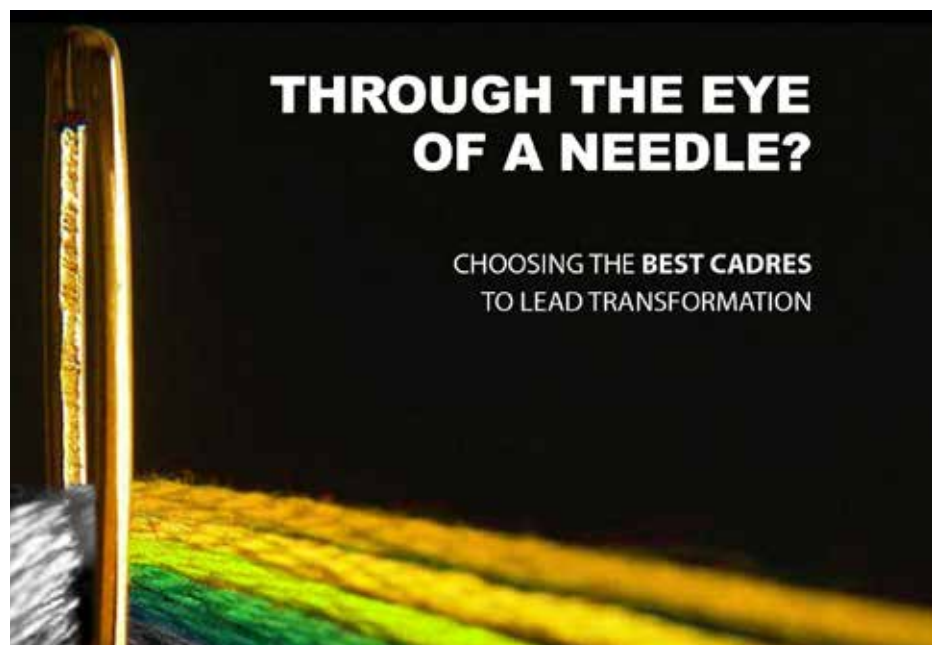
It requires reasons to be set out for nominating a candidate, while the candidate is required to disclose the positions they have held in the ANC, Alliance, MDM, and community organisations, in addition to their qualifications, skills, and experience.

The declaration and acceptance, as well as the disclosure of interests, are the ingredients for branches to embark on a process of developing full disclosures of interest and political biographies

for all leaders and members of the ANC, which can reflect a cadre’s political development, ideological grounding, or service to communities.

A political biography would become an important organisational resource, creating a historical and political record of leadership development within the movement and helping guide future deployment processes.

Another key recommendation the Veterans League is working on concerns the declaration of interests by all candidates and elected representatives. Public representatives and their families are politically exposed persons and



**THROUGH THE EYE
OF A NEEDLE?**

CHOOSING THE **BEST CADRES**
TO LEAD TRANSFORMATION

therefore, carry a special responsibility to uphold transparency and ethical conduct.

It was proposed that all candidates and political leaders within the ANC should complete declarations of interest covering business interests, involvement in government entities, organisational affiliations, gifts, sponsorships and hospitality received. These declarations should, where appropriate, extend to immediate family members to identify and manage potential conflicts of interest.



The purpose of these declarations would be to strengthen accountability, protect the integrity of deployment processes and reinforce ethical governance within ANC structures and municipalities.

It is also proposed that there should be a public signing ceremony for candidates accepting nomination as councillors, accompanied by the submission of both political biographies and declarations of interest. Failure to disclose relevant interests, particularly where adverse allegations later emerge, should attract serious organisational consequences, including the possible revocation of ANC membership.

The importance of Veterans League members playing an active role in branch candidate selection processes is to ensure that the rules and procedures adopted by the ANC Election Committee are applied fairly and consistently was raised.

Veterans have an important re-

sponsibility to help safeguard organisational integrity, combat any tendency towards factionalism as per our membership oath and ensure that capable and ethical leaders represent communities.

One challenge raised at the webinar was that some ANC office bearers were both “referees and players”. For example, when members of regional executive structures occupy positions such as Speaker, Chief Whip and chairs of oversight committees, it becomes difficult for those office bearers to exercise independent oversight over executive mayors and municipal administrations.

It was suggested that leaders should instead occupy these positions with the necessary skills, experience and independence to carry out oversight responsibilities without fear or favour.

Questions were also raised regarding the full-time appointment of councillors and office bearers. Some participants argued that

councillors, including mayors, speakers, and chief whips, should serve on a part-time basis to reduce undue interference in municipal administrative processes and to strengthen the distinction between political leadership and professional administration.

Webinar participants emphasised the importance of consequence management. Participants argued that ethical leadership cannot be achieved without decisive action against employees who fail to meet the standards expected by the organisation and communities they serve.

At the same time, the meeting recognised that the support and development of councillors are equally important.

Veterans League members were encouraged to assist newly elected councillors through mentorship, cadre development and political guidance so that they are better equipped to navigate the responsibilities of public office.

Participants also called for regular performance monitoring of councillors, proposing quarterly assessments to evaluate service delivery, accountability and responsiveness to community concerns.

Another issue raised was the need to respect the political-administrative interface within municipalities. Sustainable governance depends on clear institutional boundaries and professional administration.

The issue of community participation in candidate selection was raised.

Existing guidelines do not adequately empower communities at the ward level to influence candidate selection, with outcomes often determined by branch executive structures.

Communities should have a meaningful voice in identifying candidates who genuinely enjoy grassroots support and who are trusted to serve the people diligently and honestly.

The webinar concluded with a strong sense that ethical renewal within the ANC is necessary, achievable and in progress.

Participants agreed that rebuilding public confidence will require credible and principled leadership, transparent processes, effective consequence management, if necessary, and a renewed commitment to serving communities with humility and integrity.

As the movement prepares for LGE2026, discussions reaffirmed the Veterans League's important role in defending the ANC's values and contributing to the organisation's renewal. ■



Work, Justice and Dignity: The Unfinished Struggle for Economic Justice

■ By **DR CONNIE SEPTEMBER**

SOUTH Africa's democratic breakthrough in 1994 promised a society founded on work, justice and dignity. Thirty-two years later, these ideals remain central to the country's ongoing struggle against inequality, unemployment and poverty. Labour Day is therefore not merely a commemoration of past victories; it is a reminder that the struggle for economic justice and human dignity continues.

May Day occupies a special place in South African history. It symbolises the sacrifices of workers, trade unions and communities who fought against colonialism and apartheid. Before democracy, labour rights and public holidays were privileges

largely reserved for white workers. The democratic transition transformed this reality. The adoption of workers' rights, the recognition of trade unions, and the establishment of labour protections marked a decisive break from the injustices of the past.

The democratic government moved swiftly after 1994 to institutionalise labour rights and social dialogue. The creation of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) ensured that labour, government, business and communities could jointly shape economic policy. The Labour Relations Act (LRA), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), the Commission for Conciliation,



Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), and Employment Equity legislation established legal protections that restored dignity to millions of workers.

These reforms reflected the vision of the Freedom Charter, which declared that workers should have the right to organise, bargain collectively and receive fair wages. It envisaged equal pay for equal work, paid leave, maternity protection, unemployment support and the abolition of exploitative labour systems such as child labour and contract labour. Many of these principles became embedded in South African law after democracy.

Significant progress has been achieved. Workers today enjoy protections that were denied under apartheid. Employees have the right to join unions without fear of dismissal, engage in collective bargaining, and challenge unfair labour practices through the CCMA. Paid maternity and paternity leave, workplace equity measures, provident funds and social protections have become part of the democratic labour framework. South Africa's Constitution further entrenches dignity,

equality and fair labour practices as fundamental rights.

Justice in the workplace is now understood not only as legal compliance but as the creation of fair, equitable and respectful working environments. It includes fair wages, transparent procedures, equal opportunity, protection from discrimination and respectful treatment of workers. The Constitution and labour legislation require employers to uphold these principles and ensure that all workers are treated with dignity.

The concept of ubuntu strengthens this understanding of workplace justice. Ubuntu emphasises interconnectedness, mutual respect and shared humanity. In the workplace, it means recognising employees not merely as instruments of production but as human beings deserving of dignity and compassion. Harassment, bullying, discrimination and degrading treatment are therefore not only moral failures but constitutional violations.

South Africa's labour framework is also aligned with international standards through its commit-

ment to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The ILO's emphasis on freedom of association, collective bargaining and the elimination of discrimination reinforces South Africa's constitutional vision of social justice and decent work.

Yet despite these advances, the realities of inequality remain stark. South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Unemployment remains dangerously high, particularly among young people, while many workers survive on extremely low wages. Millions remain trapped in informal, precarious or insecure forms of employment with few benefits or protections.

The growth of the gig economy and short-term contract work has created new vulnerabilities for workers. Many employers increasingly rely on flexible labour arrangements that avoid providing benefits, job security or collective bargaining rights. At the same time, declining unionisation among younger workers weakens collective power and contributes to widening inequality.

Research consistently shows

that race continues to shape inequality in South Africa. Apartheid's legacy remains visible in patterns of wealth ownership, education, employment and spatial inequality. Large numbers of black South Africans still live far from economic opportunities in underdeveloped townships with poor infrastructure and costly commuting burdens. Wealth inequality remains especially severe, with the top segment of society controlling most assets while many households possess little or no wealth.

Educational inequality further reproduces economic exclusion. Access to quality education remains heavily influenced by class and geography, limiting social mobility for many young South Africans. Without substantial investment in education, skills development and employment creation, the promise of dignity through work will remain unattainable for millions.

The challenge facing South Africa, therefore, goes beyond poverty alleviation. The country requires structural reforms that expand employment, improve wages, strengthen collective bargaining and redistribute opportunities more equitably. Minimum wages, labour protections and employment equity measures are essential instruments for reducing inequality and protecting vulnerable workers. These gains must be defended against efforts to weaken labour rights under the argument that worker protections cause unemployment.

At the same time, South Africa must rethink its economic model. A solidarity economy offers one possible path forward. Rooted in cooperation, mutual support and collective empowerment,

a solidarity economy prioritises people over profit. It encourages economic participation, community development and inclusive growth while strengthening social cohesion.

Solidarity has always been central to South Africa's liberation struggle. Trade unions, civic organisations and communities demonstrated the power of collective action in confronting oppression. Today, the same spirit of solidarity is needed to confront unemployment, inequality and social fragmentation.

Unity amongst all workers is important, especially in the face of declining unionisation among young workers, which weakens collective power and contributes to widening inequality.

Education, health and economic opportunity must also be understood as interconnected pillars of development. Investment in education and skills development is not simply a social expense but a strategic investment in economic growth and social justice. Countries that have successfully reduced inequality have done so

by linking education, economic policy and social development.

Ultimately, South Africa must decide what kind of society it wishes to build.

The democratic project cannot be measured only by political freedom but by whether it delivers meaningful economic justice and dignity to ordinary people. Labour Day reminds us that justice in the workplace and society is not automatic. It requires organisation, solidarity, ethical leadership and active citizen participation.

The struggle for work, justice and dignity, therefore, remains unfinished. But the principles that guided the liberation movement – equality, solidarity, democracy and human dignity – continue to provide the foundation for building a more just and inclusive South Africa. ■

Dr Connie September is a Former COSATU Office Bearer and an ANC Veteran. This is a summary of a speech Dr September made to the Open Mosque on Saturday, 2 May 2026.





From Bloemfontein 1912 to today, the ANC Faces its Moment of Truth

*Factionalism Is Counter-Revolutionary as it weakens
our movement and betrays the people*

■ By **MXOLISI DUKWANA**

BLOEMFONTEIN is not merely the birthplace of our broad democratic movement, the African National Congress. It is the site of a decisive political rupture in the history of our people, a moment where Africans, fragmented by colonial design and tribal division, consciously constituted themselves into a united national movement. When Pixley ka Isaka Seme called upon Africans in 1912 to “bury the demon of tribalism,” he was not making a plea. He was issuing a revolutionary directive. That directive was carried out here, in the Free State. To reduce Bloemfontein to a ceremonial point of origin is to mis-

understand its mandate. It was not the birth of an organisation alone. It was the birth of a disciplined, united, and conscious movement committed to the total liberation of its people.

