

South Africa's urgent need for Courageous and determined Leaders

South Africa has seen violent protests and looting in the wake of the arrest of Former State President Mr Jacob G Zuma, following a 15-month imprisonment order by the Constitutional Court of South Africa after it found him to have been in contempt of court.

Government's (local, provincial, national) response has largely been silence, watered down acts of condemnation of violence and a call for respect of the Rule of Law. National Government has since deployed the South African National Defence Force to assist law enforcement to "quell the unrests that have gripped both Provinces in the last few days".

But how did we get here and what response should one have expected from a responsive and capable government is the question on every one's lips. Whilst the Zuma arrest may have been the trigger for the unrest that we are currently seeing, it is however not the sole reason behind it. NADEL is of the strong opinion that, coupled with the Zuma arrest, people have been frustrated because of the current socio-economic situation they find themselves in. If it was not #freezuma a few months along the line it could have been something else, perhaps another wave of Xenophobic attacks.

It is not a coincidence that just a few weeks ago, after the release Auditor General's Municipal Financial Management report, that NADEL had released a media statement warning that the country is burning. The state of local government in the country is a clear indication of trouble. We call upon Government as the steering wheel of the country to regain control, listen to the people and deal with the real issues. We can't maintain peace in society plagued with inequality as ours, poor service delivery and corruption especially at grassroots level perpetuates poverty and inequality especially since it is mainly the municipalities in previously disadvantaged that are most effective.

The President of South Africa, in his address to the country on the 12th of July 2021, rightfully says that "these are opportunistic acts of looting driven by hunger and poverty". He further calls for restoration of calm and order so that we can get on with the order of building the country and advised the nation of the urgent steps government has taken to meet with business to come up with solutions to restore economic activity. While we appreciate that these efforts will result in employment, we can't help but wish that we saw the same urgency in dealing with issues of service delivery, more especially at the local government level.

The people looting lack ideology, what we are seeing are people who have nothing to lose taking opportunity where it arises. Lack of ideology, poverty and lack of understanding of legal system provide fertile ground for misinformation and manipulation. What we have experienced today may happen again in the not so distant future if government does not take active and more concise steps to improve the livelihood of its people.

We have witnessed how the current state of violence has resulted in racial tension. In areas in KwaZulu-Natal black South Africans are not allowed to enter shops or make purchases while others races feel that they are targets of violence. Poverty in South Africa has a face and, unfortunately, a race and it is black. It is not surprising then that people looting are mainly black. It is true that We can never dreams of building Social Cohesion and nation building with this with the high levels of inequality and poverty that disproportionately affect people on the bases of their race. The people of South Africa through their common vision have made a clear determination to break free of its racial discriminative past and commit to improving the quality of life of all citizens. We will not labour to write in this article what needs to be done to accelerate the fundamental change needed to realize our constitutional vision as many competent bodies have conducted research and provided solutions to the problems we are facing. We implore upon our democratically elected

leaders, those entrusted to lead this country to conjure the political will to implement solutions already provided to them.

NADEL calls for all stakeholders and leaders of society to meet and come up with a national programme of action.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS (NADEL), SOUTH AFRICA.

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