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# INSTITUTIONALISED XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA:

## ITS CHARACTER, IMPACT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE

by Sharon S. Ekambaram  
(KAAX and Lawyers for Human Rights)



The Zimbabwean Special Permit was scrapped with the stroke of pen by the South African government through an announcement made in December 2021. No measures were put in place to mitigate against the crisis into which it has thrown thousands of lives, including the young ones who need to register for Grade One in 2023, and those who are currently in Grade Seven and Eleven. Their parents will be undocumented in 2023, and this impacts directly on the status of the children who have grown up in South Africa. Are Zimbabweans in this instance invisible because of their nationality and the colour of their skin? On what grounds does the South African government infringe on the right of every person in our country to be respected as human beings? What about recognition of the inherent dignity of every human being? One can only conclude that black life is cheap.

### 'How do I live free in this black body?'

Racial hierarchies of slavery, three hundred years of colonial rule and apartheid have commodified and dehumanised the black body. Steve Biko's slogans of "Black is beautiful" and affirming blackness as opposed to notions of "non-whiteness" profoundly reflected this reality. Throw into the equation gender-based violence and you have the perfect storm creating the conditions that ignite violence as witnessed in the 2008 targeting of international migrants.

This is the context of institutionalised xenophobia in South Africa. The scenario is the same with respect to people seeking refuge in our country. The asylum system is in crisis, largely because of the quality of decision making that takes place at Refugee Reception Offices (RROs). Bribery and corruption compound the crisis and feed off it. Reports<sup>2</sup> and research expose corruption at all stages of the asylum process: from an individual's first attempt to lodge an asylum claim, to renewing documentation, through appeal processes, and in renewing refugee status documentation.

Immigration officials work on the premise that people are lying. For the last ten years almost 99% of all predominantly black African people who have registered claims for refugee protection in our country have had their claims rejected – this amounts to blanket rejections. This includes the rejection of claims for refugee protection of people fleeing persecution because of their sexual orientation or conflict. If they stay in their country of origin, their lives are at risk.

This begs the question: What is being done and what needs to be done in the struggle against Xenophobia, including institutionalised xenophobia?

Human beings as a species have evolved through movement and migration. Capitalism has hijacked this. Many of the conflicts on the African continent are as a result of the continued scramble for gold, diamonds and coltan. It is the commodification of life that is destroying the planet, and climate-caused floods, drought, and water shortages have joined the list of reasons to migrate.

Less than thirty years into our democracy, South Africa is experiencing a political and economic crisis. In an article entitled: *Unions In Crisis: Has The Union Form Outlived Its Usefulness For Workers?* McKinley states that: 'There can be little argument that the world of work in South Africa, and indeed globally, is in the throes of a deep, systemic crisis.' Reference is made to record levels of socio-economic inequality between those who own the means of production and those who produce. A paper published by the World Bank in 2019: *Protecting All: Risk Sharing for a Diverse and Diversifying World of Work*, speaks to the disgraceful title that South Africa has been holding onto, as the most unequal society in the world. In a report<sup>3</sup> published in 2019, Statistics SA attributes this inequality to the fact that **the South African labour market is heavily racialised and gender-biased.**

The critical question that informs this political crisis is: Why is this democracy failing the poorest and most vulnerable – Black African womxn and men? The ruling party has failed to implement policies and allocate resources to address the systemic inequalities and take forward the transformation agenda enshrined in the ethos and vision of the South African Constitution. And opposition parties have failed in this project as well. South Africans are being fooled into believing that it is migrants that are the cause of chronic unemployment, and resultant poverty. By making promises of ridding the country of the migrants, political parties expect South Africans to vote for them.

The 2021 local government elections saw populist rhetoric and dangerous chants of chauvinistic nationalism as political leaders blamed migrants for their failure to level the socio-economic playing field that was drastically skewed by the apartheid system. This national chauvinism makes for fertile

ground to fuel hatred and violence through othering. Xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and criminalisation of both poverty and migration, fuel the violence that is destroying communities and creating a blockage to the functioning of democratic organs of civil society and struggles for social justice.

Over the years, various groupings have gathered under a banner to denounce xenophobia. These movements rise when the level of violence targeting foreign nationals is widespread enough to warrant it being reported in the media. The challenge has been to strengthen community structures

in "informal" settlements and townships as well as to build solidarity to prevent xenophobic violence in all its ongoing forms, often under the radar of the media. During the past few months, a group calling itself Operation Dudula has been spreading hatred against, and threatening to rid the country of, all foreign nationals documented or undocumented. The fact that it has been able to rally support – although, most heavily on social media - of predominantly black young people who are living under horrific conditions of impoverishment is of serious concern.

