

Zuma undermines National Development Plan

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WHY PRESIDENT ALLOWS CHAOS



EYE ON THE FUTURE: The writer says President Jacob Zuma is to blame for the leadership crises in law-enforcement agencies

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WHILE speaking to local government officials recently, President Jacob Zuma joked that “Anything that goes wrong in the country, it’s ‘that Zuma’, I’m sure even if a person falls from a chair – ‘this bloody Zuma man made me fall’.”

This may be true. But, when it comes to the unparalleled leadership crises facing the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), because as president Zuma is the only person who can appoint and remove the leaders of these institutions, he has to directly take the blame for problems at this level.

Since the beginning of the year, South Africans have watched Minister of Police Nathi Nhleko squandering millions of rands defending the unlawful suspension of Hawks head Lieutenant Anwar Dramat and Gauteng Hawks head Major-General Shadrack Sibiya.

Neither man is facing criminal nor disciplinary charges.

Reports that Dramat has been offered R3-million to resign from the Hawks brings into question whether there is any real evidence against him. Why pay him millions of rands if he can be fired for misconduct?

Rather than appoint one of the many highly professional and experienced men and women in the Hawks to replace Dramat, Nhleko decided to replace him with Major-General Mthandazo Ntlemeza, a man who the North Gauteng High Court found to be “dishonest and lacking ‘integrity and honour’ for lying under oath.

One has to wonder why the minister is willing to risk undermining and perhaps damaging the public credibility and morale of the Hawks by allowing such an untrustworthy person to remain in such an important position.

If that wasn’t enough, in the last few days there have been confus-

ing and distressing news articles about attempts to hold Advocate Nomgcobo Jiba, a deputy director of public prosecutions, accountable for the unlawful abuse of her prosecutorial powers.

Jiba is facing criminal charges and removal from the roll of advocates after repeated court judgments berating her for irrationally and illegally withdrawing charges against Lieutenant-General Richard Mdluli.

A firm Zuma ally, Mdluli is facing a myriad criminal charges ranging from murder to corrup-

tion. The evidence against Mdluli was used last year to fire his second in command Major-General Solly Lazarus.

Despite this Mdluli allegedly continues to be protected from disciplinary sanction by National Commissioner Riah Phiyega.

The leadership crisis in the police and the NPA has substantially undermined their ability to tackle crime and corruption effectively.

It also undermines public trust in these institutions at a time when there is a substantial upsurge in

armed attacks on people walking the streets, relaxing in their homes, working in their small businesses or at shopping centres.

Over the past two years the number of armed robberies has increased by more than 18 000 cases or 50 attacks every day on average. This has contributed to the increase to more than 1 700 murders with four more people killed every day on average than two years ago.

The problem is not new. The National Planning Commission as far back as 2011, during Zuma’s

first term, diagnosed the police as having leadership crises.

It is for this reason that the National Development Plan (NDP) contains very specific recommendations including establishing a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary National Policing Board to ensure clear standards for senior appointments to the SAPS.

It also includes ensuring that the appointment of national and deputy national commissioners of police are based on merit and follow a transparent and competitive recruitment process – which was not the case in relation to the appointment of Phiyega. It is also recommended that all senior officers are assessed to ensure that they have the expertise to fulfil the requirements of the posts they hold. This was not the case in the irregular appointment of Mdluli as head of crime intelligence.

Now, even if these recommendations were to be applied to both the SAPS and NPA, it will take some time for South Africans to feel assured that these important criminal justice institutions are led by capable men and women whose integrity is beyond question.

Given the substantial resources available to the SAPS and the vast expertise of many police officers and prosecutors, the right type of leadership could ensure that they are able to get on top of the serious violent crime wave our country continues to face.

The question is why doesn’t Zuma follow the recommendations of the NDP and use his constitutionally mandated powers to appoint the best possible leadership to the criminal justice system?

We need to ask why he seems to be content allowing chaos to reign in the criminal justice sector despite its toll on public safety?

Perhaps Zuma believes a compromised criminal justice system will assist him in the future if he ever has to answer the 782 criminal charges for fraud and corruption that may one day be reinstated against him.

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