The Free State is therefore not a museum of ANC history, rather its living nerve centre. A nerve centre does not commemorate but directs. It does not observe but intervenes. It does not retreat into symbolism but asserts clarity, discipline, and authority. From the Waaihoek Wesleyan Church in 1912, through the resistance to the Natives Land Act of 1913, to the delegations that confronted imperial power, this province has

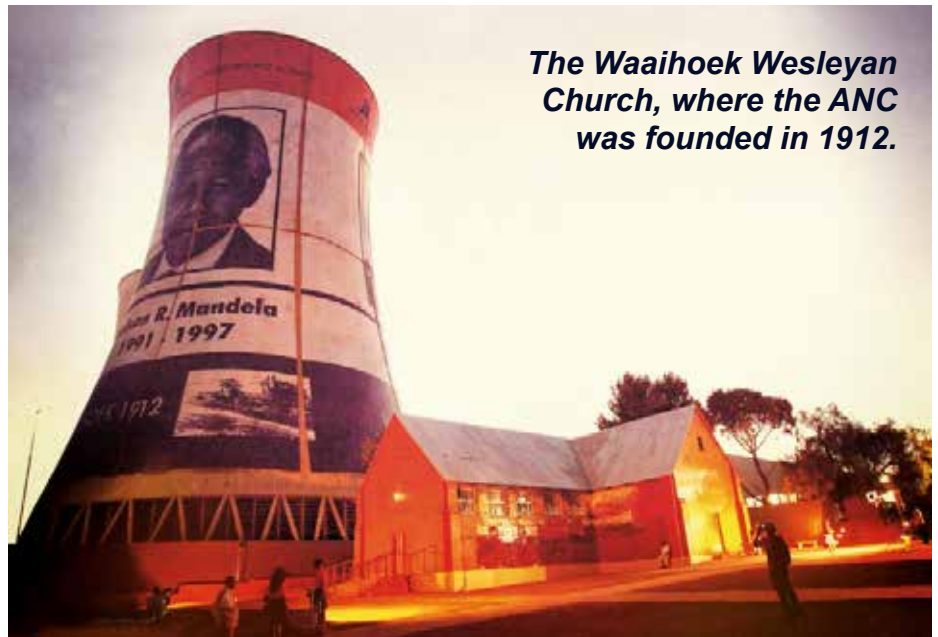
always stood at the centre of defining the direction of the struggle. It was chosen because it was the meeting point of a people determined to become a nation. That responsibility has not expired. It has intensified.

This is why history matters. As President Thabo Mbeki reminded us in his 1978 reflection on *The Historical Injustice*, societies carry the birthmarks of their past, and a people cannot become masters of history unless they understand the forces that produced their present condition. For the ANC in the Free State, this means that Bloemfontein 1912 is not sentimental memory.

It is a living instruction: to organise the people, confront injustice, defeat factionalism, and ensure that public power serves those who produce, build, work, suffer and hope in our communities.

Today, our movement, the ANC confronts a defining contradiction of the democratic era of a tension between being a liberation movement rooted among the people and being a governing party operating within the state. Where this balance is lost, a dangerous drift emerges, from service to self-interest, from discipline to factionalism, from revolutionary morality to careerism. This is not an abstract concern. It is a lived reality that threatens the credibility, unity, and future of the movement. The ANC has already diagnosed this condition. Through its Strategy and Tactics, through resolutions of the various National Conferences, and through the programme of organisational renewal, the movement has been unequivocal in that renewal is not optional but a precondition for survival. The Step Aside Resolution is binding. The Integrity Commission is authoritative. In terms of the ANC Constitution and its disciplinary framework, conduct that brings the organisation into disrepute is not tolerated but requires being acted upon. Democratic centralism demands that once decisions are taken, all cadres and all structures must carry them out loyally. Discipline is not negotiable as it is the backbone of a revolutionary movement.

Our Province, the Free State, so as others, carry in an enormous task of leading the practical implementation of these principles, not in words, but in deeds. The reality confronting us in the Free State, as reflected in the findings of the Auditor-General, compels



The Waaihoek Wesleyan Church, where the ANC was founded in 1912.

that action with urgency. When financial statements cannot be relied upon, when billions in public funds are lost through unauthorised, irregular, and wasteful expenditure, when nearly half of our water is lost through inefficiency, and when communities are left without safe and reliable basic services, the movement must confront itself honestly. These are not technical shortcomings more than they remain lived hardships for our people. They are felt through dry taps in our communities, dark streets, collapsing roads, failing sanitation systems, unemployment, and the daily humiliation of citizens abandoned by those entrusted to serve them. They reflect a breakdown of governance, a failure of accountability, and a deviation from the constitutional obligations imposed on municipalities under Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which requires local government to ensure the provision of services, promote social and economic development, and encourage community participation. Equally, the Municipal Finance Management Act demands transparency, accountability, and prudent finan-

cial management, standards that cannot be compromised without consequence.

The absence of consequence management in the face of such failures is itself a crisis.

Renewal, therefore, cannot be rhetorical but must be decisive, visible, and enforced.

Corruption must be confronted without hesitation. It is not an external threat but an internal corrosion that destroys moral authority, weakens the state, and alienates our movement, the ANC from the people. Those who abuse public office for personal accumulation are not merely errant members rather are in direct contradiction with the founding values of our movement. The ANC will not be renewed by those who benefit from its decay. Renewal will be led by disciplined cadres rooted among the people and guided by the Freedom Charter.

Factionalism must be rejected as counter-revolutionary conduct. The ANC was never formed as a platform for competing personal interests. It was formed to unite

the oppressed into a single force capable of transforming society. When loyalty shifts from the organisation to individuals, the movement is weakened. Democratic centralism demands unity in action. Anything else is indiscipline. In terms of the ANC Constitution, this position is binding. Rule 5 imposes a clear duty on every member to observe discipline and to carry out loyally the decisions of the organisation and its higher structures, without deviation. Rule 25 defines conduct that undermines the organisation, brings it into disrepute, or advances personal interest over collective purpose as misconduct warranting decisive disciplinary action. These provisions are enforceable. Any member who engages in corruption, factionalism, or criminal conduct under the banner of the ANC will face consequence management, including removal from positions of responsibility, organisational sanction, and, where applicable, referral for criminal investigation and prosecution.

At the same time, renewal demands an outward-looking membership. The founders of 1912 were organisers embedded in the daily struggles of their communities. Today, branches must reclaim that character. A branch in good standing must be visible in solving the lived problems of our people such as water, sanitation, electricity, roads, community safety, local economic development, and job creation. The ANC must once again become the primary instrument through which communities organise and resolve their challenges, working alongside civic structures, labour formations, faith-based organisations, youth formations, women's structures, traditional leaders, professionals, and the broader

Alliance movement to restore dignity and functionality in society. This moment also demands mass mobilisation.

As we approach the Local Government Elections and beyond, every member of the ANC, every cadre, every volunteer, and every supporter must rise to consolidate the movement at community level. Local government is the frontline of service delivery. It is where the dignity of our people is either affirmed or denied. The renewal of the ANC must therefore be expressed in the strengthening of municipalities, the restoration of governance, and the deployment of capable, ethical, and accountable councillors, those who serve, not those who seek position. We call upon society, workers, the unemployed, youth, students, women, professionals, business, traditional leaders, religious communities, and the clergy, to actively participate in this democratic process. To vote is not merely a right; it is a responsibility to shape the future of our communities. The people of South Africa must reaffirm and

re-mandate ANC councillors who demonstrate integrity, availability, discipline, humility, and performance in service delivery, those who are present in communities, responsive to challenges, and accountable in their conduct.

At the same time, communities must decisively reject those who hide behind the ANC brand while engaging in criminality, incompetence, arrogance, and misconduct. The movement is not a shield for wrongdoing. It is a vehicle for transformation. Communities must organise, attend ward meetings, demand accountability, expose wrongdoing, and withdraw their support, through lawful democratic means, from any representative who fails to serve. The Free State must lead the renewal, not by invoking history, but by embodying it. Not by resolutions, but by enforcement. Not by rhetoric, but by conduct. Because the truth is that the ANC was not formed to be comfortable. It was formed to transform society. That mission cannot be fulfilled by an organisation that tolerates corruption, accommodates ill-discipline,



and loses connection with the masses. It requires courage, discipline, ethical leadership, political education, and a return to revolutionary morality.

For this reason, the entire membership and society must honestly answer the following:

- When future generations ask what we did with our broad democratic movement and the democratic project entrusted to us, will we say we renewed it or that we watched its decline, trapped within factional corners, in silence?
- If the ANC in its birthplace cannot lead the struggle against corruption, factionalism, and the abandonment of the people, then who will?
- What becomes of a society when those entrusted with its liberation lose the courage to defend its people?

Bloemfontein is not where the ANC began but where the ANC must be reclaimed and unambiguously, renewal will not be negotiated with those who resist it. It will be driven by disciplined cadres, rooted among the people, guided by the Constitution of the movement, and committed to restoring its moral authority. If the ANC renews itself, it will renew South Africa. If it fails, the people will renew South Africa without it. The nerve centre must act, decisively, immediately, and without compromise. History has already issued its instruction.

The only remaining question is whether this generation of cadres has the courage, discipline, and moral conviction to answer it truthfully. ■

Mxolisi Dukwana is the ANC Free State Provincial Chairperson.



Hands Off President Cyril Ramaphosa. Hands Off!

■ By **SELLO SHAI-MORULE**

THIS year we commemorate three decades since the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 96 of 1996. As a constitutional democracy, one of the fundamental principles that sustains our democracy is the holding of regular elections. Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa is the President of the Republic of South Africa following the outcome of the general elections of the year 2024, in which the ANC received less than 50% of the vote. This result led to the formation of the Government of National Unity, which he leads.

In line with our constitutional and democratic processes, any change in the presidency will occur through the next scheduled elections. Attempts to remove the President outside of these processes undermine the will of the people and the rule of law.

Hands Off President Cyril Ramaphosa! The defence of the ANC and its leadership is inseparable. The African National Congress remains the primary vehicle for advancing the National Democratic Revolution and achieving the total emancipation of our people, as we move to realise the National Democratic Society we are marching forward to. To consolidate this objective, members, supporters and all people of South Africa are urged to exercise their democratic right and vote for the ANC with their feet in the upcoming local government elections on 4 November 2026. The stability, peace, and unity prevailing in our country demonstrate that the ANC remains best positioned to lead South Africa towards its developmental goals.

The President of the African National Congress was elected through a meeting of ANC

Branches, in the ANC National Conference – which is the highest decision-making body of the organisation – and no one inclusive of individual bitter members of the ANC have a right to call for his resignation. By convention, when the ANC contests national elections, the ANC President serves as the face of the election campaign. If the ANC wins a majority, the ANC President is elected as President of the Republic by members of the National Assembly in Parliament and subsequently forms the national government. Therefore this government cannot be removed by anyone unless through other unlawful processes.

As peace-loving South Africans and veterans of the struggle against apartheid, we stand firmly behind Cde President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his capacity as President of the African National Congress and the Republic of South Africa. We who fought to dismantle apartheid and advance the National Democratic Revolution towards a National Democratic Society will not stand by while attempts are made to undermine the leadership and mandate of our democratically elected President. We call for unity, discipline, and respect for the processes of the ANC and the state.

We must not allow the removal of any President of the Republic of South Africa irrespective of political affiliation through unconstitutional means or by taking political shortcuts. South Africans are politically discerning. They will not cast their vote simply because an individual shouts the name “Phala Phala” the loudest. The incident in question involved private property and did not concern public or taxpayers’ funds. It



has become clear that some established opposition parties, who came to be because of different reasons lack substantive policy alternatives, and resort to political grandstanding when confronted with legitimate scrutiny.

On matters of domestic and international leadership, President Cyril Ramaphosa has demonstrated foresight and resolve. He led the country through the COVID-19 pandemic at a time when many predicted Africa’s failure. He has also spoken out against the atrocities in Palestine when others chose silence. Leadership of this nature requires steadiness, principle, and a commitment to constitutional democracy.

President Ramaphosa daily demonstrates political foresight and agility that set him apart from his contemporaries. His ability to anticipate challenges and navigate complex domestic and international matters places him years ahead of many in the political landscape. As a result, opponents and commentators often appear uncertain about the direction of policy and strategy, both in the immediate term and for the future. In this political relay

President Ramaphosa remains a Peregrine falcon of politics like a fighter jet which both solve the same problem respectively.

We call upon all South Africans, members of the African National Congress, and supporters of the movement to stand firmly behind both the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa and African National Congress, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa. President Ramaphosa has not been found guilty of any criminal offence by any court of law. The unfounded claims circulating against him are baseless and do not hold water. The matter before the Constitutional Court concerned Parliament’s decision not to adopt the report of the Independent Panel. It was a matter of parliamentary process, not a finding against President Cyril Ramaphosa himself. Under, President Ramaphosa’s leadership, the country is being steered with stability. He continues to represent South Africa and the African continent with dignity and distinction on the international stage.

We continue to be reminded of a saying “*A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country.*” This phrase, 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. We therefore say: leave the President to govern, he must stay. Hands off President Cyril “CR” Matamela Ramaphosa. ■

Sello Shai-Morule is Branch Chairperson, ANC Ward 17 of Mbombela Sub-Region. He writes in his personal capacity.

President Ramaphosa's Constitutional Right to challenge Section 89 Committee Report: **A Defence of Democratic Process and the Rule of Law**

■ By **SIFISO SONJICA**

AS South Africa prepares to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprising, the nation is reminded of the sacrifices made by young people in the struggle for democracy, justice, constitutionalism, and accountable governance. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 was not only a revolt against apartheid education policies, but also a broader fight for dignity, equality, and democratic freedoms. The democratic Constitution that South Africans enjoy today was built on the courage and determination of those young people who challenged oppression and demanded a society governed by the rule of law rather than arbitrary power.

