



PAC

PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS OF AZANIA

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Office of the President

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Dear Mr. Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa.

President of the Republic of SA.

Union Building.

Government Avenue,

Pretoria.

RE: SA Lockdown, challenges, consequences and suggestions.

Greetings,

Mr President, Cyril Ramaphosa, we write to you to submit various issues of national importance amidst this COVID-19, issues which we think you will take keen interest in. These are categorized into three: Human rights; health; and economic measures put in place by government.

1. On human rights during the lockdown.

Mr President, in the main, we wish to make it clear that the PAC of Azania supports your call for the national lockdown, and it is doing its own share to see to the success of this measure to curb the spread of the virus. We, however, take exception to the verbal posture and behavior of the Minister of Police, Mr Bheki Cele: his tonality and body language insinuates that he is unworried about the use of violence by the police. As you know, he has a problematic history of inciting violence. This, we believe, emboldens a



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behavior of trigger-happy police patrols and operations. As a result, there have been instances where police have physically beaten a particular category of people, the poorest of the townships and shack dwellers. Some of the evidence of police (include army) brutality has been thinly broadcasted by the Media. We also pause to urge the african people to engage in social distancing and do the best they can to avoid the spread of the virus. For the government, it is advisable that

- The Minister of Police, through you, amend his tone and language that inherently incites violence;
- Your office comes out in public and condemn police violence against the vulnerable sections of our population and minister's tone and posture; and
- There be a speedy investigation, prosecution, and ultimate justice for those who have experienced brutality by the police and the army.

Evictions during lockdown.

We call on government to cause evictions of people to come to a halt during the lockdown. This, no doubt, is consistent with the measures government has already put in place for people to remain where they are and not move around unnecessarily as much as it is good for human rights.

2. On government measures to curb the spread.

We essentially support this call. We do not think it is working properly in townships for obvious reasons that people there are cramped together and live in squalid conditions.

The one size fits all measure is surely counterproductive. For example, the idea that people should stay inside their houses wrongly assumes that they have houses, and that these houses are spacious. This is not true. It is also public knowledge that our people do not all have water (the story of Khayelitsha comes to mind as an example), soap, and the like – let alone gloves and masks. As consequence, we advise that:

- You should, as we do, condemn the beating up of people in their yards and houses; instead they must be encouraged to be in their yards,
- The police should, instead, spend more time educating the people – this implies that they should be more educated on the basics of the measures, and
- Nurses and social workers should also scan the environment and participate in mass education about the virus as they conduct tests.

Putting health measures; acting proactively.



It is concerning that South Africa – with such vast resources – will be subjected to capacity issues if the virus spreads faster. My major concern is the extent to which your government has prepared for the worst case scenario. We should be interested to find out the following:

- How many specific beds are specifically prepared for this case?
- What is the extent of the need for ventilators, and how much prepared is the health sector in this regard?
- If masks and gloves are really useful – something which remains a subject of debate by some – do all nurses have them at work? In the Eastern Cape, as you know, nurses want to down tools in protest against not having necessary implements to protect them.
- We propose that, to deal with the problem of any shortage, private companies should be compelled to produce the much needed implements noted above. We caution that if your government acts slowly, and the spread increases exponentially as a consequence, there will be a catastrophe beyond the country's health sector capacity. We do not want to see what is happening in Spain and Italy happen in Azania.

On vaccines.

The ministry of International Relations, Minister Naledi Pando, said that there are vaccine trials that are taking place.

We wish to get clarification on two things: whether there are vaccine trials taking place in Azania, and the specific areas of our country these are taking place. We ask this because there are allegations that there is an attempt to make Africans a vaccine testing ground. Is this even true in your knowledge and understanding? If it is, we are extremely uncomfortable with vaccines coming from abroad for obvious historical and geopolitical strategic reasons. In principle, these vaccines must be tested in areas that have the highest spread and fatalities, namely in Italy, Spain, US, etc.

On Mass testing.