Progressive forces must unite in a non-sectarian way to mobilise against the violence meted out against the poorest in society. This includes the violence of xenophobia, of poverty and of inequality - all under the yoke of a patriarchal society.

The SAPS and law enforcement in general are failing in their mandate to uphold the rule of law. They are complicit in the violence either because of institutionalised xenophobia or endemic corruption, while many appear to act in the interest of one faction or the other that is vying for power.

Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia (KAAX) is a fledgling organisation, but activists involved have a long history of mobilising against xenophobia over the decades. KAAX is committed to building a movement to fight against xenophobia and build solidarity in the struggle for social justice.

Continues on pg.2

**Human beings as a species have evolved through movement and migration. Capitalism has hijacked this.**

## EDITORIAL

Solidarity and internationalism take centre-stage in this issue of Workers' World News, in light of deepening repression faced by the poor and working class.

The recent spike in xenophobic rhetoric and attacks in South Africa demand that we take steps to build and support organisations which can root out reactionary politics and defend all working-class people. It is for this reason that the lead article in this issue, written by Sharon Ekambaram of Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia (KAAX) and Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), is dedicated to understanding this phenomenon, its institutionalisation, and the need to unite against xenophobic and all forms of violence plaguing our society under capitalism. This theme continues on our Cultural Page, which features a powerful poem called Home by Warsan Shire, and on our pull-out poster by Thea Gahr (Justseeds Artists' Cooperative), titled *The Border Won't Keep You Safe*.

In International News, David Kramer from the Free Burma Campaign in South Africa delves into the fight for democracy against vicious military rule in Burma, and the urgent need for international pressure and solidarity in support of this struggle. In the United States of America, feminists are calling for international solidarity too, in their struggle to defend abortion rights. In this regard, the Gender News section platforms a statement by International Socialist Alternative and ROSA International Socialist Feminists, which explains what *Roe v Wade* being overturned by the US Supreme Court means for the hard-won women-led struggle for bodily autonomy.

Building solidarity and internationalism is crucial not only for the ways we support each other in the struggle against global capitalism, but also for the lessons we can learn to strengthen our own organising power. In the second article of our ongoing Educational Series on popular power, Shawn Hattingh writes about the Kurdish Freedom Movement (KFM) and the Rojava Revolution, and what can be learnt from their practical achievements and their liberation struggle's guiding ideology, Democratic Confederalism.

In the My Struggle section, we have reproduced the press statement by Abahlali baseMjondolo on the assassination of comrade Nokuthula Mabaso, and the many ways in which their struggle for land and dignity has been, and continues to be, stifled and repressed. Progressive organisations across the country and elsewhere must continue to call attention to such attacks by the ANC and all those in power, and do what is necessary to offer support and solidarity.

In our own work to support worker and community formations engaged in struggle, ILRIG regularly produces and distributes publications and popular materials in many forms. In this issue, we have profiled a recent booklet on post-apartheid housing policies and budgets, written by Mzimasi Mngeni and Dale T. McKinley, that we hope will serve as a useful resource for organisations engaged in the struggle for land and housing. As with all our educational resources, this booklet can be freely downloaded on the ILRIG website at [www.ilrigsa.org.za/](http://www.ilrigsa.org.za/) resources.

Capitalist states and institutions are well-resourced and well-organised, to the extent that those who attempt to resist and overthrow them are continually under threat. This demands that we learn and fight together, and actively resist borders and all other constructs which seek to divide us. A key lesson from the struggle against apartheid in South Africa is the need for internationalist solidarity and struggle. We should not forget this.

1. Coates, T. (2015). *Between the World and Me*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.  
2. Amit, Roni, Queue Here for Corruption: Measuring Irregularities in South Africa's Asylum System (July 30, 2015). *Lawyers for Human Rights and the African Centre for Migration & Society Report*, 2015, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3274014>  
3. Inequality Trends in South Africa: A multidimensional diagnostic of inequality / Statistics South Africa. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2019

