

# South African ANC faces deepening crisis after Mandela's death

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9 December 2013

South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) has begun spelling out its preparations for a ten-day-long period of national mourning for Nelson Mandela that will see thousands of foreign officials and media representatives descend upon the country.

Government Minister Collins Chabane announced Sunday that 28 heads of state will attend, including US President Barack Obama and former presidents George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter. From Brazil, President Dilma Rousseff will arrive accompanied by former presidents José Sarney, Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Lula da Silva.

Events include a "day of prayer and reflection" held Sunday followed by an official memorial at Johannesburg's FNB Stadium on Tuesday. Mandela's body is then to lie in state at the Union Buildings, the seat of the South African government in Pretoria, from December 11 to 13.

Mandela is to be buried next Sunday in his childhood village of Qunu in the Eastern Cape. The next day, December 16, is South Africa's "Day of Reconciliation," a national holiday established in 1994 after the end of apartheid, and the de facto start of the country's summer holiday period.

The ANC government of President Jacob Zuma had made substantial preparations for Mandela's death, with an eye toward squeezing the maximum political advantage out of it. Indeed, many in South Africa charged that the ruling party had worked to keep the long-ailing 95-year-old Mandela alive on life support with the aim of postponing his death as long as possible before next year's national elections.

Zuma and the ANC leadership are attempting to exploit Mandela's reputation, founded on his 27 years' imprisonment on Robben Island, to cast themselves as the continuators of his appeals for "unity" and "reconciliation."

The country's social and class divisions, however, are headed for a breaking point, driven by the highest level of income inequality in the world.

ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe declared, "This is the time for South Africans to unite and not fight." He was echoed by ANC Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, the former mineworkers union leader who subsequently amassed a personal fortune estimated at half a billion dollars, who

declared: "This is the moment when, as we put him to rest, all of us as South Africans will be saying let us reconcile and let us transform our country to properly build it into the South Africa of Mandela's dreams."

Many of those who have turned out spontaneously to mourn the former ANC leader, however, have expressed a decidedly different view, based on the belief that Mandela had somehow exercised at least a modest restraint on those who succeeded him, and that they will now escalate their attacks on the working class and their looting of the state budget and the national wealth.

"Right now, people are scared of what is going to happen, because Mandela was a father figure," Tichaona Mutero, 30, told the *Telegraph* as he joined a crowd of mourners in Cape Town. "These guys—Zuma and the others—they're not like him. We were just waiting for Mandela to die and now we don't know what is going to happen because people don't trust Zuma."

Similarly, in Soweto, Ntsiki Mthembu, 60, said: "People in power now don't want to share. There is a lot of nepotism, a lot of crime. We're worried. There are no jobs for young people. There is a lot of unrest in the country. If Mandela was here, it wouldn't be like this."

Kenosi Dlamini, 28, added: "I feel like our political leaders are misleading us. All we hear is of them hanging out in luxury hotels. Those in power don't want to pursue the dream Mandela had. They drive past in their Mercedes and BMWs all the time."

Thus, while those in power may want to exploit illusions in Mandela to bolster their plummeting popularity, for many, the death seems only to have underscored the glaring contradiction between the ANC's pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric and the realities of social inequality and self-enrichment by a thin layer of black businessmen connected to the ruling party.

Zuma's popularity rating is at an historic low for the two decades following the end of apartheid. This is driven by the economic realities confronting the masses of South African workers.

The country's economy is projected to grow just 1.9 percent this year, one third the rate that economists estimate would be required to reduce an official unemployment rate of 25 percent

(widely believed to be closer to 40 percent). Only recently, the number of employed returned to the 2008 level of 14 million, but this is after the population had grown by about 2.6 million.

Relations between capital and labor in South Africa are concretely expressed in the operations of AngloGold Ashanti, Africa's top bullion producer, which recorded earnings of \$576 million for the third quarter after having cut costs by firing 15,000 workers, an attack made possible by the betrayal of the ANC-affiliated trade unions.