It is within this historical and democratic context that President Cyril Ramaphosa's recent address to the nation following the Constitutional Court judgment should be understood. At a time when South Africa reflects on its democratic journey and the values for which the youth of 1976 fought, the President's speech emphasised respect for constitutional processes, judicial independence, accountability, and democratic governance. His decision to remain in office while pursuing lawful review procedures



reflects the very constitutional principles that emerged from South Africa's struggle against injustice and authoritarianism.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's address to the nation following the Constitutional Court judgment reflects a leader attempting to balance constitutional accountability, political stability, and democratic integrity. The speech was delivered at a moment of heightened political tension and public uncertainty after the Constitutional Court ruled that aspects of the National Assembly's rules governing impeachment proceedings were unconstitutional. While critics interpreted the judgment

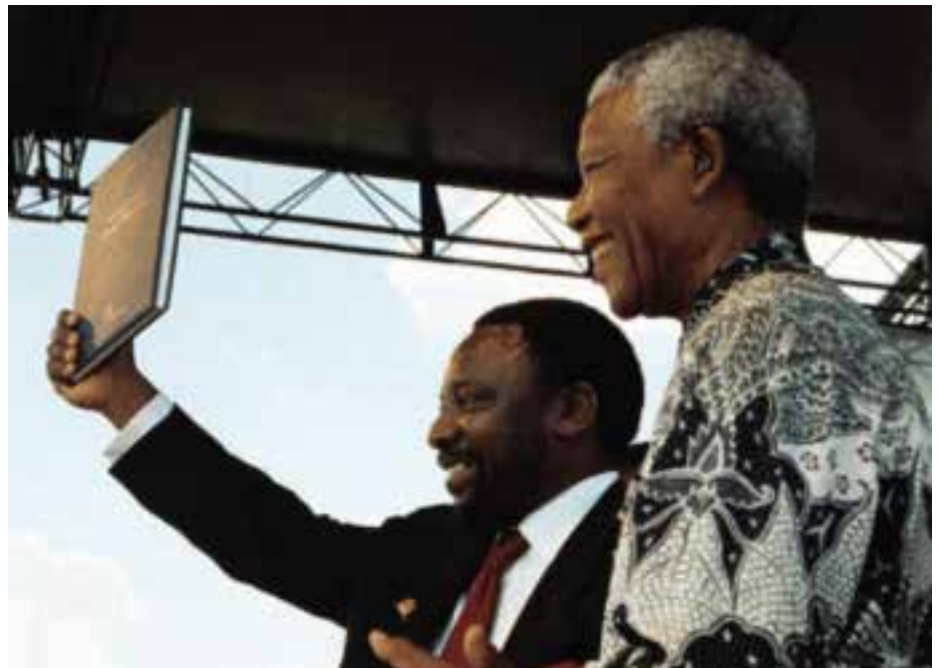
as a moral and political indictment of the President, Ramaphosa's response presents a strong constitutional and democratic argument for why he should remain in office until due legal processes are completed. His speech demonstrates commitment to the rule of law, judicial independence, and constitutional procedure rather than personal political survival.

One of the strongest aspects of Ramaphosa's speech is his clear respect for the Constitutional Court and the Constitution itself. In democratic societies, the legitimacy of political leadership depends not only on popularity

but also on adherence to constitutional principles. Ramaphosa openly stated that he “accepts and respects the Constitutional Court’s ruling,” reinforcing the principle that no one is above the law, including the President. Unlike leaders who undermine judicial institutions when faced with scrutiny, Ramaphosa acknowledged the authority of the Court and committed himself to cooperating with all constitutional processes. This demonstrates political maturity and respect for democratic governance.

Fundamentally, the Constitutional Court judgment did not find President Ramaphosa guilty of misconduct or corruption. The Court merely found procedural flaws in the National Assembly’s impeachment rules and ordered that the independent panel’s report be referred to the impeachment committee. Ramaphosa correctly argued that the judgment did not establish evidence of wrongdoing nor order his resignation. In constitutional democracies, allegations alone are not sufficient grounds for removal from office. The principles of fairness, justice, and due process require that accusations be properly tested through lawful institutional mechanisms before conclusions are reached. By refusing to resign prematurely, Ramaphosa defended not only his own rights but also the constitutional principle that individuals are innocent until proven guilty.

The President’s decision to seek judicial review of the independent panel’s report further strengthens his argument. Ramaphosa explained that his legal team advised him that the panel’s findings contained “grave errors of law and unfounded conclusions of fact.” Seeking judicial review



is a lawful constitutional remedy available to every citizen, including the President. Rather than obstructing justice, his decision demonstrates faith in South Africa’s legal institutions and confidence that the courts can fairly assess the validity of the panel’s conclusions. In fact, the Constitutional Court itself acknowledged the possibility of review by stating that the impeachment process should proceed “unless and until the report is set aside on review.” Ramaphosa’s approach therefore aligns with constitutional procedure rather than defying it.

Another important aspect of the speech is Ramaphosa’s emphasis on national stability. South Africa continues to face serious economic and social challenges, including unemployment, crime, corruption, energy insecurity, and global economic pressures. In times of uncertainty, abrupt political leadership changes can weaken investor confidence, disrupt governance, and deepen social instability. Ramaphosa argued that the country needs stability “more than any other” at this critical moment. His decision

to remain in office until constitutional processes are finalised can therefore be interpreted as an effort to preserve continuity in governance and avoid unnecessary political turmoil.

Furthermore, Ramaphosa highlighted the broader reform agenda his administration has pursued since 2018. He reminded South Africans of efforts to rebuild state institutions damaged during the era of state capture. Under his leadership, commissions such as the State Capture Commission and the Madlanga Commission were established to investigate corruption and criminality within public institutions. His government has also intensified efforts against organised crime and strengthened prosecutorial processes. These reforms demonstrate a government attempting to restore institutional credibility and accountability after years of governance failures.

Critics may argue that Ramaphosa’s continued leadership undermines public trust because of the allegations surrounding the Phala Phala matter. Howev-



er, it is important to distinguish between allegations and proven misconduct. Democratic systems are built on evidence-based accountability rather than political pressure or public speculation. If resignation were demanded every time allegations emerged against a public official before due process was completed, democratic institutions would become vulnerable to manipulation through politically motivated accusations. Ramaphosa's insistence on following constitutional procedures protects the integrity of democratic governance and prevents dangerous precedents from being established.

The speech also demonstrates effective political communication. Ramaphosa sought to reassure citizens by emphasising constitutionalism, accountability,

and continuity. He framed his decision not as a personal refusal to accept responsibility, but as a defence of constitutional order. By repeatedly referring to the Constitution, judicial independence, and democratic processes, he positioned himself as a leader committed to institutional governance rather than populist politics. This message is particularly important in a country where public trust in political institutions has been weakened by years of corruption scandals and governance crises.

Additionally, Ramaphosa's speech reflected an awareness of the broader historical and political context of South Africa. He acknowledged the country's challenges while expressing optimism about rebuilding institutions and renewing society. His refer-

ence to economic recovery, anti-corruption reforms, and social renewal was intended to remind citizens of the long-term national project beyond immediate political controversies. In doing so, he appealed to unity and collective responsibility rather than division and political instability.

Nevertheless, while supporting President Ramaphosa's right to remain in office, it is also important to acknowledge that public accountability remains essential. The impeachment committee and judicial review processes must proceed transparently and independently to ensure public confidence. President Ramaphosa's defence of constitutional process will only remain credible if he continues to cooperate fully with all legal and parliamentary investigations. Accountability and constitutional rights must operate together within a democracy.

To sum up, President Cyril Ramaphosa's speech presents a persuasive constitutional and democratic justification for remaining in office. The Constitutional Court judgment did not find him guilty of misconduct nor require his resignation. Instead, it reaffirmed the importance of proper constitutional procedures. By respecting the Court, seeking judicial review through lawful means, and emphasising stability and institutional reform, Ramaphosa demonstrated commitment to democratic governance and the rule of law. His decision to remain in office is therefore not an act of defiance against accountability, but rather a defence of constitutional democracy and due process in South Africa. ■

Sifiso Sonjica is the KZN ANC PTT spokesperson.

Prof Pali Lehohla's Warning, the ANC's Test, and **South Africa's Call to Act**

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

I listened to Prof Pali Lehohla's 19 minute presentation on Voting Patterns and it did not leave me comfortable. (The interview can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTcFo117CaI>”).

It should not leave any ANC cadre comfortable.

It should not leave any South African comfortable.

Because Prof Lehohla is not simply speaking about statistics. He is speaking about the soul of our democracy. He is asking whether ordinary people still believe democracy can change their lives. He is asking whether the child in Alexandra, Khayelitsha, Delft, Lusikisiki, Hanover Park, Nyanga or Mamelodi can still look at this country and say: *“There is a future here for me.”*

That is the real question.

Prof Lehohla uses big concepts: the Lehohla Ledger, the Labour Disappearance Index, the Democracy Collapse Index. But beneath those concepts is a simple township truth.

People are tired.

People are working hard but not moving forward.

People are voting less because many no longer feel that voting



changes the street they live on. And that is dangerous.

Alexandra and Sandton: The Democracy Test

The example that cuts deepest is Alexandra and Sandton.

They stand side by side.

In Sandton there is wealth, glass buildings, banks, security, investment, opportunity and movement.

In Alexandra there is overcrowding, unemployment, broken infrastructure, informal survival, young people sitting at home, families squeezed into small spaces, and people watching wealth every day from across the road.

This is not just inequality.

It is democracy's unfinished business staring us in the face.

How can two worlds exist next to each other for thirty years after freedom?

How can trillions move through the state, the economy, procurement, infrastructure, empowerment deals and development programmes, yet so many black communities still feel trapped?

This is what Prof Lehohla is forcing us to confront. And we must not run away from it.

The Trillions Were Not Only Stolen. They Were Also Wasted, Misused and Failed
When people ask, *“Where did the trillions go?”* we must answer honestly.

Some was stolen.

Let us not hide that.

Corruption robbed the poor. It robbed the state. It robbed the ANC of moral authority. It robbed communities of clinics, roads, jobs, housing, water, safety and hope.

But the answer is bigger than corruption alone.

Some money was wasted through weak municipalities.

Some disappeared through bad planning.

Some was swallowed by consultants, tenders and elite networks.

Some was spent but did not change people's lives.

Some went into projects that looked good on paper but did not build local economies.

Some was trapped in systems that measured expenditure instead of transformation.

That is the deeper scandal.

The tragedy is not only that money was stolen.

The tragedy is that hope was spent without enough change arriving in people's lives.

Labour Disappearance: When People Vanish from the Economy

Prof Lehohla's idea of labour disappearance is powerful because it explains what many families already know.

Unemployment is not only a number.

It is the young man who wakes up late because he has nowhere to go.

It is the graduate with a diploma sitting at home for three years.

It is the mother stretching a grant across five people.

It is the father doing piece jobs once a week.

It is the young person who stops applying because rejection has become normal.

These people have not disappeared physically.

They have disappeared from the economy.

And when people disappear from the economy, they begin to disappear from democracy too.

No work.
No dignity.
No dignity.
No belief.
No belief.
No vote.

That is the chain we must understand.

People are not simply apathetic.

Many are wounded.

Many feel unseen.

Many feel democracy has become something politicians talk about while ordinary people survive outside it.

Democracy Collapse Does Not Start in Parliament

This is the controversial but necessary warning. Democracy does not collapse first in Parliament.

It collapses first in the heart of a person who says: "Nothing changes."

It collapses when people stop believing tomorrow can be better.

It collapses when voting feels useless.

It collapses when young people see no difference between election promises and daily hunger.

It collapses when communities only see leaders during campaigns.

It collapses when the ANC branch is more alive during internal conferences than during community suffering.



That is why a 30% voter turnout is not a technical issue.

It is a national emergency.

If only a small minority votes, then democracy becomes thin. Organised minorities decide for the silent majority. Populists grow. Ethnic politics grows. Anger grows. Mistrust grows. People stop believing peaceful politics works.

A democracy can still have elections and yet lose its emotional legitimacy.

That is the danger.

The ANC Must Hear This as a Renewal Call

As the ANC, we must not receive Prof Lehohla's warning defensively.

We must receive it as a mirror.

We cannot only say apartheid created these problems.

Yes, apartheid created the geography of exclusion.

Yes, colonialism and white monopoly power shaped this economy.

Yes, Sandton and Alexandra did not become unequal by accident.

But after thirty years of democracy, people are also asking us:

What did we do with power?

That question is fair.

And if we are serious about renewal, we must answer it not with slogans, but with action.

We must admit that too many

branches know slates better than they know local unemployment figures.

Too many public representatives know speeches better than streets.

Too many municipalities measure spending better than impact.

