

The Real State of the Nation Address

Sipho Mila Pityana / St George's Cathedral, Cape Town / 8 February 2017

Comrades and friends

I would urge the Speaker of the House to not address President Jacob Zuma as honourable when she invites him to present his State of the Nation Address tomorrow night -- for it is a matter of fact that he is not.

Importantly, he shouldn't be addressing us as a nation in the capacity of a President for he has broken his contractual relationship with us as citizens. Instead, Parliament should be telling us when it intends to hold him to account following the Constitutional Court judgment on the Secure in Comfort Report.

President Zuma: You must know that as a nation we no longer have confidence in your leadership. You are not trusted by the people. You are not trusted by civil society. And, increasingly, you are not even trusted by your own party and its allies.

When the opposition parties supported a motion of no confidence against you in Parliament last year, you deliberately misinterpreted the objection of your own members to that motion as support for you.

Now you know that members of the ANC, through their various structures, have urged you to step down -- not only as the President of the country, but also as the leader of the esteemed ANC. You have used every opportunity to bring shame to a glorious movement that our nation respects for its role in liberating the motherland.

It is the state of our nation that today we are led by a limping President who doesn't enjoy the full trust and confidence, not only of many of his colleagues in cabinet, parliament and even the NEC of the ANC, but importantly of the vast masses of our people who are perturbed, aghast and disgusted at his dishonourable and shameful conduct.

Here is a leader who thinks our hard won freedom and right to self-determination can be handed over to a shady criminal gang of looters who are determined to steal from the poor. A leader not befitting the honour that the nation bestowed on him to be a President, for he prefers to be a "kortbroek", a "spanner boy", a "runner" for a bunch of arrogant crooks and criminals.

In President Zuma, we have a wounded tiger, unleashed by its handlers to sow mayhem and destruction, at great cost to both our nation and the ANC as he spends this year seeking to regain lost ground. He'll be dishing out a long list of scapegoats for his litany of failures. This, as a prelude to his ill-conceived, yet destructive actions that he is set to take this year.

We have to say this. President Jacob Zuma: we have absolutely no confidence in your ability to reflect reality when you address the nation tomorrow night. And we know, from history, that you will not deliver on the majority of the promises you are going to make.

Don't bother promising us a radical agenda to include black people in the economy. Rather tell us what programme you embarked upon, in your eight years as the President of our nation, to effect this. What progress have you made? What new steps do you intend to advance this important objective?

Evidence suggests that despite a mandate, from both the Constitution and the party you lead, you not only failed in this regard, but you set back the promising positive steps of your predecessors in Presidents Mandela and Mbeki.

We can say, without fear of contradiction, that the period 2002-2007 saw the fastest growth in the black middle class, an economy that was beginning to reduce unemployment, an unprecedented economic growth of over 4.5%, a systematic reduction in poverty, a stable debt to GDP ratio, controlled inflation, a healthy balance of payment. We had a black economic empowerment strategy that saw the emergence of shining examples of new black business.

Yet, under your leadership, President Zuma, all these gains have been reversed. Look at your mess...

The same applies with land restitution, redistribution and security of tenure. You have had a clear mandate from the Constitution and your party for years. But over the last eight years you have failed to address this. Please don't invite us to your alter of fools by promising to do better? All you have to offer us now, is the word "radical".

Let's not forget that in 2012 the ANC conference voted to abandon the willing buyer willing seller policy. A year later, you paid out a billion rand in a land restitution settlement for Mala Mala game reserve -- and yet provided neither technical nor financial assistance to emerging black farmers who secured the land of their forebears.

An NGO succeeds in court to secure tenure for over 1000 black labour tenants on white owned farmland; in a blatant act of trying to steal their victory you unsuccessfully appeal the decision. Add to this the many allegations that money intended for land redistribution is diverted in shady schemes of looters that benefit mainly corrupt white farmers and your cronies. We demand to know how much land has been distributed during your presidency?

And then there is the scourge of racism. Over the past few years, racists have become emboldened in their offensive rhetoric and violent behavior -- because you, who is supposed to be our leader, are incapable of convincing the nation of the efficacy of non-racialism. Racial chauvinists who, without a word of reprimand from you, eschew anti-Indian, anti-Coloured and sometimes even anti-white sentiments -- find comfort in your inner circle, and pretend to speak on behalf of an ANC that has long disavowed all forms of racism.

There can be no doubt that the realisation of social cohesion requires the redress of the condition of Africans as the most marginalised. It is also the case that racial chauvinism, a close cousin of tribalism, is dividing our nation and setting us back many years under your watch.

Our young people are desperate, disillusioned and disappointed as your repeated promises of employment are not delivered on. Youth unemployment has worsened since you assumed office. The black school system has seen nothing of your promised improvement. Your false promise of free education is threatening to destroy the great asset we have in our universities.

This President is a man with no heart, no soul, no compassion.

He has nothing to say or contribute to the real issues affecting South Africans: racism, sexism, or discrimination against people because of their sexuality or ability. He has nothing to offer in terms of seriously addressing inequality and social injustice.

While the entire nation is in mourning over the “Silent 94”, in shock over the way the Esidimeni issue has been handled, Zuma has nothing to offer but a cold media statement.

