

WHO WE ARE & WHY WE ARE SPEAKING OUT

We are committed and passionate South Africans. We have made big and small contributions in our struggle against Apartheid. Our objectives remain democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism and freedom.

We are deeply concerned at the direction in which the current leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), Government and Parliament is taking our country. We have formed a working committee of the South Africa First Forum (SA1st) who are committed to the ideal of placing our COUNTRY, CONSTITUTION and PEOPLE first.

We have been inspired by OR Tambo, Nelson Mandela and countless others who established high standards of leadership, morality, governance and ideals for justice and equality. These are standards to be protected through our Constitutional Democracy, our rule of law, and the public service – ensuring that South Africa and all its people are always prioritised.

THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO SPIRAL OUT OF CONTROL. OUR CONCERNS INCLUDE:

1. An electoral system that breeds lack of accountability to both the electorate and the broader South African public
2. Anti-constitutionalism
3. Disrespect of the judiciary and Chapter 9 institutions such as the Office of the Public Protector (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapter_nine_institutions)
4. Misuse of state security apparatus
5. Elements indicative of the rise of a police state
6. Growing inequality among South Africans
7. Increased violent protests
8. Abuse of state power for political, business and individual interests
9. Gross mismanagement and degradation of key public institutions and numerous State Owned Enterprises
10. Crony capitalism leading to ANC and State capture
11. A dysfunctional Parliament that has lost its dignity and the respect of ordinary South Africans
12. A lack of ethical leadership among public representatives as required by our Constitution
13. Vilification of critics including struggle stalwarts and veterans
14. Weak cadre deployments with disastrous consequences for our country
15. The ongoing erosion of our credibility as an African and international example of progressive, peaceful and equitable political change

As a generation we are mindful of the powerful words of OR Tambo: “Even when ANC decisions were acceptable within the Movement, they would come to naught unless they enjoyed popular support beyond the bounds of the ANC itself. Above all, we sought to make the people part and parcel of our decisions.”

We are also guided by Madiba’s wisdom: “If the ANC government does to you what the Apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC government what you did to the Apartheid government.”

With these principles in mind:

- We believe SOUTH AFRICA AND HER PEOPLE COME FIRST. Respect for our country, our constitution and all our people must surpass loyalty to any party, persons, business interests or ideology.
- We are fatigued by unfulfilled election promises and the ongoing failure to deliver on the basic requirements for the maintenance of human dignity and development.
- We are gravely concerned about the current self-indulgent political elite who openly benefit themselves at the expense of the entire country, including those who are in most dire need of support: our poor and vulnerable.
- We are appalled and dismayed at the leading members and organisations of the ANC who continue to openly support and justify the actions of a President and Parliament found unequivocally guilty of flouting their constitutional duties.
- We believe the rot has gone way beyond President Zuma and includes ANC parliamentarians.
- The culture of the prevailing political arena is clearly manifested in the current climate of unlawfulness, power abuse and broken confidence.
- We intend to galvanise people and find a resolution to this crisis, and through this, afford new hope for all 21st century generations.
- We will defend our Constitution and help re-establish it as the bedrock of our democracy and hard-earned freedom, and a foundation upon which we can unite as people.
- We reject the contention that speaking truth to power makes us guilty of attempting to effect 'Regime Change'. Apartheid was a 'regime', Nazism was a 'regime' and it is thus unacceptable for the ANC as a political party governing under a constitutional democracy to refer to itself as a 'regime'. All political parties, including the majority party are bound by the Constitution. Ours is a call to remove the violators of our Constitution – nothing more, nothing less.

The option of raising these serious national matters within ANC structures as requested by the Secretary General will not be purposeful, given the dysfunctional nature of the current branch system. It is our belief that these matters need urgent and open discussion for them to be dealt with.

