



AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

As they had done over the past 30 years, all the political parties are promising the people a better life in the National and Provincial elections on 29 May. They promise work, homes, better education, free health care, an end to crime and violence. But, will anything change?

NO! Most of the people remain poor, homeless, unemployed and insecure.

IN FACT, THE SITUATION HAS BECOME WORSE FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION

- ◆ Unemployment has increased - 8 million people (32.9%) are out of work. Expanded unemployment rate increased to 41.1% - probably the highest in the world - this however does not include the “discouraged” workforce - those that stopped looking for work.
- ◆ Not enough houses have been provided therefore many people live in terrible, squalid conditions. Instead of building decent, affordable houses, more locations and ghettos exist than ever before. Homeless people are now being evicted from private and state land without alternative accommodation being provided.
- ◆ Millions of children are out of school, with schools of the poor grossly overcrowded. Their schools are falling apart and have shortages of equipment and staff. “Free schooling” is a misnomer because it still is too costly for working class parents to have their children in school.
- ◆ The government claims that it is providing “free” medical care in its public hospitals and clinics. However, it has not provided sufficient health facilities and proper services because of a continued shortage of infrastructure, medical staff and essential equipment. The NHI is therefore doomed to failure and is merely an election ploy to entice voters into voting for the ANC.
- ◆ The cost of living has increased with food prices rising sky-high. With the big increase in fuel and food prices, even staple products will soon be too expensive for the millions of poor people.
- ◆ While the food prices are rising, the wages of workers remain low. The workers are forced to strike for higher wages but even then the bosses refuse to accede to their demands.
- ◆ Crime and violence have increased; many people live in fear and insecurity. Crime and violence are the products of the economic system that is responsible for poverty, unemployment, lack of houses and lack of proper education.

The wealth of this country remains in the hands of the capitalists who continue to exploit the workers by paying them slave wages. The other group who are living off the fat of the land are those in government – local, regional and national. These bureaucratic officials and their lackeys are asking the masses to be patient because things cannot be corrected overnight. At the same time, they have enriched themselves by getting paid high salaries and reaping other benefits. Yet public sector workers such as nurses, teachers and essential civil servant workers remain underpaid.

There are many people who still believe that, given time, the government will deliver. But ever more people are realising that the government will never be able to deliver. This government is but the servant of a capitalist system. To bring about the changes, to remove poverty, to create employment, to give free education and health-care, a government must have political and economic power. And this government has no power because the political and economic system in South Africa is dictated to by overseas bosses. This government therefore serves the capitalist system and is in fact anti-worker. The wealth of this country is in the hands of the capitalists who are still raping the resources of the country. These foreign bosses along with the government are grabbing the major share of the wealth produced by the workers. So, while the workers and their families are suffering all the hardships, the government and the bosses are enjoying the benefits of the workers' hard labour. Homes, education, health-care are provided for those who can pay. Those who don't have a job or don't earn a living wage can't pay and will have to go without these essential things.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The sooner we realise that what is happening in South Africa today is not what we have struggled for, the sooner we will realise that we will have to continue the struggle for a South Africa we all desire - free of exploitation, oppression and corruption. We need to destroy the capitalist system that breeds poverty, unemployment, crime and violence.

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We have to build independent trade unions, civics, sports bodies, religious bodies, cultural organisations, youth organisations and other organisations committed to fighting for the rights of the poor, such as Landless, Rural and Unemployed People's Movements. We must build the unity of working class organisations and the poor to form a **PRINCIPLED UNITED FRONT** .

The building of socialism is a lengthy historical journey for society. Every individual, every organisation has to determine what their role is in society. And every individual and every organisation has to fulfil that revolutionary role that has to be played.

WE WILL NOT VOTE BECAUSE WE DEMAND

1. **DIRECT PARTICIPATION THROUGH COLLECTIVE SELF-GOVERNMENT IN A PEOPLES' NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT** and all other levels of government, such as provincial or municipal councils. In other words, the full unqualified franchise.
2. **THE RIGHT TO WORK, LIVING WAGES**, and just benefits for all workers.
3. **ONE UNIFORM SYSTEM OF FREE COMPULSORY EDUCATION** with common equal rights and facilities for all.
4. **ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL** with the provision of sufficient recreational and cultural facilities.
5. **FREE, COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE FOR EVERYONE** in which a sufficient budget is provided which will ensure the provision of comprehensive healthcare to all citizens. All forms of treatment must be provided free of charge.
6. **AN OVERALL REVAMP OF THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM** designed and managed by the toiling classes with the objective of advancing social development.
7. **THE REDISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND**. An end to landlessness. The land is to be used for the economic benefit of all. Food and water sovereignty is the right of all people.
8. **THE RIGHT FOR US AND OUR CHILDREN TO LIVE IN PEACE AND SAFETY** in our homes and in a country where the laws and policies protect the rights of all citizens.
9. **FULL EQUALITY OF RIGHTS** without distinction of "race," colour, gender, sexual orientation or nationality. Freedom of movement, speech and association for all citizens and non-citizens in the country. The fair administration of justice as an obligation upon all officers of the law.
10. **A PROGRESSIVE JUST TAX SYSTEM** based on full equality of rights for all citizens.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM (SUPPORTED BY ALL PARTIES):