Too many leaders speak about the people but do not sit long enough with the people.

This must change.

From Feeling, to Being, to Doing

Prof Lehohla's message must land in three ways.

First, we must feel.

We must feel the pain of communities who no longer believe politics works. We must feel the despair of unemployed youth. We must feel the anger of mothers who bury children lost to drugs and gangs. We must feel the humiliation of people who live beside wealth but never touch opportunity.

Second, we must be.

We must be honest cadres again. We must be servants of the people again. We must be organisers, not spectators. We must be present in communities when there is no election. We must be humble enough to listen before we speak.

Third, we must do.

This is where the article must become practical.

Every ANC branch should immediately build a Ward Democracy

Ledger.

Not complicated.

A simple community record answering these questions:

How many unemployed young people live here?

How many graduates are sitting at home?

How many households depend mainly on grants?

Where are the drug hotspots?

Where are school dropouts increasing?

Which streets are unsafe?

Which municipal services are failing?

Which local businesses can create jobs?

Which skills do young people need?

Which families are falling through the cracks?

This must become branch work.

Not only meetings.

Not only slogans.

Not only internal battles.

Real organising.

What Government Must Do
Government must also change how it measures success.

Do not only tell people how much money was spent. Tell them what changed.

Did unemployment fall in that ward?

Did crime reduce in that street?
 Did school attendance improve?
 Did local businesses grow?
 Did young people get work?
 Did people feel safer?
 Did transport become easier?
 Did the clinic improve?
 That is the democracy people can believe in.
 We must stop governing only through averages.
 We must govern through streets. Because democracy must be felt where people live.

What Communities Must Do
 Communities also cannot wait passively. We must organise.
 Youth must form local skills groups.
 Parents must reclaim schools.
 Churches, mosques, civic structures, sports clubs, NGOs and branches must rebuild community life.
 Local businesses must be supported.
 Drug dealers and gang networks must not be allowed to become the only visible economy.
 We must create local hope again.
 The state has duties.
 The ANC has duties.
 But communities also have power.

The Final Warning
 Prof Pali Lehohla is warning us that democracy is not only about voting every five years.
 Democracy is about whether people can see a future.
 If the child in Sandton can see a future but the child in Alexandra cannot, democracy is unfinished.
 If the child in Constantia can see a future but the child in Khayelitsha cannot, democracy is wounded.
 If millions of young people disappear from the economy, they will eventually disappear from politics.
 And if they disappear from politics, South Africa will become unstable, angry and divided.
 The ANC must act now.
 Not tomorrow.
 Now.
 Build the ward ledgers.
 Know the unemployed by name.

Reconnect branches to streets.
 Measure renewal by changed lives.
 Fight corruption because it steals belief.
 Rebuild municipalities because they are the face of democracy.
 Create youth pathways because hope without work becomes anger.
 And above all, make democracy visible again in ordinary people's lives.
 Because the greatest danger facing South Africa is not only that people may vote against the ANC.
 The greater danger is that people may stop believing democracy belongs to them at all.
 That is Prof Lehohla's warning.
 And if we are wise, we will not only hear it.
 We will act. ■





Responding to the War in the Middle East – Moving South Africa Toward Reduced Imported Fuel Dependence and Greater Energy Security

■ By **KENNETH CREAMER AND STHANDIWE MSOMI**

IN response to increasing oil and fuel prices triggered by the US-Israel attack on Iran and the resulting shutting of the Strait of Hormuz, South Africa's government responded by reducing fuel levies in order to cushion the effects of the economic shock. Such interventions are necessarily temporary in nature, due to the pressure that lost revenues put on government spending plans, and there has not been sufficient discussion on a longer-term strategic response aimed at strengthening South Africa's energy security and reducing the country's exposure to imported fuels.

For the ANC such a discussion should be guided by the ANC's 55th National Conference resolutions and the 2024 ANC Election Manifesto, both of which priori-

tised the need for increased levels of energy security, including affordable energy, as well as the linkages between energy policy, industrial policy and economic growth and transformation.

In the current circumstances thrown up by the Middle East war, a central strategic challenge is how South Africa can reduce dependence on imported fuel products while simultaneously advancing industrial development, lowering long-term energy costs and supporting economic growth and employment.

The ANC's 2022 National Conference resolutions reaffirmed that South Africa's electricity future should be guided by an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which should be regularly reviewed in order to achieve a lowest cost,

competitive energy mix, including coal, renewables, gas, nuclear and storage technologies, as well as a transition toward a lower-carbon economy through a just energy transition offering alternatives livelihoods for negatively affected workers and communities.

Importantly, the Conference Resolutions also linked energy transition objectives to industrial development opportunities. The resolutions called for accelerated investment in renewable energy and electricity infrastructure; expansion of incentives for electric vehicle manufacturing; preparation for the wider rollout of electric vehicles; and support for industrial localisation linked to new energy industries.

In the past decade South Africa's petroleum sector has become

increasingly dependent on imported fuels. Domestic refining capacity has declined following the closure of major refineries. As a result, domestic production now supplies only about one-third of national fuel demand.

In recent years imported fuel products have been sourced mainly from countries in the Middle East. However, ongoing disruptions affecting the Strait of Hormuz have forced South Africa to diversify supply toward the Atlantic Basin, including imports from the United States, Brazil, Mexico and West African producers.

Fuel pricing is governed through the Basic Fuel Price (BFP) mechanism, which reflects import parity pricing based on international oil prices, freight costs and exchange-rate movements. While transparent, this pricing model means local consumers and industries remain highly exposed to global market shocks.

The decline in refining capacity has also increased the urgency of reassessing the country's long-term energy model. Continuing to rely primarily on imported petroleum products leaves the economy exposed to repeated external shocks. The 2022 National Conference resolved that feasibility studies in new investments in refining capacity would need to be undertaken, as such investments would be risky and would require significant investment in new cleaner fuel technologies to be internationally competitive. Such investments should be based on commercial private sector investment decisions, rather than requiring public funds.

The prioritisation of domestic energy sources is increasingly viewed as a strategic economic

imperative. While, in the medium term, there will need to be interventions to diversify South Africa's sources of imported fuel, expand strategic reserves and increase storage capacity, in the longer term South Africa requires a more fundamental transition toward more locally sourced energy and a more electricity-intensive economy. Forward looking states globally are those that seek the economic advantages of being electrostates, maximising the use of clean, cost-effective electricity sources, rather than being petrostates mainly dependent on fossil fuels.

Unlike petroleum products, renewable energy sources such as wind and solar do not require imported fuel inputs once infrastructure is built. Expanding renewable electricity generation therefore offers several long-term strategic advantages, such as reduced exposure to global oil price shocks; lower long-term energy costs; improved energy sovereignty; reduced import dependence; lower carbon emissions; and support for upstream and downstream industrial development. The technologies required for all energy sources are largely imported, and this reliance should be reduced over time through forging linkages with local manufacturing

activities, a process facilitated through planning instruments like the South African Renewable Energy Masterplan.

South Africa already possesses strong renewable energy potential, particularly in solar and wind resources. Combined with existing coal, hydro and nuclear generation, renewable energy can support a more resilient and lower-cost electricity system. Due to the fact that renewable energy is variable, expansion must be accompanied by strengthened transmission infrastructure to achieved diversified geography of electricity supply; battery storage systems; peaking generation capacity; grid modernisation; and improved electricity market coordination.

International evidence increasingly shows that renewable energy combined with battery storage can provide reliable and dispatchable electricity supply without requiring continual imported fuel inputs. Battery-supported renewable systems are insulated from global fuel price shocks, shipping disruptions and geopolitical instability.

The restructuring of Eskom and the development of an independent, public transmission entity



are also critical components of the broader energy transition strategy. A modernised transmission system can support increased competition among electricity generators with the aim of boosting investment in electricity infrastructure and containing future electricity prices. In developmental states, public sector leadership and the correct design of state entities play a crucial role in leading market activity and guiding economic activity towards the state's strategic objectives.

One of the most important long-term strategies for reducing South Africa's dependence on imported petroleum is expanded electrification across transport, industry and households. As electricity generation capacity expands, more economic activities can shift away from direct fossil fuel consumption. The transport sector is especially important because imported petroleum products are heavily concentrated in road transport. Supporting the local manufacture and adoption of electric vehicles therefore serves multiple strategic objectives, namely reducing fuel imports; supporting industrial localisation; preserving automotive exports; creating new manufacturing opportunities; and lowering long-term transport energy costs.

South Africa's automotive industry already plays a major role in manufacturing exports and employment. The global transition toward electric vehicles creates both risks and opportunities. Failure to adapt could undermine the sector's international competitiveness, while successful adaptation could position South Africa as an important producer of electric vehicles and components. Government support for electric vehicle manufacturing, battery



technologies and charging infrastructure is therefore not only an environmental policy objective, but also an industrial and energy security strategy.

Public transport investment also plays an important role in reducing national fuel consumption. Expanding reliable and affordable public transport systems can lower dependence on private vehicle use while protecting commuters from fuel price volatility. The transition toward electric mobility is already beginning within South Africa's public transport sector. For example, Golden Arrow Bus Services in Cape Town has deployed battery-electric buses and expects them to travel close to six-million kilometres during 2026. The company has also invested in large-scale charging infrastructure supported by solar power generation and is exploring renewable electricity wheeling arrangements with independent power producers.

Over time, wider adoption of battery-electric buses and electrified

public transport systems could significantly reduce diesel consumption, lower urban transport emissions, improve commuter energy efficiency and reduce the country's reliance on imported petroleum products. The expansion of electric public transport also creates opportunities for localisation, battery value chains, charging infrastructure industries and industrial development linked to the broader energy transition.

In addition to renewable electricity and electrification, South Africa is pursuing alternative fuel industries that can support economic diversification and reduced petroleum dependence. Government has introduced biofuels blending targets aimed at incorporating biofuels into the national fuel pool. If effectively implemented, biofuels can reduce petroleum imports; support agricultural value chains; stimulate rural development; diversify energy sources; and lower carbon intensity.

At the same time, South Africa is positioning itself to participate in

emerging green hydrogen industries. Green hydrogen projects linked to renewable energy development could create new export industries while supporting industrial decarbonisation. South Africa should create a supportive policy framework for increased exploration for domestic sources of oil and gas. If economically viable local sources of oil and gas are available these would make a contribution to export and fiscal revenues, as well as to local energy security, although this aspect would be somewhat limited by the fact that oil and gas prices are set at a global level.

A major strategic objective should be to strengthen the linkage between energy policy and industrial policy. The expansion of electricity infrastructure, including transmission and distribution networks, can stimulate domestic engineering, construction and manufacturing sectors. Skills development will be essential to support these industries. Partnerships with universities, TVET colleges and SETAs can help develop technical expertise aligned with the changing economy. Research and development aligned with the country's overall energy security and industrial policy strategies should be facilitated by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and by the relevant science councils.

This policy approach positions energy transition not simply as an environmental obligation, but as a developmental strategy aimed at strengthening domestic productive capacity. Government institutions including the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, National Treasury, Eskom and Transnet must coordinate more

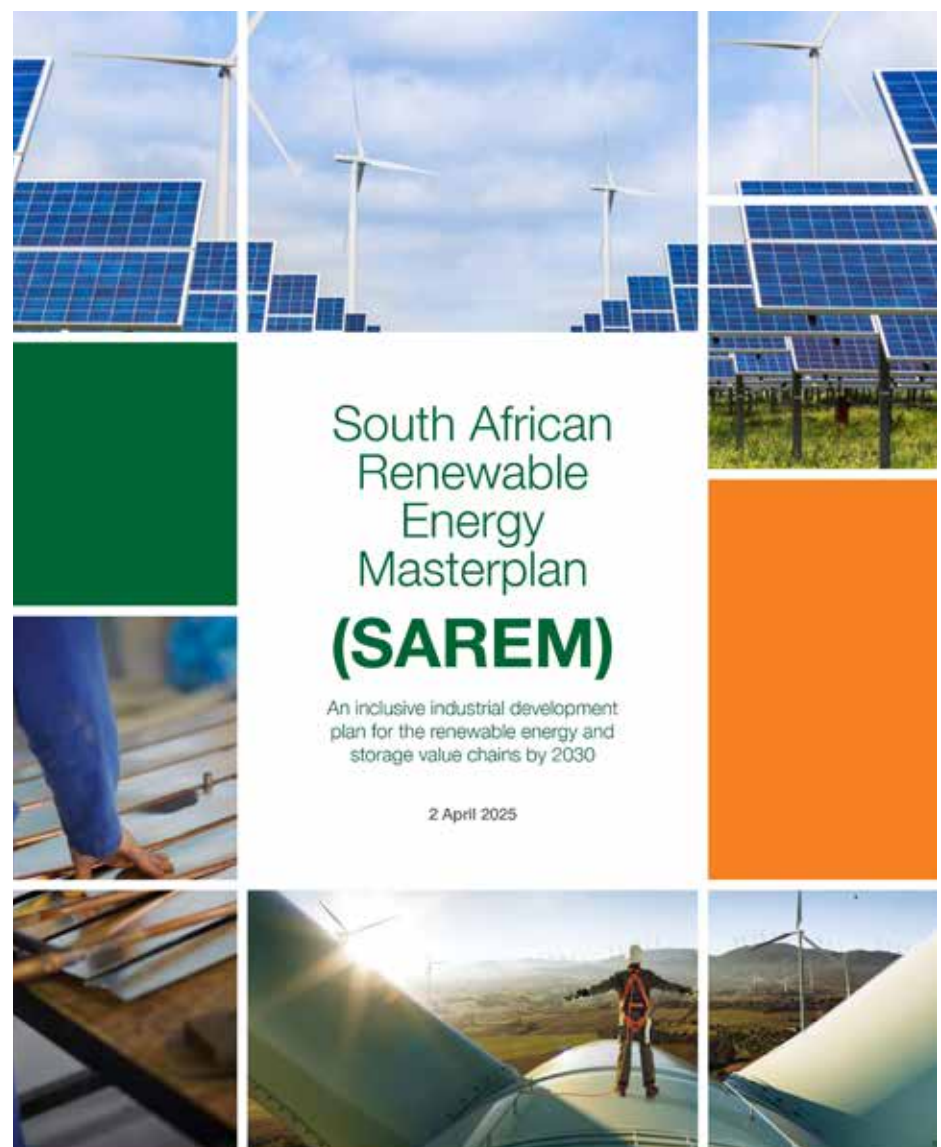
effectively to support implementation.

