South Africa: Mpumalanga premier roiled by African National Congress faction fight

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In a long-running faction fight, the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP) has accused Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza of the African National Congress (ANC) of instigating violence at an SACP lecture on January 25.

Together with the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the ANC and the SACP are partners in the ruling tripartite alliance.

The lecture at KaNyamazane near Mbombela was in memory of slain Mbombela Municipal Council Speaker Jimmy Mohlala and SACP leader Joe Slovo. SACP members were blocked from entering the venue by crowds wearing ANC t-shirts. The SACP was reportedly warned to cancel the lecture by members of the ANC Regional Executive Committee (REC) who resented the fact that former Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa and SACP Secretary Bonakele Majuba were billed to speak.

ANC members reportedly arrived well before the start of the conference and barred access to the hall. Then they gate-crashed a preparatory meeting of the SACP leadership, throwing chairs at the participants.

According to *City Press*, "All this happened while the REC members were standing by and busy giving comments to the media that they condemned the disruption, but were doing nothing to tell the crowds to stop."

SACP members were only able to force their way into the hall with the aid of pickaxe handles, broomsticks and whips. The ANC members followed, throwing stones, bricks and broomsticks that they had brought along. No one was killed in spite of reported gunfire. "Six SACP members, including Ehlanzeni Regional Secretary Bhobert Nkosi, are ... being treated in hospital," *City Press* reported.

"[A]s ANC leader in the province, [Mabuza] has not visited the injured people in hospital or condemned what happened," said Majuba. He added that the premier's leadership style did not inspire confidence.

Mabuza has attracted controversy since beginning his stint in 2009. Phosa, an ex-treasurer-general of the ANC, who preceded him as Mpumalanga premier (1994-99), is his most visible adversary in the tripartite alliance.

Late last year, Phosa was revealed as the source of documents submitted to the ANC's most senior leadership and which purported that Mabuza was a spy of the apartheid regime between 1985 and 1993. Mabuza threatened to sue Phosa for R10 million (US$860,000), with his supporters claiming Phosa was embittered at having been succeeded as premier by someone who once reported to him and who stood as a candidate for the position against Phosa's wishes.

In February 2010, the ANC had to distance itself from allegations of a "hit list," in which ANC members in Mpumalanga allegedly targeted people who stood in the way of access to lucrative FIFA World Cup contracts.

The *Sunday World* reported that two people on the list had been assassinated for blowing the whistle on corruption in the building of the R1.2 billion Mbombela Stadium, a venue of World Cup matches. Mbombela Speaker Mohlala was shot dead outside his house in KaNyamazane in January 2009. Mpumalanga Arts and Culture Communications Director Sammy Mpatlanyane was shot dead in his house in Nelspruit on January 8, 2010.

Vusi Shongwe—then Mpumalanga Sports and Recreation Minister—blamed Mpatlanyane's murder on the same people who killed Mohlala, who was to have testified in the disciplinary hearing of former Municipal Manager Jacob Dladla, himself accused of financial

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mismanagement of the stadium project.

The killing of Mohlala was covered by *Mail & Guardian* sports writer Lucky Sindane. The newspaper believed Sindane's name was on a hit list faxed to the *Lowveld Online* and to the Mpumalanga Safety and Security Department with 10 names on it, including those of the two shooting victims, Mohlala and Mpatlanyane.

Increasingly, the ruling class is unable to limit its faction fights to party, political or even lawful channels. Its representatives switch from white-collar crime to bloodshed and back again. The bourgeois thuggery which is daily reported in the media is a distorted expression of the gigantic pressures produced by the systemic breakdown of global capitalism.

On one hand is the determination of the global elite that workers be made to carry the costs of their speculative losses since 2008 by any means necessary, including criminality. On the other hand is the growing resistance of the masses to the eternal assaults on their living standards, working conditions and dignity.

The moral and intellectual degeneracy at the top of society speaks to the advanced decay of capitalist property relations. The crimes of politicians and chief executives are not an anomaly, but an intrinsic feature of a system that cannot be reformed and must be overthrown.

The Mpumalanga clash between the ANC and the SACP comes as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) of ex-ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema is embroiled in its own controversy regarding criminality among supposed leaders. The EFF has vowed to stand by Papiki Babuile, a convicted murderer who remains the party's North West provincial secretary despite having begun serving a 12-year prison sentence.

The North Gauteng High Court found Babuile's accomplice, William Lesole Malefo, to have fired the shot that killed ANC Regional Secretary David Chika on the eve of the ANC's 2012 Mangaung conference. Malefo is serving a life sentence but remains an EFF North West Provincial Executive Committee member.

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