



## **TOO MANY IRONS IN THE FIRE FOR PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA**

There is no doubt that President Cyril Ramaphosa appears to be making a concerted effort to fight corruption, resuscitate the economy, catch the thieves and rap the knuckles of the civil service drones in his party, but there's not much to show for any action matching his oratory.

His speeches and those of some of his ministers about corruption, poor service delivery, collapsing municipalities, crime, farm attacks and the country's myriad other woes are resounding and evocative. The rhetoric is designed to give the impression of vigour and determination to "set things right", but when the seats are empty and the lights are turned off, we are left with words and unanswered government telephones.

### **CORRUPTION**

While a few official miscreants are currently wearing orange jump suits, others have turned ducking and diving within the judicial system into an art. Former president Jacob Zuma is a past master at this strategy, while the secretary general of the ANC Ace Magashule seems ready to join the club. He appeared in court in November of this year on 21 charges ranging from corruption to fraud and money laundering, and is currently out on bail. How to handle this hot potato is a serious problem for the president. According to some ANC insiders, Magashule should immediately step down from his official position, given his indictment. But the general secretary refuses to do so, and this situation is the president's Waterloo. In place of a quick Magashule trial, the president has suggested the general secretary appear before the ANC's integrity committee, a group hand-picked by the president, a group with no teeth and very limited powers.

In a speech delivered on International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December) by Senzi Mchunu, minister of public service and administration, he passionately declared that South Africa had an "overflow" of political will to fight corruption. The government would fight corruption to the "bitter end", he said. In this respect, the president appointed a commission to expose corruption, and much evidence has been led against miscreants. But when some of the more

blatant of them appeared before Judge Zondo, leader of the commission, they simply refused to answer his questions because they didn't want to "incriminate" themselves. Not to be outdone, ex president Jacob Zuma simply walked out of the commission because he didn't like the questions. President Ramaphosa didn't mandate the Zondo commission with the right to indict anyone. Judge Zondo can simply recommend legal action.

So how is the president going to fight corruption "to the bitter end"? Firstly thieving is in the DNA of thousands of his civil servants and even his cabinet ministers. Secondly, he is referring the already-indicted ANC secretary general to an "integrity" committee when Mr. Magashule has already been charged and given bail on 21 counts! And when is Mr. Zuma going to take his punishment for the hundreds of charges for which he has been indicted? He has avoided jail for years now.

## **THE MUNICIPAL DEBACLE**

In a speech to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Congress on 3 December of this year, President Ramaphosa declared that it was "worrying" that the administration of so many more municipalities in South Africa was crumbling instead of improving. The president declared to the on-line attendees - mayors, councillors, municipal officials and the country's traditional leaders - that although there has been progress over the past twenty years within local authority governance and that the quality of life of millions of South Africans has improved (?), local government certainly has serious challenges ahead. He declared that in the 2018/2019 financial year only 20 of the country's 257 municipalities received clean audit reports, an achievement of only 8%. "We cannot allow the widespread collapse of so many municipalities", said the president with a straight face. But he has already allowed it, for the past 27 years, year after year! He went on to say that "unfortunately many municipalities don't have the capacity (read efficient and honest workers) to do what is expected of them!"

But to this very day advertisements in the media for municipal positions continually state that no whites may apply! "This municipality is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer" state the ads, with nary a thought that these two phrases cancel each other out! This is the cardinal reason why SA's municipalities have collapsed. Mr. Ramaphosa's party's policy of cadre employment is why there is sewage in the streets, no water for weeks in some areas, wholesale stealing, and a 92% dishonesty rate in the financial management of these local authorities. So who is he kidding about "we cannot allow the widespread collapse of municipalities". His party has allowed it and is continuing to allow it.