International partnerships are also important. South Africa is seeking to strengthen cooperation through platforms such as BRICS; the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP); the SADC; and broader African energy cooperation initiatives. Policies going forward should reduce excessive dependence on US dollar-denominated trade, particularly in energy markets. Expanding local currency trade arrangements and alternative payment systems could help reduce vulnerability to currency volatility and geopolitical pressures.

The long-term strategic response to the current war in the Middle East requires more than temporary fuel price relief measures. It requires a decisive restructuring of the energy sector with the objective of reducing dependence on imported fuels.

Expanding energy security and cost-effective electrification can improve national sovereignty, contain long-term energy cost increases and reduce exposure to external shocks. ■

Kenneth Creamer and Sthandwe Msomi are economists and ANC members.



From Handovers to a National Movement: Building a Digitally Empowered South Africa

■ By **NONCEBA MHLAULI**

ACROSS our country, from the Northern Cape to the Western Cape, from township schools to rural communities, we are witnessing a quiet but profound transformation. It is the transformation of possibility.

In recent weeks, I have had the privilege of handing over a cyber laboratory at Paballelo Senior Secondary School, a mobile digital library to Louwville High School in Vredenburg, Saldanha, technology resources to learners and educators, and laptops donated by HONOR to Kaalfontein High School and a cyber lab at Gcinibandla Primary School in Majola, Port St Johns. These handovers were more than ceremonial moments. They were practical expressions of the African National Congress's enduring commitment to social justice, equality and the creation of opportunities for all.

Each device handed over, each computer switched on, and each learner introduced to the digital world represents a decisive step towards a more inclusive and capable South Africa.

Bridging the Digital Divide

The ANC has always understood that political freedom must be accompanied by economic and social empowerment. In the 21st century, digital inclusion is no

longer a luxury. It is a prerequisite for meaningful participation in society.

The digital divide remains one of the starkest manifestations of inequality in our country. Too many learners still attend schools without reliable access to computers, internet connectivity and digital learning tools. Too many young people are excluded from opportunities in the modern economy simply because they lack access to technology.

When we hand over cyber laboratories, digital libraries and laptops, we are confronting this inequality directly. We are ensuring that a learner in Upington, Vre-

denburg or any other community can access the same information, educational resources and opportunities as a learner anywhere else in the world.

Technology as an Instrument of Liberation

The ANC's historic mission has always been to expand the frontiers of human dignity.

In previous generations, liberation meant access to land, education, housing and healthcare. Today, liberation also means access to data, devices, digital literacy and technological capability.

Technology can no longer be



viewed as a tool reserved for the privileged few. It must become an instrument of liberation in the hands of the many.

A learner who gains coding skills can become a software engineer.

A young entrepreneur with internet access can build a business that reaches global markets.

A teacher equipped with digital tools can unlock new forms of learning.

A community with access to online knowledge can solve local challenges with innovation and confidence.

This is why digital empowerment is central to our broader national development agenda.

Investing in the Future of Our Youth

South Africa's greatest asset is its young people. They are creative, resilient and ambitious. What they require is opportunity.

At Paballelo Senior Secondary School, we saw learners eager to explore new possibilities through a modern cyber laboratory.

In Vredenburg, the mobile digital library demonstrated how innovation can reach communities that have historically been underserved.

Through the donation of laptops by HONOR South Africa, we witnessed how partnerships can remove barriers that stand between talent and achievement.

These interventions equip young South Africans with the tools to research, learn, create and compete.



They are investments in future scientists, engineers, teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs and public servants.

The Power of Partnerships

Government alone cannot close the digital divide.

The progress we are making is the result of partnerships between the state, the private sector, educational institutions and communities.

We welcome companies such as HONOR South Africa and all organisations that are prepared to work with government to uplift our people.

When the public and private sectors align around a shared vision, we can scale solutions and reach more communities.

These partnerships must be guided by a common principle: technology must serve the public good.

Advancing the National Development Plan

The National Development Plan envisages a South Africa where

all citizens have the capabilities they need to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Digital access and digital skills are essential to achieving this vision.

The handovers we have undertaken support several key national priorities:

- Improving educational outcomes.
- Expanding youth employment opportunities.
- Strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Reducing inequality.
- Building a capable developmental state.

These initiatives are also aligned with our efforts to harness the Fourth Industrial Revolution in a manner that leaves no one behind.

Community Ownership and Responsibility

The success of these initiatives depends on more than the delivery of equipment.

Communities, schools, learners and parents all have a responsibility to protect and use these resources effectively.



These laboratories and devices must become centres of learning, creativity and problem-solving.

They must be maintained, secured and integrated into everyday teaching and learning.

To the learners who have received these resources, I say: use them boldly. Explore new fields. Acquire new skills. Dream bigger.

To educators, I say: continue to guide and inspire our young people.

To communities, I say: guard these investments as shared assets that belong to the future.

Building an Inclusive Digital Economy

South Africa's economic renewal depends on our ability to equip citizens with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

Artificial intelligence, data science, cybersecurity, software development and digital entrepreneurship are reshaping every sector of the economy.

Our young people must not be passive consumers of technology. They must be active creators, innovators and leaders.

By expanding access to digital infrastructure and learning tools, we are laying the foundation for a more inclusive digital economy.

This is how we ensure that the benefits of technological progress are broadly shared.

A Call to Action

The handover of a cyber lab, a mobile library or a laptop may appear modest in isolation. But taken together, these interventions form part of a larger national movement.

They represent our determination to build a South Africa where

geography does not define destiny; where poverty does not limit potential; and where every child has the opportunity to succeed.

This is the work of the ANC.

It is the work of transformation.

It is the work of building a nation that is inclusive, innovative and future-ready.

As we continue this journey, we call on all sectors of society to join us.

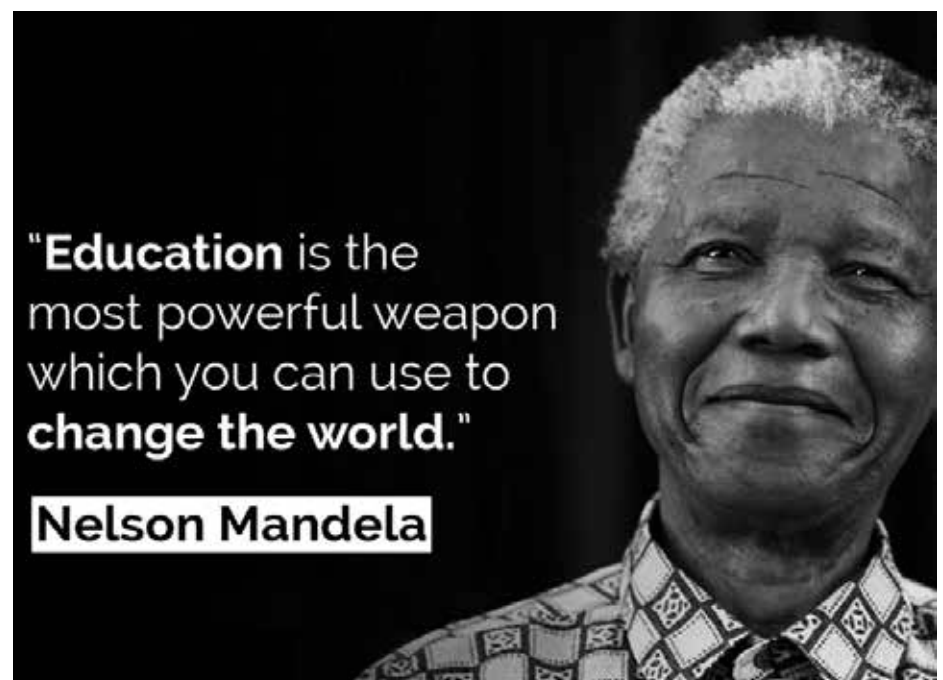
Let us invest in our youth.

Let us bridge the digital divide.

Let us turn access into opportunity.

And let us ensure that every learner, in every corner of our country, can participate fully in the South Africa we are building together.

The future is digital. The future is inclusive. And the future belongs to all our people. ■



Gqeberha Under Siege: A City Held Hostage by Violence in Need of National Intervention

■ By **ANDILE LUNGISA**

GQEBERHA, the historic coastal city in the Eastern Cape, once known as Port Elizabeth, is in the grip of a violent crime crisis that has escalated beyond the capacity of ordinary policing. For years now, entire communities, particularly those in working-class and impoverished areas, have lived under the shadow of terror. Gunshots are no longer shocking, they are routine. Grief has become cyclical. Fear, a permanent condition.

What was once dismissed as localized criminality has metastasized into a broader breakdown of public safety. The recent, deeply distressing murder of the acting City Manager's son has shattered any illusion that this violence is confined to the margins. It is not. It reaches into every layer of society. No one is insulated. The bloody message is clear that in Gqeberha today, vulnerability to unspeakable violence is universal.

Yet for the black working class and the poor, this reality has long been unavoidable. In these communities, criminal gangs and armed thugs operate with alarming boldness. They kill, maim, and intimidate with apparent impunity. Every other week, sometimes every few days, reports surface of yet another shooting, another life cut short, another family plunged into mourning. The violence



is not only frequent, it is often senseless and gruesome, leaving behind a trail of trauma that extends far beyond the immediate victims.

Even spaces that ought to be inviolable, those reserved for mourning, dignity, and cultural continuity, are no longer spared. Reports of funerals disrupted by armed robberies have become a chilling feature of this crisis. Mourners, gathered to lay loved ones to rest, find themselves confronted by marauding criminals who strip them of their possessions under threat of violence. Traditional ceremonies, once regarded as sacred communal rites, are now treated with contempt by thugs emboldened by easy access to firearms and a lack of consequences. In such an environment, there is no sanctu-

ary. Every facet of life is exposed to violation, whether in the home, on the street, or at the graveside.

What makes this tragedy even more painful is that Gqeberha was not always a city associated with fear and lawlessness. In the not-so-distant past, it was widely regarded as a place of culture, intellectual vibrancy, and refinement. The city produced giants of South African artistic, literary, and sporting life. It gave the world legendary jazz musicians such as Dudu Pukwana, whose genius reverberated internationally even as he died in exile in London under apartheid. It nurtured literary and theatrical figures of global significance like Athol Fugard, whose works chronicled the moral contradictions of South Africa with piercing clarity. The city also produced gifted actors such as

Vuyisile Bojana and John Kani, whose contributions to stage and screen elevated South African storytelling onto the world stage.

Beyond the arts, Gqeberha has continued to shape national identity through sport. It is the home of Siya Kolisi, the current captain of the South African rugby team and an enduring symbol of resilience and transformation, as well as Mzwandile Stick, the national team's deputy coach and one of the most respected rugby minds in the country, Zanele Mdodana the assistant coach of South African National Netball Team. These figures embody a tradition of discipline, excellence, and human possibility that stands in stark contrast to the social decay now threatening the city. Gqeberha's history is therefore not one of despair, but of immense cultural wealth, creativity, and achievement. That is precisely why its current condition represents not merely a local crisis, but a national tragedy.

This is not merely a policing issue. It is a crisis of governance, security, and social stability, but also, critically, an economic emergency. Persistent violent crime does not exist in isolation, it imposes severe and compounding costs on a city's economic life. Gqeberha is already feeling these effects.

Investment, both domestic and international, is acutely sensitive to risk. Businesses seek environments where the rule of law is predictable and enforceable.

