

The masses must unite behind tackling poverty and unemployment

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AS SHOWN by the waves of unrest sweeping the country, all it takes to ignite mass anger is a spark. In this instance, it would appear that the spark is Jacob Zuma's jailing.

However, it is noteworthy that the anger is expressed, not as an organised protest movement, but as spontaneous destruction and looting.

There is a suspicion that the torching of delivery vehicles in KZN is really part of an ongoing xenophobic campaign aimed against the employment of "foreign nationals" in the road transportation industry.

And that the burning and looting of businesses, especially in KZN and Gauteng, are part of the ongoing dissatisfaction with poor to-non-existent service delivery in deprived communities.

Without excusing or condoning what appears to be senseless, wanton behaviour, we have to acknowledge that it arises from the deep levels of poverty and deprivation suffered by the vast majority of our citizenry.

This is what is being exploited by unscrupulous elements in the political arena, whose narrow agendas are advanced by "ungovernability".

As in all previous cases, the police will employ a strategy of repression-and-containment.

They will resort to violent repression when they deem it necessary, combined with simple containment – in other words, limiting the location of the unrest, and allowing it to exhaust itself.

But the poverty won't go away, which means that the potential for future flare-ups will remain. What is needed is structural social change. The root causes of poverty will need to be addressed.

The poor need to organise in their masses, via peoples' organisations such as civics, in order to transform the energy which is currently being dissipated in mindless destruction into focused action to transform the existing capitalist order.