### Pull-out poster

ON PAGE 7

'The Border Won't Keep You Safe'  
by Thea Gahr

courtesy of Justseeds Artists' Cooperative

**GENDER NEWS** By International Socialist Alternative and ROSA International Socialist Feminists

# WORLDWIDE SOCIALIST FEMINIST STRUGGLE NEEDED FOR ABORTION RIGHTS



**International Socialist Alternative and ROSA International Socialist Feminists call for worldwide solidarity as women, workers and poor people in the USA rise up to defend the right to abortion. We, socialist feminists and workers, build international networks of resistance in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Russia, China and other parts of Asia.**

On May 3, it was leaked that the majority of judges in the US Supreme Court aim to tear up the Roe v Wade ruling which since 1973 grants women the legal right to abortion in the US and is the basis for many other progressive laws, including contraception and LGBTQ+ rights. This has been met with wrath by women, young people and workers in the country, where the great majority want to keep the right to abortion.

In the last ten years, the feminist struggle has won important battles. A few examples: Ireland won abortion rights in 2018, South Korea in 2019, Argentina in 2020, and abortion was decriminalised across Mexico in 2021. Colombia's highest court in February this year legalised abortion up to week 24.

It is Donald Trump's sexist agenda that is now being rolled out. While in power, Trump appointed three new judges to the court and he consciously chose anti-abortion rights candidates in order to tilt the Court's majority and tear up Roe. Many more states are expected to ban abortion in the weeks and months after a decision to overturn Roe, if that ends up being the final court decision. The abortion ban in Texas, already in place for six months, calls on anyone in contact with a pregnant

woman wanting to have an abortion to become a state informer - a taxi driver, for example, could be convicted for aiding and abetting.

On top of all this, then, an ideological offensive against women's most fundamental right - the right to decide over their own bodies. Should the "pro-life" agenda in the US succeed in abolishing Roe v Wade, it will be a blow against women all over the world. Agnes Callamard, the General Secretary of Amnesty International, warns that this would "set a terrible example that other governments and anti-rights groups could seize upon around the world in a bid to deny the right of women, girls and other people who can become pregnant". Other countries could follow suit and enact harsh laws,

Already the so-called Global Gag-rules, which Reagan was the first to introduce, have hit poor women across the world hard. They prohibit NGOs which receive US aid money from advocating for the right to abortion. Donald Trump extended these rules to the entire health sector. Aid organisations in Africa testify on how governments, such as in Kenya, use this policy of US imperialism as a crutch in their own suppression of the abortion rights movement. According to the WHO, three out of four abortions carried out in Latin America and Africa in the years 2015-2019 were unsafe.

Women's health will also be impacted for the worse, through higher numbers of pregnancies, mental suffering and also the use of dangerous abortion methods. Furthermore, due to the profit-interest and class divided healthcare, maternal death rates are already unacceptably high in the US. and Black women who also experience racism within the medical system will be especially affected - with maternal deaths amongst Black women expected to rise by 33 percent.

This in itself is a blow to women's struggle and to workers' struggle. The reactionary, anti-

feminist Trump-right will be strengthened in other countries and along with it, gender-based violence, transphobia, racism, fanaticism and violence. It is a blow against everyone's health regardless of gender when social welfare gains are threatened.

This is why International Socialist Alternative and ROSA International Socialist Feminists call on women's struggle organisations, trade unions, feminists, LGBTQ+ organisations and social movements across the world to act now.

Socialist feminists worldwide must discuss the issues in the workplace, in the residential area, in the community. See how all our struggles

are connected. The conservative right may feel strengthened to launch similar attacks on abortion rights in more countries, and to escalate the

repression against feminists and socialists where abortion rights are yet to be won.

The strongest force for change is the organised working class, because we the workers can strike the system where it hurts the most - through strikes and mass protests we can stop the profit machinery upon which the capitalists depend.

It shows that the state, when pushed, will act to preserve the unjust class society with its built-in women's oppression and racism intact. Therefore we must fight for another system, where the state is controlled and run democratically by all workers.

**It is a blow against everyone's health regardless of gender when social welfare gains are threatened.**

## INSTITUTIONALISED XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA CONTINUED FROM PG.1:

It brings together a number of different forces in society and remains rooted in working in communities. It has been in existence since February 2022, but the centre holds as various activities are organised in struggles to build a presence of a force in society of good over evil.

KAAAX champions the principle of inclusivity and is committed to doing the slog to raise consciousness through education. It is also committed to engagement as we struggle to rid ourselves of the shackles of racism, sexism and narrow nationalism. It is a struggle to champion the notion of a citizen of the world, particularly when states promote narrow nationalism that

raises the spectre of migrants as a threat to national sovereignty.