The ANC made it a policy to rid municipal structures of hundreds of thousands of efficient and experienced municipal workers, to be replaced by ANC chums, relatives and sundry hangers-on, whether they could read or write or not. It has been shown without a shadow of a doubt that these ANC parasites have always been hopelessly out of their depth in terms of the necessary skills needed to run a local government. But no one, let alone Mr. Ramaphosa, moved a finger to remove them. In fact, more and more hangers-on have been added to the municipal salary bill over the years. It has now been reported that legislation is to be presented where it will be forbidden to employ ANC "cadres. (Beeld 4.12.20) in local government. This is defined as forbidding any political "office bearer" to take up a municipal post, but what about all the friends and relatives of ANC officials who are not political "office bearers"?

### **FORKED TONGUE**

In retrospect, promises made by the president over the years have proved to be alarmingly empty, even fanciful. On 14 June 2019, Business Day reported that President Ramaphosa had said earlier in the year that he wanted to "tie white people to trees" because he did not want white people to leave South Africa. Says Business Day: "It may have been an attempt to reassure white South Africans that they have a place and a role to play in today's South Africa and that the economy can benefit from their skills and expertise". In addition, Ramaphosa said at his inauguration that "we need to embrace excellence, not mediocrity". Sensible words, but not carried through. They were just words!

In May 2019 during his election campaign, the president told coloured people in Cape Town that filling in forms and having to tick your race is no longer acceptable. "This practice from the past must go", he declared. (Beeld 4.5.19). He was looking for votes among this beleaguered community. But race is defined over and over throughout ANC policy: Black Economic Empowerment, job advertisements, sport quotas and many other facets of South African life are hampered by this impediment.

### **NOTHING CHANGES**

The corruption goes on unabated. Examples are part and parcel of every newspaper's centre pages. Municipal services hardly exist. The situation is worse not better, despite the president's exhortations to civic workers that "we cannot allow things to deteriorate". "Generators, cold showers, take away foods and pitch dark streets is the norm in parts of North West and Gauteng where municipal service delivery has "completely collapsed". (Beeld 1.12.20).

Raw sewage has flooded unhindered through a private property in Koster in NorthWest. A brand new sewage treatment plant built for the Reagile township near Koster is not in operation because the suppliers of the plant have not yet been paid by the municipality and have thus not handed the equipment over. The municipality simply dug a ditch through which the sewage now flows into the local dam. Residents complain that all they get from the ANC-controlled municipality is “empty promises”. Sounds familiar? The municipal management promised six months ago that these matters would be sorted out, but nothing has happened. Nobody answers the phone.

Areas in Polokwane have been without water for weeks. Many citizens bought water tanks as the water problem was evident four years ago. But the municipality refuses to fill these tanks with water. Only buckets and bottles and other small containers will be filled by the municipal authorities. Business people who need water complain bitterly that they call four times a day to the council offices and there is no reply. The taps in parts of Hospital Park where the provincial hospital is situated have been dry for longer than a month.

If the president is aware of this collapse, why doesn't he employ people who can fix things and get a functioning municipality going again? The answer is the 2021 election. The economic passengers at the municipality are voters, and whatever the president says, the only thing we can count on is that he and his party want to stay in power, at any cost. Come next year, more promises will flow thick and fast and people will unfortunately believe them. The civil servants will vote for the ANC to stay in their jobs.

South Africa has been heavily criticised by the international “Climate Transparency Report 2020” (CTR2020) because this country is one of the worst polluters within the G20 group. This is despite promises made in 2015 and signed up for at the Paris climate change conference. Once again mention is made of South Africa's empty promises, this time by an international agency.

Perhaps the only solution to the vacuous speeches, and the political exhortations by the president and his ministers to “move forward together” and the nonsense uttered on the campaign trail, is to ignore what is said. Some municipal citizens are already paying into trust funds and disbursing their taxes themselves. Listening to empty political promises is an exercise in futility. It's time to take the running of municipalities into citizens' hands in order to save the little we have left in the country masquerading as municipalities. It is not too late.