



REPORT ON JOINT ISS/UNISA SEMINAR

Theme: High-level panel discussion: What election manifestos say about crime

Date: 26 March 2009 (10:30 – 13:00)

Place: Dr Miriam Makeba Auditorium, University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria

Speakers

- Panel discussants:
 - **Mr Malusi Gigaba** (African National Congress)
 - **Ms Dianne Kohler-Barnard** (Democratic Alliance)
 - **Ms Nozuko Pikoli** (Congress of the People)
 - **Mr Zolisa Lavis** (United Democratic Movement)
 - **Professor Dirk Kotzé** (University of South Africa)
 - **Mr Prince Mashele** (Head: Crime Justice and Politics Programme, ISS)

Facilitator: Dr Chandré Gould (Senior researcher, Crime, Justice and Politics Programme, ISS)

The imminent general election in South Africa prompted the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the University of South Africa (UNISA) and The Weekender to co-host a public discussion and debate about how political parties propose to deal with the problem of crime and the dysfunctional criminal justice system, after the election. The seminar provided an opportunity for four of the most prominent political parties to discuss what their election manifestoes say about how they intend to address these issues.

The seminar took the format of a panel discussion between the party representatives, a political analyst and an academic. Speakers were asked to answer direct questions from the facilitator and the audience about their proposed approaches to dealing with crime and the criminal justice system. The seminar also launched the latest edition of South African Crime Quarterly (no 27).

The seminar was attended by approximately 150 people, including an SABC television crew. The seminar received television coverage on the 7pm news on SABC 2.

Summary of speakers' contributions

Mr Maulusi Gigaba - ANC

Mr Gigaba noted that after 15 years in government, there would be no change to the ANC's strategy on crime reduction and prevention, rather a continuation of the current strategies. In this regard, Mr. Gigaba made mention of the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), even though the strategy is yet to be implemented.

Mr Gigaba agreed with opposition parties on the panel that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) was flawed and said that the government was in the process of planning an overhaul of the system. He stated that the CJS required 'modernisation' and to this end government would ensure that new strategies would be implemented. He said there was a need for a system of continuous evaluation of the CJS.

On the matter of crime statistics, it was noted that recent media coverage of statements made by the Minister of Safety and Security, Nathi Mthethwa, suggested that there was reluctance by the government to release the statistics as regularly as had been done over the past two years. Panelist from opposition parties expressed concern about this apparent retreat from a system that allowed for transparency. Mr. Gigaba responded by saying that the Ministry was still in the process of establishing an efficient way to gather crime statistics. This is despite the fact that the previous Minister of Safety and Security had released the statistics on both a six monthly and annual basis. His comment resulted in some confusion, that was not resolved. Mr. Gigaba however vehemently denied that the refusal by government to make the crime statistics public as regularly as was the case in the past was an effort to prevent the statistics from being used against the ANC by opposition parties in the run-up to the election.

Ms Nozuko Pikoli- COPE

Ms Pikoli noted that COPE, unlike the ANC would focus on implementation. She stated that COPE agreed with the principles of the NCPS and if her political party were to come to power, they would implement the strategy. Ms Pikoli also said that COPE would address the problem of the lack of skills in the police force by

introducing what she referred to as 'Youth Cadets' as a mechanism to keep young people off the streets, saying that the idea would be to put young people into police stations to fulfil administrative tasks in order to free the police up to be 'the bobby on the beat'.

On the dysfunctional CJS, Ms Pikoli stated that partisan appointment and corruption are some of the reasons why the CJS is not effective and why accountability and responsibility are compromised. She said that COPE would focus on professionalising the public service.

Ms Pikoli agreed with the DA that 'moral regeneration' was necessary to deal with the social ills that the South African society faces and noted that such an initiative should be led by civil society rather than government.

Ms Dianne Kohler-Barnard - DA

Ms Kohler-Barnard said that the DA is conscious of the underlying social causes of crime and that consequently the DA's crime-fighting strategy in the Western Cape involves teachers. She reported that the DA-led City of Cape Town had managed to reduce the crime rate in the Cape Town central business district by 90 per cent.

Ms Kohler-Barnard said that it is the view of the DA that the South African CJS should be informed by international models. She said that the number of detectives needs to be increased by 35 000, the conviction rate must increase and more prisons should be built to reduce crime. She also noted that police corruption hinders efficient policing.

In response to a question from a member of the audience who asked how the DA planned to deal with the fact that the middle classes retreat behind 'gated communities' and thus restrict freedom of movement and interaction, Ms Kohler-Barnard stated that she supported the actions taken by people who need to protect themselves from criminals and that this was a clear indication that the public does not trust the police to protect them.

Mr Zolisa Lavisa - UDM

Mr Lavisa noted that since there is a need to increase the size of the police service, the UDM's remedy would be to use the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) assist SAPS, particularly to staff roadblocks. In addition to this, Mr. Lavisa stated that the SANDF would also be better equipped to manage the 'influx' of illegal immigrants.

Mr Lavisa also noted the UDM's intention to hold a referendum on the death penalty.

Mr Lavisa raised concern about the delay by the Ministry of Safety and Security in the releasing of crime statistics and said that if the UDM were to come into power they would ensure transparency.

Professor Kotzé - UNISA

Professor Kotzé said that crime and social development have both been topical issues in South Africa since 1999, it could thus be expected that political party manifestos would deal with these issues. He noted, however that the manifestos could not provide a detailed description of how parties would address crime. Meetings, such as these were thus an important avenue for exploring the detail.

In comparing the issues that political parties raised in their election manifestos on crime, Prof. Kotzé stated that all parties, with the exception of the ANC, raised concern over the dissolution of the Scorpions. He noted that violent crime was still not being effectively dealt with by police and that the loss and theft of licensed firearms (including those used by the police) exacerbates the problem. To effectively deal with the problems experienced in the CJS, Prof. Kotzé suggested that there should be a national conversation about crime. This would ensure that we have a holistic and integrated approach to crime prevention.

Mr Prince Mashele - ISS

Mr Mashele noted that there was little significant difference between the manifestos of the parties represented in relation to how they intend to deal with crime and the problems of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). All emphasise the need for more police (although the DA was the only party to mention the intended size of the SAPS - they wish to increase it to 250 000 staff). He said that the UDM seems to agree with the ANC that a 'Super Ministry' is necessary to oversee the CJS, although the parties differ in emphasis, with the UDM wishing to see an emphasis on crime prevention, rather than crime combating. Mr. Mashele also noted that none of the parties' election manifestoes address the need to address the social causes of crime in any significant way.