The real enemy is capitalism which knows no boundaries as multinationals and corporates plunder and subject human beings and communities to inhuman living and working conditions, sewing divisions of racism, sexism, and othering which makes for good business and profits. What is needed is a global movement against global capital, the companies and states that put profits before lives and are there to protect the interests of a tiny minority who own the wealth of the world.

**EDUCATIONAL SERIES:** PART 2 | by Shawn Hattingh

# DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM: A COLLECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE STATE, CAPITALISM AND PATRIARCHY



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Democratic  
Confederalism has  
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structures we use to  
self-govern during  
and after a revolution.

In this series, we are looking at examples of movements that have built structures that are an alternative to the state and capitalism; not just as part of a revolution but as part of building towards one. As such, these movements build organisations of self-governance as part of daily resistance so that people involved develop the skills to collectively run their own lives and that can directly replace the need for the state and bosses in the long run. In this too, they are a viable alternative to electoral politics.

The example of such a movement we will be looking at in this article is the Kurdish Freedom Movement (KFM) and the Rojava Revolution. The KFM is involved in a liberation struggle across four countries: Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. The aim of this liberation struggle is to replace capitalism and the state – with women's liberation being seen as central – with a socialist system based on direct democracy without a state. While this struggle started out as a national liberation struggle, with many parallels to the anti-apartheid struggle, it has evolved into an international struggle that aims to show that alternatives based on popular power can be developed across the world.

## What is Democratic Confederalism?

Central to the resistance organizing of the KFM is Democratic Confederalism. As part of challenging the state, patriarchy and capitalism, this form of organising involves working class people in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran building structures, federated communes, based on direct democracy that are embryos of a new system.

The communes are street level structures

involving between 20 to 400 households. The commune meets regularly and is open to everyone regardless of gender, age, religion and race on a street and is based on direct democracy. In the commune there are different committees through which the participants run the politics, law, economy, healthcare, women's organising, youth organising, media, safety and political education at a street level. Through this a popular power exists to challenge the state.

Communes are federated together at a neighbourhood level, a city level, a provincial level, a national level and even an international level through mandated and recallable delegates to councils, with at least 50% being women. This differs from representative democracy (seen in political parties, many social movements, trade unions, parliaments and the state) where power is given to representatives to make decisions. Rather, in Democratic Confederalism, communes have the power: delegates to structures such as city, provincial and national councils carry mandates.

At an economic level, in places where Democratic Confederalism is a resistance movement, worker and women co-operatives are established to meet very basic needs on a street level – in other words they help communities alleviate the worst aspects that capitalism causes.

## Rojava Revolution

One place where activists have fully replaced the state with Democratic Confederalism through a revolution is in Rojava, in North-Eastern Syria. In Rojava, people overthrew the Syrian state in 2012 through mass protests and taking over military bases and state buildings as part of the Arab Spring. There, a new society without the state has been organised based on communes.

The communes are confederated together through delegates to neighbourhood assemblies, city councils, provincial councils and an overarching coordinating structure called the Syrian Democratic Council. The delegates at each structure are always comprised of two people: a man and a woman. The delegates do not have decision making powers on their own – decisions are made by the communes and coordinated by delegates in the councils.

There are also women's formations in the communes, assemblies and councils that are confederated under the banner of the women's movement called Kongra Star. If a majority of women within any structure feel a decision is wrong, even if there is an overall majority of men and some women, the women can override the decision, which is aimed at addressing patriarchy. Each commune has its own structures of community self-defence – in which women of all ages play a key role – and a participatory court to ensure community safety. There is no police force as there would be in a state as safety is ensured through self-defence by all at a commune level.

In terms of the economy, state-owned land in

Northern Syria (which was the dominant form of property) has been redistributed to agricultural co-operatives that have been established and linked to the communes. The only big industry in Rojava is oil and it has been socialised under the Syrian Democratic Council, and it is mandated to produce to meet the needs of all people. As a way to overcome capitalism, many worker co-operatives have been formed to produce for need and not profit – these too are directly linked to communes. Small and medium-sized businesses still exist and even still outnumber the co-operatives, but they are accountable to communes to ensure they have a role to play in meeting people's needs. While they can make some profit, communes have the power to prevent profit gouging, as businesses are answerable to the commune if they do so.