1. **ROBS US OF OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS** and we have mostly incompetent, corrupt national and local officials looking after their own personal interests.
2. **REDUCES US TO CHEAP EXPLOITED LABOUR**. They deny us skilled jobs and limit our rights as workers. They create unemployment and retrenchments.
3. **SEGREGATES SCHOOLING ALONG CLASS LINES**. They have one system for them and another under-resourced system for the oppressed in order to cripple the minds & development of our children.
4. **FORCES THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE TO LIVE IN URBAN AND RURAL GHETTOS** where our children grow up in a world of township terror.
5. **FAVOURS THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD PROPER HEALTH CARE**, perpetuating discrimination against the poor, who are reduced to make use of under-resources and inadequate public health facilities.
6. **PROMOTES AN UNJUST ECONOMIC SYSTEM** that benefits the capitalist classes both locally and foreign, making South Africa the most unequal society in the world.
7. **SUPPORTS AN UNJUST LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERN** that favours the rich. Little regard is given to the degradation of the environment as long as maximum profits can be generated for the capitalists.
8. **CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN THE ADMINISTRATION OF LAW THAT IS SKEWED IN FAVOUR OF THE RICH**, both with regard to the civil and criminal procedures and practices in the courts.
9. **FAILS TO ADDRESS CONTINUING DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES** with increasing levels of violence against women and children. A perpetuation of "racial" practices.
10. **TAXES US IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE BECOME POORER AND POORER**. In spite of the high taxes, we still suffer a lack of facilities in public service spaces such as schools and hospitals. Food and other prices are high.

NOT TO VOTE IS A VOTE AGAINST THE SYSTEM

DEMOCRACY IS POSSIBLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

A letter to a national newspaper¹ in May this year states that South Africa does not have a “democracy problem” but rather a “democratic governance one”. Comparing the current “privations” in the South African society with the “instability and crisis” of 1990 when South Africa was on the cusp of regime change from a segregationist government to one which is elected by all its people, they proffer their solution which goes beyond the bounds of “normal political means”.

They are spot on in their declaration that South Africa remains a country of “two nations” of a “rich minority and a poor majority” where “incivility and inhumanity are rife” living cheek by jowl with wealth and opulence. How insane is it that a CEO of a company earns R240 000 per DAY² compared to the ZERO income of jobseekers and those that have been laid off to increase the profits of companies and the many that earn less than a living wage.

The letter is excellent in reflecting the mess that South Africa has become, economically and politically. But they are very wide of the mark in averring that what is required, is to usher in greater “democratic governance”. The authors’ advocating of a change in governance from one characterised by corruption and a “widespread culture of impunity” to one of accountability composed of “political parties” not “pretending to represent societal interests” and not in “a crisis of credibility in representation and responsiveness”, is an imperative and would be welcomed by a downtrodden cadre of unemployed and poor people.

However, their reference to “democracy” and “democratic governance” is telling, revealing that the authors have swallowed, wholesale, the imperialist gob that a parliament consisting of competing parties necessarily reflects a democratic setup. By Western standards South Africa is a democratic country because it has a multi-party parliament. Yes, it has admirable redeeming features in, for example, the existence of a vibrant grassroots human and civil rights custom where organisations and groups may loudly and actively proclaim and demonstrate their unhappiness and demands.

But what happens in a multi-party debate in most “democratic” parliaments? No matter how erudite and convincing a deliberation or how weak and limp an argument may be in order to sway whoever participates in the debate, when it comes to voting, the outcome is determined by the instructions given by the party caucus to the hacks that vote, and not by the persuasiveness or correctness of the debaters. For example, in January 2021, Job Mokgoro, the premier of the North West Province was suspended after he voted with the opposition in the Provincial Legislature. After first refusing to resign, he later resigned as premier.

