



CAN SOUTH AFRICA AVOID THE EBOLA VIRUS?

The South African authorities are advising the public that they are “ready and prepared” if the Ebola virus now ravaging the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and some neighbouring countries, makes its way to South Africa. It appears the government has accepted there is absolutely no guarantee that it can be kept out of the country, given the parlous circumstances surrounding so-called border control since the ANC came to power in 1994. This serious situation has been exacerbated by president Cyril Ramaphosa's utterances against preventing “our brothers” from entering South Africa at will. This has resulted in the local resentment by SA citizens against the millions of foreigners who have entered the country illegally. Protest marches have taken place throughout the country, accompanied by the usual violence and looting. The government is facing a perfect storm.

VACCINE

There is no approved vaccine for the current virus strain ravaging the DRC, the Bundibugyo virus. We are informed that the figures for deaths and infections far exceed what is being reported. What is challenging however is the lack of border control which is South Africa's real Achilles Heel in all this chaos. There are reported to be clinical trials in existence for a vaccine for this particular strain, but nothing has been approved yet.

There is however a tragic side to this story. There is no substantial and stable first world presence and concomitant functioning infrastructure in sub Saharan Africa except in South Africa. While Nigeria and Kenya are given glowing publicity by American and British documentary programs, just outside Lagos and Nairobi are miles and miles of fetid slums, where people live in execrable circumstances and where jobs are as rare as chickens' teeth. This type of poverty exists in most of sub Saharan Africa.

Since 1994 under the ANC, South Africa has become a magnet for many poor and jobless foreigners. They saw their chance - a weak and inefficient South African government, many of whose officials would take a bribe at the drop of a hat - was allowing unmitigated entrance into South Africa without a permit. Many foreigners believed they could obtain visas or permits when they arrived, only to be met by official ineptness and laziness, very much par for the course in South Africa. Millions came because there was nothing in their countries. Others came to exploit the lack of law and order in South Africa. Within these masses, there could have been Ebola carriers. It was a perfect storm.

Local resentment against foreigners has been festering for years. But many of these hapless people have filled vital roles in small businesses, repair shops, convenience stores and in agriculture. While SA unemployment is high, many SA citizens refuse to do menial work. Employers complain that they have offered jobs to South Africans, but they have been turned down. More and more foreigners have taken up the slack.

IRONY

The irony in this bizarre double-edged sword is that President Ramaphosa holds an African Union health title - he is "African Union Champion on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response". In this role he "provides political leadership for Africa's response to disease outbreaks like Ebola, Mpox, Covid 19 and so forth. He has been speaking in this capacity as recently as June this year on the Ebola outbreak in DRC and Uganda. He is surely aware that the DRC is woefully unprepared for yet another Ebola outbreak. Its government has had little success over the years in improving the country's health services, as is evidenced by the spread of the disease and the lack of equipment, special clothing and disinfectants to be used to prevent spreading. There is little evidence that President Ramaphosa has had any influence in heading off this latest Ebola outbreak, as he has had in preventing millions of foreigners entering South Africa illegally.

South Africa shares borders with six countries - it has 71 ports of entry, 52 land ports of entry, 10 international airports and nine sea ports. The government says its Border Management Authority (BMA) is now coordinating steps to manage security, trade and movement. It is difficult to take this with anything other than a pinch of salt. Every manned border post's personnel is vulnerable to bribes, and many are taken. While illegals are being repatriated out of the country, there is no guarantee that others are not entering.

The SA government is once again reacting instead of pro-acting. They cannot see ahead, they cannot plan, and they scramble to sort out chaos when it arrives. The ANC government is betraying the millions of its people who have voted for them for thirty years, never mind the people who didn't vote for them. It is those betrayed who have taken the bull by the horns to send back thousands of people to their countries. Unfortunately, the baby is being thrown out with the bathwater. There are many being repatriated who, given the chance via SA efficient officialdom, could have made application for a permanent stay in South Africa.

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