## Conclusion

Democratic Confederalism has proven to be a very effective way of organising that shows that the structures we build today, if based on direct democracy, can become the structures we use to self-govern during and after a revolution. Indeed, in Rojava the forms of organisations that were built by activists in a resistance movement have, after a social revolution, become the structures through which people collectively and democratically govern society. As such, it shows that people have the power to collectively build a new system and that hierarchies, state-centred electoral politics and politicians are not needed, and in fact are counter-productive, to do so.



# BURMA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY: RECENT HISTORY AND PRESENT REALITY

News from Burma (Myanmar) in recent years has been dominated by the plight of the Rohingya, the Muslim minority facing genocide. This followed Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi's release from years of house arrest, when she became an international human rights icon, and her subsequent rise to power on the back of an overwhelming electoral victory in 2015 for her National League for Democracy (NLD).

Mass atrocities were carried out against the Rohingya mainly in 2012 when an estimated 120,000 to 140,000 were driven from their homes into camps where they languish until today. Worse was yet to come, when, in 2017, the Burmese military, in a campaign of violence involving murder, rape and arson, drove a further 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh. Aung San Suu Kyi's muted and ineffective response (as the de facto leader of the Burmese civilian government at the time), and seemingly designed not to upset significant parts of her constituency and the military, has ruined her reputation.

The International Court of Justice has recognised that the Rohingyas face genocide and has called for Burma to comply with various measures, which it has not done. Whether those responsible for crimes against the Rohingya will ever face justice remains to be seen. The ousted civilian government has now recognised the

Rohingya and their plight. The Rohingya's situation is the worst of Burma's minorities. But the other minorities have also faced gross human rights abuses for many decades under military rule.

More recently, the military seized power in the early hours of the morning of 1st February 2021. This took place against the backdrop of the National League for Democracy (NLD) boycotting the first elections under the new constitution in 2010 as Aung San Suu Kyi was then still under house arrest. Subsequent to her release from house arrest, the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi participated in the 2015 elections when the party won a landslide victory which was followed by an even bigger victory in the 2020 elections; while the military's proxy party the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was further diminished.

The 2021 coup was met with outrage and anger both locally and globally, although the Generals rationalised it in terms of the military-framed and backed Burmese constitution. This constitution, the result of a sham 2008 referendum, gives Burma a veneer of democracy, while the military retains ultimate power.

Some of the features of the constitution which entrench military rule include: it can only be changed with a three-quarters majority in the national legislature, with one quarter of the legislature's seats being reserved for the military; military personnel cannot be prosecuted by a civilian court; the three security-related ministries, Defence, Border Affairs and Home Affairs (police) must be headed by serving military personnel; and lastly, the military is given the right to take over the government when it sees fit.

In addition, the military's budget is substantially

free of civilian oversight through its control of two conglomerates with diverse interests in Burma's resource-rich economy. Meanwhile, Burma's generals and their families have substantial financial interests in the economy. Prior to Burma's nominal transition, it came stone last in Transparency International's annual Global Corruption Perceptions Index.

Given these realities, a crucial question is, why did the NLD even agree to participate in the military's compromised constitutional arrangement, something they had steadfastly opposed from the time of their formation? The answer lies in Burma's geopolitical importance.

Burma is wedged between the two biggest (by population) countries in the world, which also have two of the largest economies in the world. It is, as Thant Myint-U explains in his book *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia*, where China and India are both competitors, for Burma's resources, and potential partners in linking their large and rapidly expanding economies. The West, which has long supported Burma's democracy struggle, has feared losing out, especially to China. And, so it was that Western pressure was largely responsible for Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD participating in the flawed constitutional set-up which they so strongly opposed.

Once the military took power just over a year ago, they arrested Aung San Suu Kyi under a raft of trumped-up charges. Since then she has been 'tried and convicted' on several of these charges and remains locked up. The subsequent backlash from large sections of Burmese society has been surprisingly militant and sustained, revealing that the majority of people clearly do not accept

a return to total military power/control. For months, there were widespread protests that erupted across Burma, involving all strata of society and including healthcare workers and teachers. Even members of the police and some soldiers have defected to the opposition forces.

The military's response has been predictably ruthless, shooting, arresting and disappearing thousands of protestors and then sending the army in to 'deal' with the newly formed, People's Defence Forces (PDF's). One year on and the country can now be said to be in the throes of a full-scale civil war. The present and ongoing situation is grim: the military has razed entire villages, with the number of Internally Displaced Persons (according to the United Nations) increasing from around 400,000 to over 800,000. Meanwhile, over 3,000 people, who are effectively political prisoners, have been arrested, charged or given extremely harsh sentences.

