



ANC STATEMENT SOUTH AFRICA FREEDOM DAY JUNE 26TH FROM THE FREEDOM CHARTER TO A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

We are now half-way into 1990, designated by our movement as the Year of People's Action for a Democratic South Africa. For both our country and our region, 1990 has indeed been a year of momentous developments which have brought our people to the threshold of major advances.

On this, the 40th anniversary of South Africa Freedom Day, we salute the people of our country in all their organised formations, and the various sectors of the Mass Democratic Movement. It is your struggles, waged against the most fearsome odds, under successive States of Emergency, that have compelled De Klerk and his colleagues to recognise the reality that their policies of repression have utterly failed.

We salute also the heroic working class whose disciplined unity in action and social vision has earned them recognition as the most powerful contingent among the liberation forces.

We salute the women, our militant youth and students, whose mass struggles in the townships, the squatter camps, the rural areas, the schools and universities, have forced the regime on to the retreat.

At no time has the strength and moral authority of our movement been greater, at home and abroad. We have marked up a series of notable gains since January, yet it remains equally true that the obnoxious apartheid system remains in place.

The history of our country and our region makes it crystal clear that nothing in South Africa will change except at the instance of the struggle of our people on all fronts. The question of political power, who wields it and how it is to be used, remains at the top of the political agenda. It is the organised strength of the people, from the local, regional and up to the national level, the determination and thrust of our democratic offensive, that will decide the destiny of our country. The future is in our hands!

Forty years ago the ruling Nationalist Party of Malan, Strijdom, Verwoerd, Vorster, Botha and De Klerk embarked on a notorious programme to stifle and suppress the voice of freedom in our country. The aim of the Suppression of Communism Act, rushed through Parliament with indecent haste, was to set in place a comprehensive repressive law that would not merely outlaw the Communist Party but also empower the minority regime to ban and proscribe any political movement that posed a threat to racist domination.

It is that self-same Nationalist Party that has, for more than four decades, tyrannised the people of our country in an orgy of misgovernment that has violated every norm of human rights. The Nationalist Party systematically filled the law books with one repressive law after another, and reduced South Africa to a country ruled by batons, teargas, Casspirs and the gun. This is the party responsible for the mass gaolings, detentions, torture and judicial murder of the most courageous sons and daughters of our people.

It is not to the Nationalist Party regime — with its proven anti-democratic record — that we owe the release of Comrade Nelson Mandela and some of the political prisoners. It is the struggles of our people, waged over 30 years with the support of the overwhelming majority of humankind, that have flung open the prison doors and won freedom for our comrades. This same struggle will compel the regime to release the other political prisoners, including those presently on death row.

At Kliptown, 35 years ago, we placed before our country and the world the vision of a new South Africa belonging to all its people, black and white. The achievement of the central objective of that vision — The People Shall Govern! — has become more urgent than ever. A united nation, not a collection of hostile ethnic, racial, tribal and cultural groups, but one people conceived in liberty and equality, remains the aim of the ANC and its allies in the Mass Democratic and other formations.

The Freedom Charter, in which we enshrined these noble goals, is unique in the history of our country as a revolutionary programme created by the mass of the people themselves. It is one of the most important tasks of all democrats to ensure that this Freedom Charter, and the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines based on it, find their way into every community and every home in our country.

While the regime mouths words of peace and reconciliation in the capitals of Europe, at home the climate of repression and state-inspired terror continues as before. The South African police, the SADF and their auxiliaries in the kitskonstabels, vigilante gangs and other paramilitary structures, carry on their activities with impunity.

Even as we approach June 26, the vicious killings in the Natal region continue unabated. Ultimate responsibility for this violence inescapably lies at the door of the De Klerk regime, which has armed and delegated policing powers to the bantustan administration of KwaZulu. The intermittent violence that plagues other parts of the country owes much to the counter-insurgency strategy of the Botha regime which created surrogate forces to terrorise our people into submission.

Political trials and arrests continue even at a time when talks are in progress to remove the obstacles to the creation of a climate for negotiations.

The violence and provocations of the ultra-right political and paramilitary formations proceed unchecked and are in fact escalating. The criminal activities of neo-fascists and white supremacist storm-troopers in Welkom have earned not even a slap on the wrist from the regime. On the other hand peaceful black demonstrators and striking workers are regularly dispersed with violence and even gunfire by the police.

It is self-evident that the permissive attitude of the state towards them has emboldened the ultra-right. The regime cannot escape responsibility for the words and deeds of these far-right groupings. Indeed, they all appeal to the authority of the traditional policies of the Nationalist Party as justification for their actions. At this moment in time the reluctance of the regime to disarm and disband these neo-fascist paramilitary structures constitutes an additional blockage on the path to a peaceful solution.

The ANC, its allies and other democratic forces demand the right to conduct meetings, mount demonstrations and processions, assemble and consult with the same degree of freedom presently enjoyed by the Nationalist Party. We demand these as our right and not as favours to be dispensed or withheld as the regime sees fit.

The road from the Freedom Charter to a democratic constitution is through struggle. On this June 26th let us go forward determined to achieve democracy and freedom in our country, now and not later.

The future of our country is in our grasp!

End the State of Emergency in Natal!

Forward to an Interim Government!

Forward to a Constituent Assembly!

Amandla! Matla! Power to the People!