When violence becomes endemic, investors hesitate, or withdraw entirely. Projects are delayed, capital is redirected, and opportunities are lost to cities perceived as safer and more stable.



Over time, this erodes the city's competitiveness and undermines long-term growth.

Local businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, bear the brunt of this instability. Many are forced to spend disproportionately on private security, insurance, and loss mitigation. Others simply cannot absorb the costs of repeated theft, robbery, or disruption and are pushed to closure. Informal traders, already operating on thin margins, are particularly vulnerable. When livelihoods collapse, unemployment rises, deepening the very social conditions in which crime often thrives.

Tourism, a sector with significant potential for a coastal city like Gqeberha, is likewise compromised. Visitors are unlikely to frequent a destination associated with violent crime, particularly when incidents intrude into public and communal spaces. The reputational damage is difficult to quantify but deeply consequential, affecting hospitality, retail, transport, and a host of ancillary industries.

There is also a quieter but equally destructive economic impact in the form of the erosion of human

capital. Skilled professionals and entrepreneurs have been choosing to leave the city in search of safer environments, taking with them expertise, innovation, and leadership. What remains is reduced productivity, as fear and stress take a toll on daily life. Children growing up in violent environments face disruptions to education and development, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.

Moreover, municipal resources are increasingly diverted toward reactive responses to crime, emergency services, infrastructure repairs, and crisis management, rather than proactive development. This limits the city's ability to invest in long-term improvements such as housing, transport, and economic infrastructure.

Gqeberha is now at a point where incremental responses are no longer sufficient. The scale and brazenness of the violence demand decisive, coordinated national intervention. The South African Police Service, at a national level, must step in with urgency and authority. This is not a call for symbolic action, but for a sustained, intelligence-driven operation aimed at dismantling the infrastructure of violence.



First and foremost, the proliferation of illegal firearms must be addressed. Guns are the lifeblood of this crisis. They enable the rapid escalation of disputes into deadly encounters and empower criminal networks to dominate communities. A comprehensive crackdown, combining targeted raids, improved forensic tracing, and tighter border and supply chain controls, is essential to stem the flow of these weapons.

Equally critical is the identification and apprehension of those orchestrating the violence. Behind every trigger pulled is often a broader network, individuals who finance, direct, and benefit from the chaos. These actors must be brought to justice. This requires enhanced intelligence capabilities, inter-agency coordination, and the political will to confront organized crime without hesitation.

Communities, too, must be brought into the fold as partners in restoring safety. But this can only happen if residents trust that the state is both willing and able to protect them. Visible, consistent law enforcement presence, combined with accountability and professionalism, is key to rebuilding that trust.

We need to be clear that the current situation is intolerable. No city should normalize weekly killings. No parent should fear that their child may not return home because of stray bullets or targeted violence. No community should feel abandoned to the whims of armed criminals.

Gqeberha is a city with a rich and distinguished history, having played a pivotal role in the liberation struggle of this country and in the making of South Africa's cultural and sporting identity. It is a city that once stood as a beacon

of creativity, intellectual life, racial harmony, working-class solidarity, and human aspiration. But that future is being threatened by a relentless tide of violence that shows no signs of abating on its own. The economic costs are mounting, the social fabric is fraying, and the window for decisive intervention is narrowing.

The time for half-measures has passed. What is required now is a firm, unwavering application of the law, swift, strategic, and sustained. If decisive action is not taken, the cost will not only be counted in lives lost, but in the long-term degradation of a city that has given so much to South Africa and deserves far better in return.

The people of Gqeberha have endured enough. They deserve safety, stability, and the conditions necessary to rebuild both their lives and their economy. ■

Andile Lungisa is an ANC NEC Member and Former ANC YL Deputy President.



PART ONE



The man who blew up a nuclear power station and disappeared

Reprint of an article that appeared in The Gaurdian, 5 May 2026

IN December 1982, South African **Rodney Wilkinson** walked four bombs into Koeberg power station – the crown jewel of the apartheid state – pulled the pins and then left on his bicycle. How did he do it?

At 21, Rodney Wilkinson was the best fencer in South Africa: national champion in foil and sabre, second in epee. He had toured Europe and Argentina. He had not stood on the Olympic podium because South Africa was banned. The apartheid state had taken that from him, along with everything else it took from everyone.

One evening in August 1971,

Wilkinson stood in the gym at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, foil in hand. He was facing his coach Vincent Bonfil, a 25-year-old Englishman who had represented Britain as a reserve at the 1968 Mexico Olympics, and who was now in Johannesburg finishing a master's thesis in metallurgy. They were working on a technique in which both fencers lunge simultaneously, and the one who reads the other's move a split second earlier wins the point. They came at each other. Wilkinson's foil caught the edge of Bonfil's sleeve. There was a pop.

When a foil snaps, it makes a sound like a lightbulb being

smashed, and then there is a blade of steel in the air that nobody is controlling, and it is moving fast. The broken tip went through Bonfil's chest, beneath his right arm. His mouth filled with blood. He was on the floor in five seconds. Medical students were in the room but there was nothing anyone could do. He died on the way to hospital.

A Johannesburg magistrate ruled it accidental. Bonfil's mother flew out from England and told Wilkinson she now thought of him as her son. He spent time with the family in England afterwards.

I asked Wilkinson, not long ago, how it had affected him.

“Badly,” he said. And then he stopped talking.

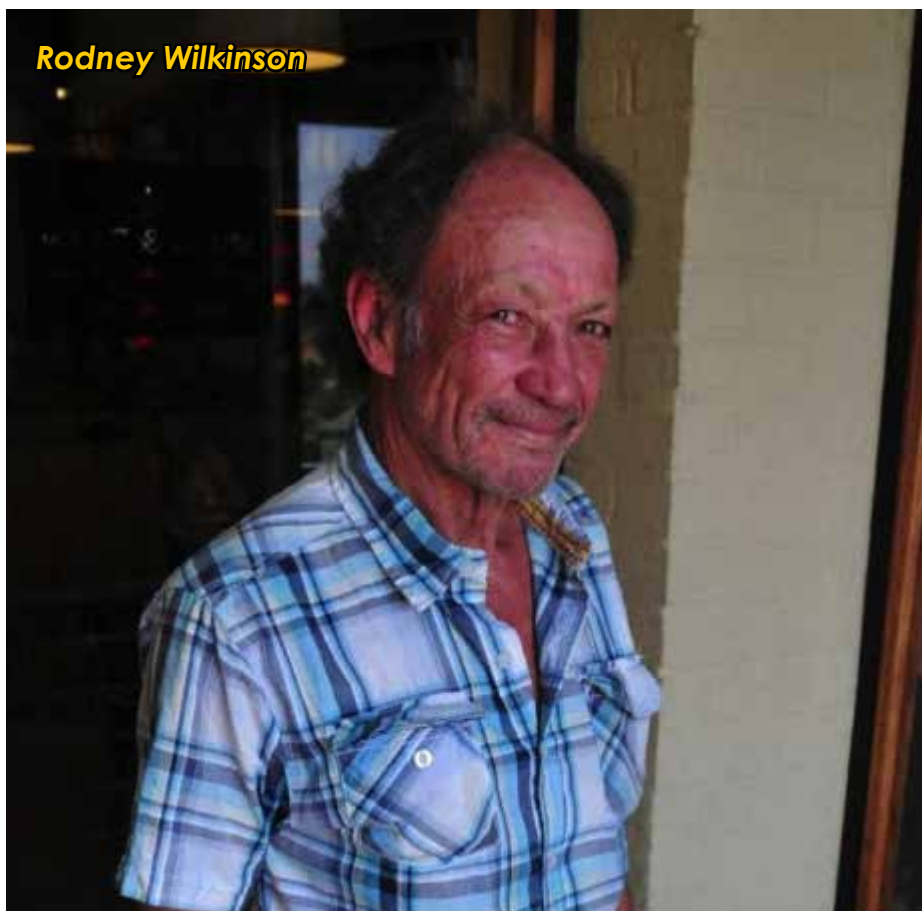
Eleven years after the incident, the same man, who had learned what physics does to a body, was working as a contract engineer at the Koeberg nuclear power station, 19 miles north of Cape Town. He was furious with the regime that had conscripted him, sent him to fight a war in Angola he didn’t believe in, and made his country a pariah. In an act of folly or courage, in December 1982 he walked four bombs into South Africa’s only nuclear power station, weeks before it was due to come online. On 17 December, he pulled the pins, made it out of the control room, had a farewell drink with his colleagues, and then disappeared.

The woman who runs the Hide-Away guest house in Knysna, a small coastal town six hours’ drive from Cape Town and three from Port Elizabeth, claims to know everyone in the area. Her name is Colleen Harding. She is in her 60s, ex-airline industry, and she runs the place with the serene authority of a woman who has appointed herself the intelligence service of the suburb. At breakfast she grills me. What am I doing in Knysna? How long am I staying? Who am I visiting?

I tell her I am there to see a man named Rodney Wilkinson: white, 76, no guest house, no website, no listing anywhere that would help a person like Harding locate him in her system. She has never heard of him.

But the second I say the word Koeberg, her eyes light up. Her next door neighbour worked at the nuclear power station for his entire career. He is in the Old Boys WhatsApp group. Knows

Rodney Wilkinson



someone who was on shift the night the bombs went off. Colleen is already tapping at her desktop with WhatsApp Web open, like a stockbroker executing a 3.59 pm trade.

She can connect me to someone from the plant in two seconds flat, but she has never heard of the man who bombed it. It turns out that he lives 20 minutes from her front door. He has been living there for decades. Most people achieve anonymity by being unremarkable. Wilkinson achieved it by being the most wanted saboteur in South African history and then, for more than 40 years, keeping a low profile.

He had help in staying below the radar. The house where he now lives in Knysna belongs to a woman named Matilda Knill, 49, a force of nature, and her husband, Greg Knill, a former

game-reserve manager. Matilda first met Wilkinson years ago at a pub. They became friends. When her mother died, Wilkinson started turning up at the house uninvited, with soup and tranquillisers. He cooked for her, her father, her brother. Nobody had asked him to, and nobody asked him to leave. For most of those years Matilda had no idea who Wilkinson was or what he had done. Then a film producer called him. Wilkinson handed Matilda his phone and said: Google “Koeberg”. Her face changed. She moved him in permanently.

Like all white South African men of his generation, Wilkinson was conscripted at 18. He absconded. The South African Defence Force dragged him back, and in 1976 sent him and many others north into Angola in unmarked vehicles. South Africa was fighting a war the regime denied it

was fighting. Soldiers were dying and their deaths were being reported in the media as being the result of car accidents. Their parents had to live with the lies.

In Angola, Wilkinson was stationed at a radio relay camp. His unit received coded messages from the field, decoded them, recoded them, forwarded them on. Wilkinson delayed them until they were useless. One came in: *"We've spotted an unmarked silver helicopter. What should we do?"* The answer came back: *"Shoot it down."* By the time Wilkinson forwarded the order, the helicopter had been gone half an hour. One time, he drunkenly fell asleep at the wheel of a commandeered troop carrier filled with crates of beer. It turned over. The accident left him with a permanent scar on his forehead.

Wilkinson was, by any reasonable reading, exactly the kind of person you would keep away from sensitive infrastructure. As it turned out, the army was just his rehearsal.

After his army stint, at 29, Wilkinson left Johannesburg and moved to a commune in Cape Town, teaching fencing for a living, which is to say not much of one. A woman named Heather Gray lived in the same commune. Wilkinson, as he told me, *"jumped into her bed"*. They became inseparable. He smoked a great deal of dagga. (Calling it marijuana makes it sound like a policy problem. Calling it dagga makes it sound like a lifestyle, which, for Wilkinson, it was.)

Years before he met Gray, before Angola, Wilkinson had worked at the Koeberg site as a junior draughtsman, producing technical drawings for the engineers

while the nuclear plant was still in the planning stage. Koeberg was the crown jewel of the apartheid state's energy programme: proof of civilisation, symbol of technological superiority, monument to permanence in a state built on forced labour.

While he was working in the office on site, Wilkinson stole a fat catalogue of drawings – A4, 40mm thick – detailing the layout of the entire facility. He did not steal the plans on his own. There was a Black draughtsman in the office whose job was to control the reference book. *"I had a good working relationship with him,"* Wilkinson told me, *"because I didn't treat him like an inferior."* So when Wilkinson said: *"I'm going to copy this book, but don't let anybody know,"* the man got the message. The next morning, 200 pages were sitting on Wilkinson's drawing board, wrapped neatly in brown paper. (Wilkinson did not share the man's name with me, and does not know what happened to him.)

When Wilkinson told Gray about the plans, she told him to keep quiet until they figured out what to do with them. Then she suggested he take them to the African National Congress (ANC). Neither Wilkinson nor Gray had ever met an ANC operative. They had no political training and no contacts. But they decided that's what they would do: take them to the ANC.