As things stand, it appears that Burma is entering into a sustained period of both political and military conflict. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG): "[N]either side is in a position to deliver a decisive blow to the other, a protracted and increasingly violent confrontation appears inevitable."

In this context, it is of the utmost importance for progressive forces and internationalists the world over to not only provide needed support and solidarity to the Burmese people's struggles but to pressure their governments and international bodies to give Burma the attention that it demands and do all they can to isolate the military regime. The long-suffering and brave people of Burma deserve no less.



## AB AHLALI BASEMJONDOLO PRESS STATEMENT ON THE ASSASSINATION OF COMRADE NOKUTHULA MABASO

6 April 2022

**Nokuthula Mabaso, a powerful leader in the eKhenana Commune and the Women's League, was assassinated in eKhenana last night.**

The eKhenana Commune has been under ruthless attack for years. There have been more than thirty illegal and violent evictions, including evictions in violation of court orders. People have been assaulted, had their homes burnt, been arrested on trumped up charges, and jailed for long periods.

On 8 March 2022, Ayanda Ngila, a young leader in the Commune who had twice been jailed on ridiculous charges, was assassinated. Last night, 5 April 2022, at around 7:30 pm, another leader in the Commune, Nokuthula Mabaso, was assassinated. She was forty years old. A soldier in our movement, who ensured that more than a hundred families have land and roof over their heads, is no more.

As well as being a powerful leader in eKhenana and the Women's League, Nokuthula was also a key figure in the establishment and management of the chicken farm that was part of the very successful food sovereignty project at the Commune. She spent time in prison with Maphiwe Gasela and Thozama Mazwi on fabricated charges.

Yesterday, during the afternoon, she was part of the team that was processing food received as part of the movement's food solidarity programme after the floods. In the early evening, she was in a meeting of comrades who were making plans to attend a court case today. Khaya Ngubane, the son of NS Ngubane, the local ANC chief who has been

driving the attack on the Commune, is scheduled to appear in court today. Nokuthula was attacked when she left the meeting to go to her house and attend to a pot of rice that she was preparing for her children. She was shot five times, four at the back, in front of her children. The other women rushed to her when they heard the gunshots. She was still alive when they found her. She died in their hands.

Witnesses saw Khaya Ngubane murder Ayanda Ngila on 8 March, but today's court appearance is about the time that he attacked Sniko Miya with an axe on 6 March. The investigating officer for this case is saying that he cannot find any evidence to implicate Ngubane in the attack on Sniko, but he has not spoken to the witnesses. The same officer has been involved in arresting our members on trumped up charges and recommending that they be denied bail.

Previously, NS Ngubane clearly said in the court building that 'there will be bloodshed in eKhenana'.

Nokuthula had prepared an affidavit that was going to be used in court today at the bail hearing of Ngubane. Her affidavit explains that it would not be safe for the community, and especially for witnesses to the axe attack and the murder, if Ngubane was granted bail. Her affidavit, along with an affidavit by Maphiwe Gasela, explains that the witnesses to Ngubane's crimes, who are women, would be at severe risk if Ngubane were to be released and that, in the interests of justice, he should be remanded in custody.

Nokuthula was one of a number of people who witnessed the murder of Ayanda, and could potentially have been a witness if the matter went to trial. She was also the main respondent to the eviction case that was brought by the municipality in eKhenana. She played a key role in fighting for the occupation, and in turning the occupation

into a Commune. She was brave in collecting all the information on the various cases that would have led to the arrest of NS Ngubane, and many others who have been behind the destruction of eKhenana.

We have no doubt that the local ANC in the area, led by this unscrupulous pastor NS Ngubane, is behind the assassinations of Ayanda and Nokuthula. As we have reported before, NS Ngubane openly instructs the police at KwaKito (Cato Manor police station) who to arrest and who not to arrest, and openly advises the prosecuting authority in the Durban Magistrates' Court on how they should proceed with cases relating to our members.

We have built a Commune in which, according to the principles of Abahlalism, land is not bought and sold and shacks are not rented. The local ANC want the land in eKhenana to be used for private profit and not for communal purposes. The ANC is threatened by a woman who has led the occupation and continued with the Commune despite the severe repression over the years and when other leaders are in jail, in hiding or have been assassinated.

Whenever a leader emerges, she or he becomes a target of assault, trumped-up charges or assassination. The ANC are cowards. They are murderers. They are thieves. They are our enemy and the enemy of every person who stands for justice.