Prices are rising, while wages and social welfare benefits are not. For the 2013 national budget, the Child Support Grant, a benefit upon which some 9 million people depend to stave off hunger, was increased by about 4 percent, while the Consumer Price Index increase is 6 percent. This means, in real terms, a cut in food rations for the country's poorest.

Cuts are being implemented across the board, with the exception of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defense Forces (SANDF), which received above-inflation increases that are going in part to fund the reestablishment of the country's riot squads.

Meanwhile, the nine richest South Africans are worth some R309 billion (nearly \$30 billion), a \$5 billion increase in their collective wealth compared to one year ago.

Nowhere have these contradictions been expressed more sharply than in the brutal massacre of striking platinum miners carried out by the government in August 2012 at Lonmin's Marikana mine northwest of Johannesburg. This mass killing, reminiscent of the apartheid-era massacres at Sharpeville and Soweto, was the government's answer to the resistance of the working class to attacks on its jobs, wages and conditions.

On the day of Mandela's death, the Farlam Commission of Inquiry, which is conducting the official investigation into the massacre, announced that it would recess until January 6 of next year.

In the most recent proceedings, Brigadier Adriaan Calitz, who commanded the police at Marikana on August 16, 2012, was questioned by an attorney for the families of the murdered miners on evidence that victims had been shot in the head and, in a number of cases, in the back, contradicting claims made by the police that they were merely defending themselves against strikers armed with clubs and spears.

Earlier testimony revealed specific preparations for a massacre, including the South African police ordering in advance the deployment to the scene of four mortuary vans capable of carrying 32 bodies each. It was also revealed that the police had ordered 4,000 rounds of ammunition for R5 assault rifles in the run-up to the mass killing.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has cited the transcript of a meeting between Lonmin executives and police that has emerged from the inquiry, showing that they reached a common agreement to break the miners' strike by force. The transcript quotes provincial police chief Zukiswa Mbombo as warning that a successful struggle could strengthen demands

for the nationalization of the mines and stating that the strike "has a serious political connotation that we need to take into account... we need to act such that we kill this thing."

An agreement was reached that the company would issue an ultimatum to the strikers to return to work or be fired, and if this failed to end the walkout, the police would move in to break the strike by force. If the workers failed to surrender their weapons, Mbombo said, "then it is blood."

The report also cites the intervention of ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa, at the time a non-executive director of Lonmin, who called the government's minister for mineral resources, Susan Shabangu, the day before the massacre. He emailed fellow Lonmin executives that he had "called her and told her silence and inaction about what is happening at Lonmin was bad for her and for the government."

Ramaphosa later added that the message had produced the desired effect. Shabangu had worked to "get the minister of police Nathi Mthethwa to act in a more pointed way." Ramaphosa, who is often cited as a likely successor of Zuma as president, clearly has miners' blood on his hands.

Mandela's death has temporarily overshadowed damaging corruption investigations into Zuma and his cohorts in the ANC government. Among them is a probe into the lavishing of some \$27 million on what were officially described as "security upgrades" to Zuma's village home in Nklanda. These upgrades reportedly included a large swimming pool, homes for relatives, an amphitheater and a visitors' center.

Invoking apartheid-era national security statutes, the government went to court seeking to block Public Protector Thuli Madonsela from issuing a report on the Nklanda scandal, while ANC officials claimed that her office was responsible for leaking its findings.

Other probes by the public protector have exposed government corruption leading to a nationwide shortage of schoolbooks, sweetheart contracts handed out by a former communications minister to her married lover, and an improper contract put out by the minister of forests and fishery.

These exposures are barely the tip of the iceberg of the corrupt operations of the ANC government, which has turned programs like Black Economic Empowerment into a vehicle for turning party officials and their business cronies into multi-millionaires, even as conditions for the working class majority decline to levels worse than those prevailing under apartheid.



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