WHAT MUST HAPPEN

In order to arrest the rot that has set in, we call for unity as we collectively champion and drive the necessary irreversible social, economic and political change required to ensure:

- the wellbeing of South Africa and its people, and
- compliance with our Constitution in its entirety by all citizens and organisations

Therefore:

1. We call on the ANC to remove Jacob Zuma as both ANC President and State President of South Africa. In the direct words of the Constitutional Court Judgment, Jacob Zuma “failed to uphold, defend and respect the Constitution as the supreme law of the land.” He has therefore clearly violated his Oath of Office as President of the Republic of South Africa. President Jacob Zuma must go.
2. We call on the ANC Executive and ANC representatives within the National Assembly, to address what the Constitutional Court judgment called their “attitude problem”. This means acknowledging and accepting their culpability for not adhering to their constitutional obligation to hold the President accountable. They publically supported his wrongdoing and continue to do so. The judgment was clear and without contradiction, and appropriate corrective measures along with an apology to the Nation are required.
3. We call for the dissolution of Parliament and the immediate scheduling of fresh elections, since if the ANC Executive and representatives referred to above still intend to lead society, they will need to seek a new, legitimate mandate from the electorate at the polls.
4. We call for the replacement of the current Speaker with a fairer and more independent-minded person, capable of prioritising our country, Constitution and people above any party political and personal allegiance.
5. We call on the African National Congress to hold a Special Elective Conference of its members and voter- supporters to address the failure of its current leadership, its failure to put the interests of South Africa first, its failure to adhere to our Constitution and its failure to put the People first. This may open a possibility of a renewal of their movement.
6. We call on the ANC leadership to stop the intimidation, intemperate language and the labeling of struggle veterans and patriots as ‘enemies’ simply because they criticize the current situation, and in doing so, exercise their constitutional right to freedom of expression and association. We have serious concerns about senior ANC officials’ threats against and dangerous vilification of fellow South Africans. This is an ominous sign that our previously free political environment and the fundamentals of our Bill of Rights are being undermined.
7. We call on the ANC to formally reaffirm a commitment to remain law-abiding and respectful to the spirit and letter of the Constitution and the Courts of Law. No political party, including the ANC is above the Laws of our land.
8. We call for an end to corruption. This culture permeates the political aristocracy, some of its members of Parliament, Cabinet, the President and the Civil Service, as well as some within opposition parties and the corporate sector. Corrupt relationships are reciprocal between corruptor and corrupted, and urgent steps need to be taken to root out and sanction all those culpable on both sides as well as prevent future corrupt activity. In theory, our existing laws and formal anti-corruption agencies are adequate in this respect, however they are inadequately utilised and/or have been subverted by those who benefit from corrupt activities. This needs to be rectified.

GOING FORWARD

Over the next two weeks, our working committee will engage with individuals and any formation who wishes to associate with this Forum, based on the above principles. We plan to host such groupings/individuals on 20th April 2016 for further discussion and planning. We are aware that similar discussions are taking place in the rest of South Africa. On 27 April 2016, the Forum will join with all formations championing these principles. We will unite in the national call for Jacob Zuma to step down as State President and for the renewal of our political environment. We will do this in the interest of South Africa and its people.

We are working on a series of activities to get South Africans on board with this initiative, including:

- a. Translating the salient points of the Constitutional Court "Nkandla" judgment into as many of our 11 languages as possible. This will be made available to all South Africans. Our intention is to ensure clarity on the outcome of the ruling.
- b. Launching a massive signature campaign.

Mindful of the fact that the ANC in Parliament voted to support the President in not upholding his oath of office, the Forum calls on you to, during the next election, use your vote in a wise and principled manner.

We conclude with our wish to stand FOR something new in our country:

- We cherish a future free of racism. We are committed to a diverse South Africa possessing an economy which supports the eradication of poverty, builds dignity for all, respects the planet and which values education and the free sharing of ideas.
- We cherish a society that values democracy, critical intellectual discourse, respects the rights of people to free political party expression without vilification and respects the rule of law and the Constitution.
- We would like to see renewed efforts to build a united South African nation that buries racism and, while acknowledging our diverse roots, celebrates and strengthens the ties that bind us. We believe that this is fundamental for social cohesion and our success. Our Country as a home for all will rise and achieve greatness if we unite. Divided, we will fail.

We visualise this South Africa:

"I have a dream to live in a South Africa where we live in harmony as a nation enhanced by our diversity and all of us have the opportunity and right to have a better life for ourselves and our children. A country governed by a Constitution and served by men and women of integrity who are in public office to serve all our communities without fear or favour. A country where public representatives found to be dishonourable and corrupt in the execution of their duties are summarily dismissed or compelled to resign from their positions."