We have now lost twenty-three comrades to assassination, police murders and killings by the land invasion unit and municipal security since 2009. We have lost three activists in the last two months.

The ANC, the police, the municipality, the prosecuting authority and the magistrates who keep sending innocent people to jail after the

police say that they have arrested to investigate (whereas they should be investigating to arrest) all who need to be held to account for their role in the long, violent and criminal attack on eKhenana.

We note that the Minister of Police has ignored all our attempts to have him intervene. We note that the Human Rights Commission has not acted despite the fact that they have a report on this matter. We note that the national leadership of the prosecuting authority have not dealt with the crisis in Durban despite communication from us, and protests at their offices.

The Cato Manor police station is around 500 meters away from where Nokuthula was assassinated. The police confirmed that they heard gunshots, but it took two hours for them to arrive at the scene. In fact, the leadership had to drive to the police station to call them, when calls were ignored. However, when Mqapheli Bonono was rushing to the scene police could stop him, harass him, delay him and fine him for a damaged light on the car he was using. They refused his request for them to accompany him to eKhenana.

The struggle for dignity, for land and autonomy, continues to mean death. Our hearts are broken.

Nokuthula was a soldier. We will bury her with all due honour.

Nokuthula leaves her husband, Sibusiso Mhlongo, and four children: Nomfundo (23), Siyanda (19), Kwanele (17) and Junior (5). Kwanele is living with a disability.

Umpakathi uyakhala. Umbutho wabampofu uyakhala. Umhlaba uyakhala. (*The community is crying. The poor are crying. The world is crying*)

**Land & Dignity!**



# SOUTH AFRICA'S POST-1994 HOUSING POLICIES AND BUDGETS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

The provision of housing in South Africa has been and remains, one of the country's biggest development challenges. This is not surprising, given that the enduring legacy of apartheid provides the backdrop for the associated policies and instruments introduced since 1994. Indeed, the ruling ANC government has consistently claimed that its housing policies have been adopted to address the key challenges of underdevelopment and discrimination emanating from decades of apartheid.

The reality however, is that those historic conditions of underdevelopment and discrimination, minus the specific racialised frame of apartheid laws, have largely remained intact for the majority of South Africa's population (i.e., black workers and the poor) in the post-1994 era. One of the key reasons for this is because soon after 1994 the ANC government chose to turn its back on its promised commitments to ensure the public provision of affordable quality and accessible housing (amongst many other basic needs) as well as the equitable redistribution of opportunity and resources. In doing so, it chose to adopt socio-economic policies - such as GEAR, the 'Growth, Employment & Redistribution' macro-economic programme - that embraced the privatisation and corporatisation of most all basic needs and services.

As a result, 27 years after the democratic breakthrough, the general living conditions of that majority are extremely poor, and the situation has been made worse by the ongoing ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a rapid increase

in the number of those who are homeless and those who live in backyard shacks and informal settlements. In turn, this has led to ever-increasing land occupations, particularly in urban areas, as people desperately search for a place to live. Combined with growing rates of unemployment and crime, deteriorating health and education systems as well as increases in the prices of basic foodstuffs and services, what this points to is a deep-seated and intensifying crisis in the overall living standards of the workers and poor, with tens of millions impoverished and growing inequality in South African society

It is against such a contextual backdrop that this publication provides a post-1994 snapshot view of the ANC government's housing policies, accompanying budgets and record of 'delivery'. In so doing, it also briefly reflects on the consequent living conditions of the poor and marginalised in townships and informal settlements as well as associated struggles by affected communities.

*Below is an excerpt from the booklet. It is hoped that this publication will assist activists taking part in worker and community struggles involving land/housing and equip them with useful information and tools of analysis.*

## What Does the Present Housing Policy Say?

The state's current housing policy is outlined in the document, 'Breaking New Ground: A comprehensive plan for the development of

integrated sustainable human settlement' (BNG). The stated purpose of the BNG, which was unveiled in 2004, "is to outline a plan for the development of sustainable human settlements over the next five years, embracing the People's Contract as the basis for delivery". Seventeen years later it remains the main policy

document. According to the document, "a new plan is required to redirect and enhance existing mechanisms to move towards more responsive and effective delivery" in order "to promote the achievement of a non-racial, integrated society through the development of sustainable human settlements and quality housing".