In late 1980, Wilkinson and Gray took the stolen plans and crossed the border into Zimbabwe. The ANC had been banned in South Africa for 20 years. Mandela had been on Robben Island for 16. The leadership operated in exile under Oliver Tambo, the president, who had been running the movement from a desk in Lusaka, Zambia's capital. The ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation, MK), was scattered across Mozambique, Angola and Zambia. The apartheid government in Pretoria was pursuing ANC operatives wherever it could reach them. Into this



tense situation, Wilkinson and Gray walked, with no political training and 200 pages of highly sensitive technical drawings.

What Wilkinson and Gray did not know was that someone had already noticed them. In Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, Jeremy Brickhill, a white Zimbabwean who had deserted the Rhodesian army to join the guerrillas, was a director in the intelligence directorate of Zipra, the armed wing of Zimbabwe's own liberation movement. He was running a network of agents quietly monitoring the South African exiles flooding into post-independence Zimbabwe. One of his assets, a young woman named Jackie Cahli, reported the arrival of an unusual couple – hippy-ish, no political background, claiming to have nuclear power station plans they wanted to give to the ANC. Cahli housed them. She watched them. She reported back to Brickhill for weeks.

In early 1981, Brickhill engineered a meeting. Cahli threw a party at which Brickhill was introduced as just another guest. The party ran out of beer; Brickhill volunteered to go on a beer run, and made sure Wilkinson – who had a car – drove him. In the car, Brickhill made his pitch. He was an officer in the liberation forces, he said. He knew Wilkinson had something valuable. He wanted to ask some questions about Wilkinson's background. Wilkinson, drunk, heard "background" as an accusation. "Are you accusing me of being a spy?" He swerved off the road, on to the verge, and pointed the car at a tree. "You don't believe me, I'm going to kill us both." The car stopped three inches short of the trunk.

"And then that kind of broke the ice," Brickhill, who is in his 70s

Mac Maharaj



and lives in Harare, told me. *"I said something like: 'Welcome to the struggle, comrade. Now let's just go and buy a beer.' But that was the moment I was convinced Rodney was genuine. He was obviously crazy, but he was also genuine."*

Brickhill installed Wilkinson and Gray in a safe house and put them through months of basic training in tradecraft: counter-surveillance, secret communication, resisting interrogation. Some months later, Wilkinson finally handed over the plans – pushing them through Brickhill's window while the family was out. *"It was all this cloak-and-dagger stuff, which we did, and celebrated afterwards,"* Gray told the journalist Yunus Carrim years later, in his book *Attacking the Heart of Apartheid*, an oral history of MK Special Operations. *"Hurrah, done our bit. Or so we thought."*

What Wilkinson did not know was that Brickhill's involvement had been authorised at the highest level. Dumiso Dabengwa, the head of Zipra's National Security Organisation, had personally signed off on the introduction.

The most consequential act of sabotage in South African history was set in motion at the top of Zimbabwean intelligence before the saboteur even knew it was happening.

One Saturday in August 1981, Brickhill asked Wilkinson to come to his house. In the garden was a man who, until then, had existed only in the whispers of exiles: Mac Maharaj. Born in Newcastle, in the province of Natal, to Indian parents, Maharaj had joined the anti-apartheid underground as a young man and was arrested in 1964 for sabotage. He served 12 years on Robben Island alongside Mandela. On his release in 1976, he smuggled out the manuscript of Mandela's autobiography, transcribed in microscopic handwriting and hidden inside the covers of a notebook. When I sat down with him over video link this year, Maharaj was 90 and still formidable. I asked him his secret for staying sharp. *"Go to prison,"* he said.

In their first meeting, Maharaj noticed the scar on Wilkinson's forehead and drew out the whole story. *"All that background,"* Maharaj

told me, “suggested that here was a person from a privileged community, but quite a person to do things his own way, not to be bound by rules created by the system.” He continued: “He was a dagga smoker, a hippy, a commune-living guy. And I can see he is one loose cannon. But this is the guy. He has left no trail. He has got no political background, so you can send him back.”

Maharaj made a specific recommendation to Wilkinson’s ANC handlers: Heather Gray was a stabilising influence. They should treat her as Wilkinson’s operational partner. Gray’s political awareness had been stirred at an early age, through her sister Diana, who was involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement and the 1968 student revolts. Gray was a speech therapy student at the University of Cape Town and was anti-nuclear before she ever met Wilkinson. Within the ANC, Maharaj told me, the assessment was that of the two, she was the stronger. But Maharaj was also struck by the fact that, beneath the dagga and the dishevelment, Wilkinson was the kind of person who had reached the highest level in fencing. “Not a sport you indulge in,” he told me. “It is not just reflexes. There is a mental strength that goes with it.”

In the months that followed, the drawings that Wilkinson had taken from Koeberg went up the chain to Joe Slovo, head of MK’s Special Operations, the strategic sabotage unit that reported directly to Tambo. Slovo had them authenticated by nuclear scientists in the Soviet Union and Britain. They were genuine.

The ANC had been trying to figure out how to target Koeberg for years. A bomb inside the plant,



Koeberg plant

on the reactor heads, in the control rooms, would be the most symbolically devastating strike in the history of the struggle. Now they were in contact with a man who had once worked inside Koeberg, who knew its layout, who could plausibly walk back in. They asked Wilkinson to undertake the mission himself. To plant the bombs.

The field commander assigned to the operation was Aboobaker Ismail, code name Rashid: a 27-year-old science graduate from Lenasia, the Indian township south-west of Johannesburg, who was quiet, methodical and obsessive about detail. The value of an operative who could re-enter the plant, with a face that looked like it belonged there, was greater than any unit cutting through a fence from outside. Why send a unit when you already had a ghost?

Wilkinson said he would think about it. “Not whether it was the right thing,” he told me, sitting in a chair in Knysna 43 years later. “But whether I had any chance, or was prepared to take the chance. By that time I was a fa-

ther.” Wilkinson had been raising Heather’s daughter, Kyla, from a previous relationship, as his own. “So it was quite a big decision.”

I asked him: did you think you would get caught? Get killed? “Get killed, both.”

“You thought it was the last day of your life?”

“No. I thought it was a risk. Serious risk to life.”

He said it the way you would say it rained on Tuesday. By the time he and Gray drove from Zimbabwe back into South Africa in June 1982, he had said yes.

Their friends and family in Cape Town had no reason to think the 18 months in Zimbabwe had been anything but an adventure. Wilkinson and Gray said they were coming home because they could not get money out of South Africa to support Kyla. Nobody outside the ANC operatives who had recruited him knew the truth.

(Part 2 of this interview will be published in the next edition of ANC Today). ■

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

16–22 May 2026

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

16 May 1956 Egypt establishes diplomatic relations with China

This move angered the Peoples Republic of China's Cold War rival, the United States who threatened to withhold promised financial aid for the Aswan Dam. In retaliation, Egypt President Gamal Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in July that year.

16 May 1964 Mohammed Ali visits Ghana



Encouraged by Malcolm X, world boxing heavy weight legend Ali arrived in Accra, Ghana for a two week visit. He described it as "a return to the fatherland," where he also meets President Kwame Nkrumah.

16 May 1976 James Ranisi Jolobe, author and poet, and clergyman passed on

On 16 May 1976, South Africa lost a poet, author and a cler-

gyman. James Ranisi Jolobe made a contribution to South African arts and culture through poetry. Born in Transkei, Jolobe was best known for his collection of poems, *Umyezo* (1936) and played a major role in the compilation of the English-Xhosa-Afrikaans dictionary.

16 May 1977 Mme Winnie Madikizela-Mandela banished to Brandfort



ANC and ANCWL stalwart Mme Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was banished to Brandfort, Free State for her political activism by the apartheid government for nine years. She was dumped unceremoniously in Brandfort with her daughter Zinzi, and throughout the period she continued to suffer harassment and not allowed to officially pursue her career as a social worker.

16 May 1983 Comedian Loyiso Gola born



Loyiso Gola, a South African stand-up and TV comedian was born in Gugulethu, Cape Town on this day. He is the co-creator and anchor of the late-night satirical news television series *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* on e.tv and eNCA, launched in 2010, and has performed internationally.

16 May 1997 Mobutu Sese Seko relinquishes power in the DRC

As rebel troops led by Laurent Kabila advanced on Kinshasa, the nearly 32-year ruler of the Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) fled the capital, and the Information services announced that he had resigned and went into exile. He died in Morocco in September of the same year of prostate cancer.

16 May 2018 Bambara Traoré statue unveiled in Bamako

The last African leader to defy

colonial French conquest in West Africa, the unveiling of the statue of Emperor Mabemba Traoré in the Malian capital, was attended by Prime Ministers from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, which were part of the KénéDougou Empire ruled by Traoré.

16 May 2019 First African Woman to Summit Mount Everest



Saray Khumalo hoisted the South African flag on the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest. An e-commerce executive, Saray was born in Zambia, with Rwandese parentage and a South African citizen. She scaled the 8,850-metre mountain after three failed attempts foiled by bad weather and a deadly earthquake in 2015. She has also summited six other mountains, including Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Aconcagua in Argentina and Mount Elbrus in Russia and has been on an expedition to the South Pole in 2019.

17 May 1900 Esther Franks, first ophthalmic surgeon born

Esther Franks, physician and first woman ophthalmic surgeon to practice in SA, was born in Zurich, Switzerland. Her parents emigrated from Russia via England and Switzerland and came to SA shortly after her birth. She was a pioneer in the fight against

blindness. In 1971 she was adjudged Woman of the Year by the readers of The Star for her outstanding work in restoring sight to thousands of rural Africans.

17 May 1923 Pioneer conservationist and zoologist, Prof David Wasawo born

The first East African to earn a science degree in 1951, studying at Oxford University and the University of London, Kenyan David Wasawo was Professor and Dean of Faculty at the University of Nairobi and Chancellor of the Great Lakes University of Kisumu. His research focused on East African fish and invertebrate animals.

17 May 1936 Sugar magnet Hulett born

Sir James Liege Hulett, Natal planter, industrialist and politician, was born in England and came to South Africa in 1857 at the age of 19. Hulett pioneered the country's sugar industry when he founded the Hulett Company in 1892, which had extensive cane plantations and erected the first sugar mill in 1903. Today, the Huletts Sugar Company is called Tongaat-Hulett, after it merged with the Tongaat sugar company, and is still one of the major sugar groups in the country.

17 May 1937 Maggie Laubscher, painter passed on

Born on 14 April 1886 on a farm near Malmesbury, Maria Magdalena Laubster was a painter and printmaker. Her expressionistic work was initially shunned upon by critics, but has since gained wide acceptance. Laubster studied art in Cape Town under Ed-

ward Roworth, in London at the Slade School, and also trained in Berlin, Germany. Laubster and Irma Stern are two of the most prolific woman painters in South Africa, introducing expressionism to South Africa.

17 May 1989 ISCOR privatised

The Conversion of Iscor Bill was passed by the apartheid government, allowing for the privatization of ISCOR. The steel company was founded in 1928 as a state owned company. After privatization in 1989, it went through different ownership structures, until it changed hands to Acelor-Mittal South Africa.

17 May 1995 Parliament establishes Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The South African parliament approved legislation to set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995. The Commission, based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995, investigated what happened under apartheid



between 1960 and 1994. Archbishop Tutu was appointed as TRC Chairperson and Dr Alex Boraine as vice-chairperson.

17 My 2020 Sankara statue unveiled in Ouagadougou

A statue of Burkina Faso and Pan African icon, Thomas Sankara, President from 1983 until his assassination in 1987 is unveiled in the capital, Ouagadougou.

18 May 1912 Isithwalandwe/Seaparankoe Walter Sisulu born



Walter Ulyate Max Sisulu is born in Engcobo, Eastern Cape. Sisulu worked as a miner, baker's assistant, domestic helper and factory hand and was an active trade unionist before joining the ANC in 1940. He was one of the founders of the ANC Youth League, elected as its first treasurer in 1944. He went on to become secretary general of the ANC from 1949 to 1954, as leader of the Defiance campaign and the adoption of the Freedom Charter (1955), and was a founder of Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961. A Rivonia trialist, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964, and served on Robben Island till his release in 1989. After the unbanning of the

ANC in 1990, he chaired the Interim Leadership Core to rebuild the ANC, and was elected as Deputy President at its 1991 Durban Conference, a position he held until the 1994 Conference, when he retired. In 1992, the ANC honored Sisulu with the Isithwalandwe/Seaparankoe award for his outstanding contribution and sacrifice to the liberation struggle. Walter Sisulu, according to ES Reddy, was *"the organizational genius of the ANC, ...He was the moving spirit behind all the great campaigns in the 1950's, as well as the transformation of the ANC in 1960-61 for underground work and armed struggle."* Sisulu passed away in 2003.

18 May 1899 Conference lays foundation for ICC

An International peace conference is convened at The Hague in the Netherlands. It adopts conventions on warfare and creates the Permanent Court of Arbitration, as a mechanism for peaceful resolution of interstate conflicts, as well as conflict between states and other parties.