Thus, multi-partiasm is no guarantee of democracy; in fact, they could be a perfect oxymoron. Even in a one-party state, where MPs are subject to direct accountability to their electorate base and the parliamentary system is underscored by the triumvirate of DEBATE (based on thorough research of the needs of the electorate), CONVINCING (with clear, transparent and honest intention) and VOTE (with conscience), in that sequence, is much more democratic than all the multi-party parliaments across the world.

With regard to “democratic governance”, the authors have absolutely taken in the Western World view that “democratic governance” is possible in a neo-liberal capitalist setup. This belief flounders hopelessly on account of the following, *inter*

alia, 1] in capitalism he who pays the piper calls the tune, literally. In preparation for the current national and provincial elections many corporations have donated large sums of money to most political parties, some single companies giving cash to several parties at once, even if the parties have diametrically opposing policies (a whopping R330 million this year)³; 2] if the ownership of the means of production is in the hands of a few, the fiscus would never have enough funds to provide an equitable lifestyle to all citizens, which should be the outcome of democracy.

Most South Africans have suffered long enough under the selfish and brutish yoke of capitalism. There are alternative paths to an equitable dispensation for all of us.

1) *Sunday Times 19 May 2024, Ebrahim Fakir & Chris Landsberg*

2) *Wealth in BusinessTech, 7 May 2023*

3) *Seth Thorne in BusinessTech, 22 May 2024*

THE ICC ARREST WARRANTS – DO THEY GO FAR ENOUGH?

On Monday 20 May news broke of the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan's intention to seek arrest warrants for senior leaders of both Hamas and of the Israeli government.

Many would have hoped that this would signal the end of Israel's months-long genocidal madness in Gaza. This article was penned on the same day, so at this point it is not known what direction events will take. However, it would be pertinent to discuss the *principle* of Khan's decision to pursue criminal charges.

In a nutshell, the arrest warrants were requested by Khan based on "evidence collected and examined" by his office leading to "reasonable grounds to believe" that the named individuals "bear criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity."

The individuals concerned included senior Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif), and Ismail Haniyeh, and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, and minister of defence Yoav Gallant.

Of concern is that the template being applied is one resembling that of Nuremberg, where the emphasis was on the criminals and their crimes, not on the motivation for their genocidal project. Thus, the focus in the case of Israel's war on Gaza is on the leading individuals involved, not on the ideology of Zionism. In other words, the issue is to be limited to the crimes not the politics of the genocide.

It is foreseeable, therefore, that if the final outcome is to punish the Zionist perpetrators via the ICC, the Israeli settler-colonial state will not be held accountable. Yet, the whole point of the war is to promote the ethno-nationalist interests of the Israeli state against the interests of the Palestinian people. It is not unlikely that in time the citizens of Israel might even come to "lament" the war, and make reparations of some kind, while continuing to enjoy the benefits of settler-colonialism, moving forward.

This was the purpose of Nuremberg. To quote from Mahmood Mamdani's seminal work, *Neither Settler nor Native*:

The depoliticization of genocide in Germany was the result of a deliberate and organised process . . . the victorious Allies reinvented Nazism as an accumulation of individual crimes rather than a political project . . . denazification became a punitive effort rather than a politically transformative one, [not one] to reform the political institutions and social relations that made the Holocaust thinkable and desirable inside Germany . . .

And

The [Nuremberg] proceedings were designed to ensure that only the violent acts of selected German perpetrators would be assessed and punished. No effort was made to address the predicates of their violence. German industrialists who invested in – and were handsomely rewarded by – the Nazi regime were largely ignored, the better to support the

commercial goals of Western corporations looking to collaborate with German businesses. Nazi intellectuals and journalists, precisely the people who most forcefully enunciated German nationalism, were left out of the tribunals. Foreign corporations that supplied Hitler's war machine were entirely exempted from charges and punishment . . .

The parallels between Nuremberg and what might eventuate from the ICC's process in respect of the genocide in Gaza are plain to see.

The transition to a constitutional democracy in SA also comes to mind, specifically the Truth and Reconciliation process. The whole point of this exercise was to take attention off the political need to transform the country from its racial capitalist past. Instead, those perpetrators of apartheid who owned up were "forgiven," and the transitioning of the country to that of a neoliberal state was pursued unhindered.

Who was it who said, "Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it?"