The plan places particular emphasis on the role of the private sector, especially in relation to the provision of housing finance, and also strongly pushes for individual home ownership. While the plan introduces "a new informal settlement upgrading instrument to support the focused eradication of informal settlements", the practical means to do so relies on "a phased in-situ upgrading approach in desired locations, coupled to the relocation of households where development is not possible or desirable".

Instructively, the plan is silent on access to housing for the large number of non-South Africans living in the country. The policy claims that there will be a shift in housing delivery focus from quantity to quality and that there will be greater participation by communities in making decisions about the nature of houses to be built. There is also a great deal of talk about the need for more spatially integrated housing developments in urban areas, the expansion

of "social housing" as well as effective and capacitated management and oversight of housing projects.

Although there have, in real terms, been increases in the housing budgets since 1994, this has not been accompanied by similar increases in the number of houses 'delivered' to the poor. Indeed, over the last decade in particular, the trend shows that the exact opposite has happened - i.e., increases in the budget equals decreases in the number of houses built. Amongst other things such as government corruption/wasteful expenditure and bureaucratisation, these figures confirm the massive increase in the costs charged by the private sector construction companies and resource suppliers (both big and small) for their services and associated building materials.

The fact is that private sector companies remain the core beneficiaries of government housing policy and implementation, as reflected by profit-making contracts, excessive prices of bricks and other building materials, as well as a lack of accountability for shoddy housing quality. Indeed, there is ample evidence to show that tenders to build houses and other services have been fraudulently awarded to the friends and family members of government officials without their undergoing official and proper processes - confirmation of the high degree of corruption through nepotism and sub-standard construction.

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## NUMBER OF HOUSES BUILT



(1994-2019)



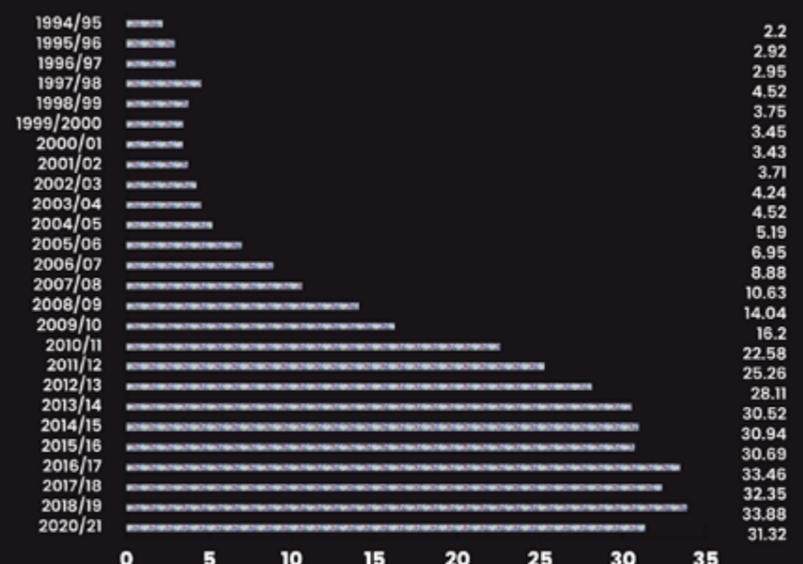
\* Source: Africa Check using figures from the Department of Human Settlements. Note that 2018/19 figures are for 9 months only (April - Dec 2018) and are preliminary

**Total**  
**3,269,686 (Million)**

## HOUSING BUDGET & EXPENDITURE TRENDS

National Level

1994-2020



**Total**  
**R401.51 (Billion)**



**= R1 Billion**

Source: National Treasury: National Budget Information, Departmental Expenditure

Excerpt from

# HOME

by Warsan Shire

No one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body  
you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it's not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under  
your breath  
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet  
sobbing as each mouthful of paper  
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Are you involved in progressive struggles or grassroots workplace/community organising that needs solidarity or that you think more activists should be made aware of? Do you have an analysis of or insights into a struggle or social/political/economic issue or development – whether local, regional or international – that is of interest or relevance to progressive/working class activists and struggles in South Africa that you would like to share? Do you have questions/comments about or disagreements with something published in Workers' World News?

Send us your article (max. 600 words) by email or Facebook private message and we will consider publishing it in a future issue.



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The border won't keep you safe from hate or ignorance. Neither can it protect you from the consequences of exploitation; from climate change, war, or poverty.

The real danger is not people escaping oppression, war, and unnatural disasters or those looking for a better life. We are threatened by the easy way a people can be manipulated through fear into hate and division.