As much as we are not opposed to mass testing, we still think that targeting a particular relevant group is crucial. We are aware that about 50 000 or so people have been tested so far. Clearly the process is slow and as such may conceal the extent of the problem. We think – if the problem of scarcity and costs of test kits are fundamentally real – it is sensible to focus on testing all people who work at the Airport (and have naturally been exposed to others), and those who have international travel history, including their immediate families and friends they have interacted with. We are unaware that that has been the case. The idea should not be to simply have mass testing for the



sake of testing anywhere in the country; these [mass testing] must be relevant, tailored, and quickly. Specifically, we advise that

- The specific category which should have all been tested by now should be all the workers at the airports and other points of entry, including those people in the identified hotspots, and
- All those who are providing essential services be tested. The logical reason is that they are constantly moving and are necessarily clamped in taxis on their way to work, and at work they interact with people;

3. Economic measures.

In the main, it is sad, though not surprising, that the Credit Rating Agencies (the recent of which in Moody's) should downgrade this country to a junk status. This decision is meant to advance a nefarious imperialist capitalist agenda to frustrate the already weak sovereignty of this country. There can be no other key reason for downgrading this country in the middle of a national crises except an urge to place it under the administration of the IMF whose austerity (forcing spending cut, tax increase, and privatization of all key sectors of the economy) never had positive cases of success across Africa in the whole history of its existence. We think this is the right moment for your government to also look inward and stop relying on oppressive entities like the World Bank and IMF. There is over a R1 trillion sitting idle as a leakage in the savings account, money which should be injected in the economy to deal with the recovery of the country. But corporations are hoarding, under the guise of policy uncertainty.

Measures for small businesses.

We are aware that the Minister of SMMEs has outlined some measures, including provisions of financial assistance to keep them afloat. Our submission is that

- Interests on loans for SMMES should be cut to 0%, and
- This is the right time to nationalize or increase government control of the Reserve Bank in order that it is not subjected to maintaining "fake" independence even in the midst of national need.

We believe that your government has completely ignored the most vulnerable. These are the trolley-pushers; those who live from hand to mouth; and those who are selling at the red robot, and the like. We advise that

- This category of people should be classified under SMMEs as a particular type of a venture;



- The government should then collect data of the people operating in it; and
- Provide a relief for them for what they have economically suffered during the lockdown

The workers.

No clear measure has government made in regard to workers, except – in the main – to hope that businesses will not necessarily retrench them. The reality is different, Mr President: people will lose jobs. Some workers are facing retrenchment. In this case, we advise the following:

- All those who have lost jobs must, through the Department of Labor and Employment, be allowed to file for unemployment. This should create verifiable data of the extent of the socio-economic consequence of the problem.
- They must be given the pay they ordinarily got in the companies they worked for before retrenchments and be paid for the duration of their unemployment. In this connection, the government should put these people to productive labor after the crises. At the end of the day, if their labor was producing value, then their contribution becomes even more crucial for economic recovery.
- A zero interest rate on loans should be done. This is especially crucial for those whose jobs are on the line; living the fate of workers to banks is to subject certain individual workers to the mercy of the merciless, greedy profit-driven banks.

On the unemployed.

The lockdown adds insult to injury as the unemployed might also be dependents of those who are likely going to lose their jobs. Whilst providing food parcels during the crisis time is a good thing, it is not sustainable. The government should

- Provide a cheque for the economically active but unemployed, and
- A data base of these be kept, and that they engage productive labor after the virus has been contained as is suggested early for the retrenched.
- This temporary model, especially the latter, is equally vital in making up for the money that would have been paid, and avoids potential for money to lose its value over time. It goes beyond

4. Coordination, management and communication.

We wish to point out that various ministers and provinces communicate different and often conflicting messages. This causes confusion on the



ground. There is an instance of the sale of tobacco, for example: the minister of police and the Western Cape government seemed to have had a misunderstanding with that of police. The other problem is the constant change of the regulations. Your government needs to manage the lockdown through effective coordination and communication to the public. The singularity of consistent and effective communication cannot be overemphasized.

5. In conclusion.

It is my hope that you will consider these proposals and implement them in the interest of the most dispossessed masses of our people.

Regards,



PAC President Houn. Mzwanele Nyhontso (MP).