In conclusion, it is worth speculating that the ICC included warrants for the individual Hamas leaders possibly as a sop to Israel and their backers. There would certainly have been the mother of all cries of "anti-Israeli (read: anti-semitic) bias!" had this not been the case. It is well-known that the facts surrounding events on October 7 are far from clear and indisputable. Simply take the "fact" of "babies being beheaded." This was admitted as a falsification by no less than the Biden administration. And then there is the question of "who killed who?" when IOF helicopter pilots admitted that they fired randomly into crowds on the ground, unable to distinguish Hamas operatives from Israeli citizens.

While the chances of the ICC moving beyond the issue of arrest warrants are extremely slim (at least in the short term) the move has immeasurable symbolic value, and might be key in the pressure on Israel to cease or reduce its atrocious mass murder in, and destruction of, the Gaza Strip. It would certainly put pressure on the Zionist state's Western allies, particularly those who are signatories to the Rome Statute of the ICC, to review their shameful complicity in the genocide.

***Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* is a 2020 book by Ugandan political theorist Mahmood Mamdani.**

WORTH QUOTING

The following piece is taken from Adi Callai's May 2024 article, "The Gaza Ghetto Uprising," published by Brooklynrail.org.

Starting in December 1987, the First Intifada was a massive popular uprising against Israeli apartheid. This uprising saw the use of the tools of mass struggle to great effect—strikes, civil disobedience, mass rallies, riots, tax resistance—all working together in confluence. And despite the fact that the uprising was largely unarmed, it was met with unspeakable brutality, the killing of many hundreds of protesters, the arrests of multiple thousands, and injuries to over a hundred thousand Palestinians by Israeli soldiers who were specifically instructed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to “break their bones.” Still, it’s remembered with incredible fondness by that generation of rebels, and the way that this uprising was pacified was not by “breaking their bones,” but by bringing in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was in exile in Tunis, and appointing it as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. As specified in the US Army’s Field Manual, successful, long-lasting counterinsurgency “requires development of viable local leaders and institutions.” If there are no leaders, if the resistance is decentralized, counterinsurgency requires the creation of a centralized leadership. The PLO, which had been created by Arab states in 1964 as . . . “a tool to control the insurgent [Palestinian] factions,” was now appointed by the US and Israel as the leadership of the uprising. This allowed Israel and the US to marginalize and ignore the decentralized popular committees that were, to use [Franz] Fanon’s terminology, guiding the insurrection away from a recuperable “traditional politics.” Then, through the Oslo Accords between 1993–95, the PLO, Israel, and the US formed the PA as an auxiliary arm of the Israeli occupation, with a limited security apparatus that would be dedicated to policing and repressing insurgents within Palestinian population clusters in select areas of the West Bank and Gaza

Well-meaning people still see the Oslo Accords as a genuine peace process rather than a sophisticated counterinsurgency operation that enabled Israel to continue entrenching its settlement project with relative calm. After the so-called peace process collapsed with the conclusion of the five years allotted for its duration, the PA remained. The Second Intifada broke out in October 2000, and for a brief moment PLO Head Yasser Arafat did act up by releasing 350 political prisoners, including Hamas and PIJ members, but then the US and Israel effectively

fired him, and a new collaborator-in-chief was appointed, Mahmoud Abbas, aka Abu Mazen. The PA was ousted from Gaza in 2007 when Abu Mazen attempted what [Tareq] Baconi calls a “US-planned coup,” after Hamas won the elections in 2006. But Abu Mazen was able to complete the coup in the West Bank and greatly help in stabilizing Israel’s control there.

The PA creates the appearance of Palestinian autonomy, but in fact, much like the governments of the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa, it is simply an extension of the colonial state, a tool of counterinsurgency that is highly effective for the repression of local rebellions, because it makes the native population police itself. Fatah, which was a revolutionary movement in the early days of the armed struggle, is now mostly contained by the PA. Would-be rebels are now government employees, fighting to keep their collaborationist jobs. Community organizers are now working for NGOs, exemplifying Colin Powell’s infamous categorization of non-profits as “force multipliers” for Empire. The money funnelled by NATO countries into the non-profit and government sector is the main reason for the relative pacification of the West Bank following the militarization of the Palestinian resistance in the Second Intifada. This echoes General Petraeus’s guideline of employing “money as a weapons system.” These are the winning counterinsurgency principles: move in with overwhelming force to control space, isolate the insurgents from the general population, appoint your own government (but, importantly, make it of the same identity as the general population), and supply the population with services so they don’t become insurgents to meet their basic needs (this ties with General Peter Chiarelli’s SWEAT concept, standing for sewage, water, electricity, and trash-collection; I recommend Greg Stoker’s short video on SWEAT-MSO on this). In short: “divide-and-conquer” and money—this is how empires win wars.

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