18 May 1994 Race driver Naomi Schiff born

Naomi Schiff is a Rwandan racing driver and television presenter. She was born in Belgium, to a Belgian father and Rwandan mother, grew up in South Africa, lived in Paris, and joined Sky Sports as presenter in the UK in 2024.

18 May 2013 Television icon Vuyo Mbuli passed on

Television icon Vuyo Mbuli passes away on this day. An icon of



Morning Live, SABC Vuyo Mbuli (1967-2013) was a larger than life presence, yet humble, patriotic, able to relate to everyone and known for his sign-off "sharp-sharp" at the end of programmes.

20 May 1884 Dinizulu rises to Throne

HRM King Dinizulu kaCetshwayo succeeds his father, Cetshwayo as monarch of the Zulu Kingdom, at the age of 15 years.

20 May 1910 Hailey's Comet

Hailey's Comet passes 22 km from Earth, the closest in history. Comets are space snowballs of frozen gases, rock and dust that circle in a fixed pattern around the Sun. When frozen, they are the size of a small town.

20 May 1935 Ethiopia calls on UN for support against Italian Invasion

A special meeting of the League of Nations, the forerunner of UN is called for by Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), requesting aid in defense against Italian aggression. Ethiopians, led by reigning Emperor Haile Selassie resisted this invasion of Mussolini's forces during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1940). This followed the

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

First Italo-Ethiopian War (1895-1896) when Italy was defeated at the Battle of Adwa by Ethiopian forces led by Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taytu Betul, who commanded a force of cannon-eers at the frontline.

20 May 1952

Football star Roger Milla born



Cameroonian footballer and one of the first major African international star is born in Yaoundé. He was crowned CAF Footballer of the Year in 1976 and 1990, and played in the Cameroon national team in three World Cups.

20 May 1981

Rapper E-Sir born

Kenyan hip-hop singer, Issah Mmari Wangui, aka E-Sir is born in Nairobi, Kenya. He astounded with his quick-witted lyrics in kiSwahili. The young poet of Swahili rap died in a car accident at on 16 March 2003.

20 May 1981

UN and OAU take a stand against Apartheid policy

An International Conference on Sanctions against South Africa was hosted by the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) at UNESCO in Paris, France. The UN had been

vocal about apartheid policy since early 1950s. On 1 April 1960, the UN Security Council, in its first action on South Africa, adopted Resolution 134 condemning the policies and actions of the South African government in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre.

20 May 1986

SANDF cross-border raids

South African Special forces conduct raids against liberation movements based in neighbouring states, simultaneously in Gaborone, Botswana, in Lusaka, Zambia and in Harare, Zimbabwe.

20 May 2021

First Kenyan woman appointed as Chief Justice



Court of Appeal Judge Martha Koome, is appointed Kenya's first woman Chief Justice by President Uhuru Kenyatta, with approval from Parliament.

21 May 1665

Slave trader John Hawkins honoured by Spanish

Spanish authorities in Venezuela extend a trading license to slave trader, John Hawkins for the 400 slaves he brought from Guinea. Queen Elizabeth I also honored

Hawkins for his profiteering from the Atlantic slave trade, issuing him with a coat of arms featuring a male African slave.

21 May 1906

Alfred Mangena files deposition against Natal Governor in London

Mangena, South Africa's first black lawyer, who at the time was studying law in London, filed a deposition against Henry McCallum, governor of Natal, charging him with acts of oppression involving illegal proclamation of martial law and the homicides of 12 natives put to death. The British magistrate refused to receive the deposition in court.

21 May 1930

White women gain vote

The Women's Enfranchisement Act goes into effect in South Africa, giving white women 21 years and older the right to vote and run for office. Black women only gained the right to vote sixty four years later, in 1994.

21 May 1936

Conference on Protection of the African elephant and rhinoceros

An international conference was held to protect the African elephant and rhinoceros, endangered for their prized ivory tusks and horns. Three years earlier the "Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State (1933)" was put forward for the protection of certain animal species, which included the African Elephant, the White Rhinoceros and the Black Rhinoceros. Governments who signed up to the convention, included the Union of South Africa, Egypt, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

21 May 1937 Mengistu Haile Mariam born



Marxist leader of Ethiopia (1974-1991), Mengistu Haile Mariam was born on this day in Wolyaita, Ethiopia. Mengistu overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, ending the 600 year-old Solomonic dynasty. He established the Government of The Derg promoting 'Ethiopian socialism', embodying slogan such as self-reliance, the dignity of labor, and the supremacy of the common good. The Derg also did comprehensive land reform and nationalization of key sectors of the economy. In 1978, after a failed assassination attempt, Mengistu unleashed what became known as the Red Terror, with an estimated death toll of more than 700,000. In 1991 Mengistu was overthrown and he was granted exile in Zimbabwe.

21 May 1946 Women Organises Food Strikes

As a (albeit divided) participant and contributor in the Second World War, South Africa faced severe food shortages during the 1940s, with the poor especially vulnerable. Wholesalers and others hoarded food and sold it at exorbitant prices. A non-racial women's organisation formed in 1946, the Cape Town Women's Food Committee, organised food queues so that everybody could



get food. Founders and leaders included Katie White, Dora Tamana, G Anthony, Hettie McLeod and Cissie Gool. On 21 May 1946, the women stormed warehouses and other places where food were hoarded to demand that they be released to the general population. These protests were known as the 'Rice Strikes'. The Women's Food Committee mobilised women under the slogan "Today we fight for food, tomorrow for the vote, and then freedom for all."

21 May 1978 Moses Kotane passed on

Moses Kotane, South African Communist Party (SACP) and ANC stalwart passed away in Moscow, Russia where he was hospitalised after a long illness. In 1931 Kotane became an active member of the SACP, joined the ANC in 1946 was elected to the ANC NEC. Kotane was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1951. In 1955 Kotane and I.M Cachalia sneaked out of the country without proper documents to attend the famous Bandung Conference in Indonesia, sent by the ANC as observers. In 1963, Kotane left the country for Tanzania, working tirelessly in ANC external missions. As General Secretary of the SACP from 1939 to 1978 and a key ANC National Executive Committee member, he was crucial in uniting the liberation alliance and promoting militant action against apartheid.



"Our national liberation movement headed by the ANC, today pay eternal tribute to the people's leader, Moses Kotane, for his monumental contribution to the great advances made towards the seizure of power by the people in South Africa"
President OR Tambo, 1978

21 May 1978 - Comrade Moses Kotane passed on



21 May 1988

Mapantsula film released

The South African film about black South Africans under apartheid is released, starring Thomas Mogotlane. *Mapantsula* tells the story of Panic, a petty gangster who inevitably becomes caught up in the growing anti-apartheid struggle.

22 May 1942

ANC Intellectual and Veteran, Pallo Jordan born



Zweledinga Pallo Jordan, ANC leader, intellectual and veteran was born in B Location, Kroonstad, Orange Free State. He is the son to Professor Archibald Campbell Jordan an African novelist, linguist and academic and his mother, Dr Priscilla Phyllis Jordan, was a teacher, researcher and lecturer. He became politically active in the early 1960s, first in the Non-European Unity Movement, and later in the ANC. In exile, he worked in ANC offices in London and various African states. He also served as administrative secretary of the NEC Secretariat (1985–1988), on the NEC's Strategy and Tactics Committee as convenor (1985–1989), the NEC's Negotiations sub-committee and the NEC's Constitutional Guidelines sub-committee, and as the Director of Information and Publicity (1989). After 1990

unbanning, he served in various positions within the ANC, including in the Department of Information and Publicity, the ANC Elections Committee and as member of the ANC National Executive Committee. From 1994, cde Pallo served as Member of Parliament, as the first Minister of Post, Tele-communications and Broadcasting (1994-1996), as Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (1996-1999), and Minister of Arts and Culture (2004-2009). An ardent patriot and intellectual, he continues to contribute to debates in the movement and the country, edited *Oliver Tambo Remembered* (2007) on the life of the ANC President in exile; and is the author of *Letters to my Comrades. Interventions & Excursions* (2017).

22 May 1945

SA Bureau of Standards established

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) is established by an Act of Parliament. The SABS is responsible for quality control and safety of all products, and issue regulations and standards, running a product certification scheme and also provides testing and related services.

22 May 1964

Lake Chad Convention

Lake Chad in the Sahel, covering the territories of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger was one of the largest freshwater lakes in Africa, at its height covering 17,800 square kilometre), then the sixth largest lake in the world. The Convention established rules on the use of the resources of Lake Chad and also the Lake Chad Commission to monitor the environmental and social impact of the lake usage. By 2010, due to climate

change, rising human population growth and unplanned irrigation, Lake Chad has shrunken dramatically, to less than a 10th of what it covered in the 1960s.

22 May 1970

Campaign against all-white sports team



The anti-apartheid movement called for a cancellation of this all-White rugby South African team due to tour the UK. Veteran anti-apartheid campaigner Peter Hain led a campaign called Stop the Seventy Tour, threatening to disrupt any matches played during the tour. African and Asian countries also threatened to boycott the Commonwealth Games that would be held in Edinburgh in the same year should the South African team be allowed to be a part of that tour. In May 1970, the British government requested that the English Cricket Council reverse its decision to invite the South African cricket team on tour. The English Cricket Council withdrew the invitation on 22 May 1970.

22 May 1970

Samora Machel becomes FRELIMO President

Samora Machel is elected as Frelimo President, after the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane on 3 February 1969.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

16–22 May 2026

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

16 May International Day of Living Together in Peace



Living together in peace is about accepting differences, social justice, working for the common good, and the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others. The day focuses global attention on the ongoing need to promote and work for peace, tolerance, inclusion, peaceful resolution to conflict and solidarity.

16 May International Day of Light

The day seeks to strengthen scientific cooperation amongst scientists, professionals, countries and ultimately across the world, in order to harness science for the common good of all humanity, not just for profits. The day coincides with the first successful operation of the laser in 1960 by physicist and engineer, Theodore Maiman.

17 May International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

In many countries, sexual and gender minorities continue to be among the most marginalized individuals and groups, often facing discrimination and

exclusion from key services including health, education, and housing. Homophobia means discrimination and/or prejudice against people because of their sexual orientation or their gender identity. The South African Constitution outlaws all discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, identity as well as sexual orientation. Our laws make provisions for ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, but changing attitudes is much more difficult. We have thus seen the rise in hate crimes against people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) communities. A bill against Hate Crimes is being considered, to ensure harsh punishment for crimes of homophobia.

17 May World Telecommunications and Information Society Day

Celebrated every year on 17 May, World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) highlights the growing role of digital technologies in our lives and commemorates the founding of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – the United Nations Agency for Digital Technologies. The theme for WTISD 2026 is **Digital lifelines: Strengthening resilience in a connected world**. In a world that increasingly depends on uninterrupted connectivity, the resilience of our digital networks is essential. Digital lifelines – terrestrial networks, submarine cables, satellites, and data systems – form the backbone of our communities and economies.



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2026 calls on governments, industry, and communities to strengthen the digital lifelines that keep the world running. It enjoins us to design networks and systems that can withstand shocks and recover quickly, ensuring that no one is cut off and left offline when it matters most.

20 May World Bee Day

Bees and other pollinators, such as butterflies, bats and hummingbirds, are increasingly under threat from human activities. Pollination is, however, a fundamental process for the survival of our ecosystems. Nearly 90% of the world's wild flowering plant species depend, entirely, or at least in part, on animal pollination, along with more than 75% of the world's food crops and 35% of global agricultural land. Not only do pollinators contribute directly to food security, but they are key to conserving biodiversity. To raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development, the UN designated 20 May as World Bee Day.

20 May Global Accessibility Day

Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) promotes digital access and inclusion for people with disabilities and impairments. GAAD is observed, to get everyone talking, thinking and learning about digital access and inclusion, and the more than One Billion people with disabilities/impairments, whether it's visual, hearing, movement or cognitive.

21 May International Tea Day

Millions across the world start their day with a cup of tea, or drink it during the day. The International Tea Day raises awareness of the rights of those who make it possible, the workers in the tea value chain, to enjoy our favourite brew. The International Tea Conference in New Delhi came out with an International Declaration on the rights of workers and small growers to help regulate uneven competition, land ownership, safety regulations, rights of women, social security and living wages. Major African tea producers, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa account for about 30% of world exports in tea. As we also celebrate Africa month, buy local.



21 May World Day for Cultural Diversity

Culture is defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour shared and/or manifested by people, groups or a society. All societies have a degree of cultural diversity, as well as the things that brings them together across cultures. The South African Constitution recognizes this, when it talks about our **'Unity in Diversity.'** Three-quarters of the world's major conflicts have a cultural dimension. Bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary for peace, stability and development. Cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only with respect to economic growth, but also as a means of leading a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life.

22 May International Day for Biodiversity



Biodiversity is the foundation of all life on Earth. It is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people. We depend on it for food, medicine, energy, clean air and water, protection from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration. In 2026, the campaign focuses on the theme **Acting locally for global impact.**



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