A real President would be visibly consoling the nation, addressing the needs of the families, and showing compassion. A real President would order that national flags be flown at half-mast and call a national day of mourning as we grieve over this devastating indictment on our nation’s health care, and the neglect of the most vulnerable. It’s not too late to do so Mr. President.

The blemish of Esidimeni, like the Marikana massacre, only shows how little the lives of the poor and vulnerable matter to you. We need a leader who knows to put them first.

This is the Real State of our Nation.

Our nation is experiencing increased pain, hunger, thirst and depravation while those in the centre of power turn their backs so they can focus on amassing illicit wealth. They are eating away our nation with their corruption and their abuse of power. They believe it is their turn to eat.

Money intended for social services like education, health and social development is being stolen by some politicians, public servants, and service providers.

The grip of state capture rips the soul out of state-owned companies, encourages gross financial mismanagement, and promotes unfettered looting. It is getting even tighter as Zuma and his cronies line up the biggest tender-grab ever: the nuclear energy deal, which best epitomises the current phase of state capture.

We have to stop this. We have to harness our collective energy, as ordinary South Africans, as members of organisations, and as people with influence, before it is too late.

I'm inspired by that true servant leader, Oliver Reginald Tambo who foresaw the challenges that would face the ANC as it moved from liberation movement to governing party.

Speaking during a meeting with young exiled South Africans at Somafco in Tanzania, he uttered these profound words: **“Let’s tell the truth to ourselves. Even if the truth coincides with what the enemy is saying, let us tell the truth.”**

Yes, comrades, and friends, we must tell the truth. For therein lay our true freedom, the truth. And we do so today, encouraged by the many who have joined us and trust that you and many others will join us – and isolate, once and for all, this corrupt President and his henchmen and women.

As the Save South Africa campaign, we asked our supporters to tell us their own truth about the State of the Nation. We asked them to explain on our social media platforms what they believe is the “Real State of the Nation Address”.

We received hundreds of responses, but they can be summed up in three phrases: **“Nepotism”, “corruption” and “state capture”**.

We asked them at our rallies how they felt about the real state of the nation. Hundreds of people attended our meetings, but their reaction can be summed up in the same three phrases: **“nepotism”, “corruption” and “state capture”**.

Some of our endorsing organisations have also developed their own assessment of the real state of the nation. Once again, the same three phrases: **“nepotism”, “corruption” and “state capture”** come through.

This, President Jacob Zuma, is the Real State of Your Nation – it is being torn apart by nepotism, corruption and state capture. And you are at the centre of it all:

- You have been implicated in the most gross attempts to sell out our nation for personal financial benefit, as revealed in the Public Protector's State of Capture Report.
- You disrespect our Constitution, and our Constitutional Court – in fact, you have become a serial offender.
- You have made repeated commitments to deal with corruption – yet you do nothing about it. Instead, you do your utmost to cripple the institutions that are supposed to outlaw corrupt activity.
- You do nothing about the governance crisis, mismanagement and corruption in state owned entities, which has become a major destabilising factor in the economy. When are you going to make good on the promises you made last year to restructure these institutions?
- You talk glibly about promised radical economic transformation through a black industrialist programme -- and we expect you to do the same again

tomorrow night. Yet the result of your work so far is that the richest black person is now Mr. Ajay Gupta.

- Ultimately, day by day, your focus is on making sure that South Africa's economic agenda serves your own personal interest, as well as those of your family members and your cronies?

This has to be stopped.

Jacob Zuma, it is time for you to go.

Comrades and friends

We must all do whatever we can to make sure that tomorrow is the last State of the Nation Address by President Zuma. We have to say: "No more Zuma".

No more Zuma!

We need more active citizenry. We need you to join others and get involved.

Convene a Save SA group wherever you are and use the reach information on our website to understand our programme and bring as many citizens together to work for change. Sign our People's Motion of No Confidence. Lobby your MP or public representative to say no to Zuma.

We have to stop the Zuma nightmare, and begin to dream again.

We must be very firm in ensuring that the democratic project stays on course. We must use our energies to continue to drive Zuma out, but also to drive change beyond that. We must continue to build a society founded on social justice, human dignity, equality and democratic principles.

We must loudly reject looting, theft, corruption, the abuse of power, the contamination of state institutions, the distortion of the justice system for political gain, and the complete disrespect for our Constitution.

We must insist on respect for our flag, our state institutions, and ultimately our sovereignty. And we must hold our leaders accountable whoever they are.

If it was right for former Ministers Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde and Dina Pule to resign following adverse findings against them. Why should the nation accept that you Mr. President remain in office for more serious violations? If it is right for the ANC to recall John Block following a guilty verdict by a high court, why shouldn't we expect that you'd suffer the same fate following adverse findings by the highest court in the land; or is it that you are above the law? Shouldn't you be taking a leaf from Brian Molefe who resigned, as he put it, in the interest of Eskom, following the state of capture report? Shouldn't you be resigning in the interest of the country? Or is it because you have no conscience?

Fellow South Africans: We must be steadfast in our demand for accountability. We must reject those who undermine our democracy and are intent on using state resources for nefarious means. They must be stopped, and we must build

a society that is founded on the democratic values we fought for, the values enshrined in our Constitution. That's why we demand that Zuma should go' and do so immediately.

Only then will we be able to Save South Africa.

Save South Africa! Save South Africa!

Zuma must go

Thank you.