



Vol 1: Issue 32

12 May 2023

## AN OFFENSIVE TOWARDS ONE MILLION VOTES

The 26<sup>th</sup> Congress of AZAPO held in Tshwane last weekend took a bold and daring decision to campaign for One Million Votes in the 2024 Elections. There is no time for self-pity, or blaming the electoral process to justify our lack of desire to fight and change the circumstances. Job seekers do not have a cent, yet they have to have the determination to go out and hunt for work. It doesn't help wallowing in self-pity and complaining that one doesn't have the resources to go out and look for work. We often stress the point that AZAPO's military wing did not have the arms when it was formed and when the first Combatant was trained. Those constraints did not deter the AZANLA Forces to grow and develop into a well-oiled fighting machine armed with weapons confiscated from the enemy.

The 2024 General Elections are around the corner. Elections are important in a democracy because they offer a fallacy for the people to choose a government of their "choice." By virtue of that popular vote, assuming that it is officially declared free and fair, the public representatives are thereby given a mandate to occupy the various governance structures and run the political and economic affairs of the country. Of importance to note here is that the people delegate their power to the public representatives and the various governance structures.

You may have noticed that the "choice" the people have to choose their government is in quotation marks. The reason for that is that there are many factors that interfere with the independent exercise of that choice. The people are never given equal access to messages of the various political parties by the media. Some political parties enjoy a lion's share of media coverage over the others. Some political parties could be listed as those that have virtually zero coverage. This interferes with the exercise of the people's choice to choose. Some political parties enjoy a monopoly of the available financial and material resources through their incumbency to be able to avail tender opportunities to selected businesses that are expected to conduct kickbacks in return. The unleashing of subtle but effective violence also plays a decisive role in the undermining of the independence of the people to exercise their choice.

Despite all these challenges, Elections are the only available mechanism to acquire State power and legislative representation in the current electoral democracy in this country. Therefore, AZAPO has no

choice but to contest every available Elections in this democracy. We will do so despite the fact that all the odds are against us. We will participate within the scope of the imposed limitations and seek to win. We will not complain and stand outside the system. Propelled by their desire to be free, the Azanian people initiated and advanced the liberation despite the odds against them. Involvement in the struggle meant that they were going to be arrested or killed. But they marched on even when they did not have guns to defend themselves. It is this kind of determination that serves as an inspiration for AZAPO to contest the Elections to win despite the challenges we are facing. Those challenges should serve as motivation to go an extra mile to win.

We have seen the challenges of AZAPO being tripled by the signing into law of the Electoral Amendment Act. This Act was supposed to deal with the question of Independents who were not allowed to contest the Elections as individuals. They were required to join a political party to do so. The Act did not just make Parliament and the various legislatures inaccessible to the Independents, it also roped in political organisations like AZAPO and shackled their feet to make it virtually impossible for them to make it into Parliament and fight for Black people. As things stand, and as stipulated by the Act, AZAPO has to campaign throughout the country for 107 000 Signature Votes that will be an indication that the people allow AZAPO to go to the next stage of paying the hefty financial deposits to go and campaign alongside other political parties for votes. Without first getting 107 000 Signature Votes, AZAPO would be disqualified from contesting the 2024 General Elections. That would mean that the Black Voice is forever kept out of Parliament and the various legislatures.

It has to be explained that the 107 000 Signature Votes will be discarded after helping AZAPO to qualify to contest the Elections. Only registered voters can give AZAPO the Signature Votes to qualify to contest the 2024 Elections. So, if you are not registered, your vote will not count. Also, you don't have to be an AZAPO supporter to give AZAPO the pre-voting Signature Votes. That means all members and supporters of other political parties can give AZAPO the Signature Votes and later decide how they want to vote in the main voting process for the General Elections. As a matter of importance, those who see the political need for a Black Consciousness perspective in Parliament will have to vote twice for AZAPO. They will cast their vote as a Signature Vote to help AZAPO qualify to contest the 2024 Elections, and again vote to send AZAPO to Parliament. There is no room for exhaustion and mistake.

These 107 000 Signature Votes are the total number of the Signature Votes that AZAPO has to get from each of the 9 Provinces and the various Regions. In that regard, these Signature Votes cannot come from a Province or area where AZAPO regards itself as strong. They are spread throughout the Provinces and the Regions. AZAPO will make these figures available in other platforms. For now, get yourself ready to stand up and be counted to say the Voice of Biko cannot be marginalised and be kept out of Parliament.

AZAPO is not asking for a favour to be represented in Parliament and the various legislatures. AZAPO is a Liberation Movement that fought for liberation. AZAPO members went to prison and got tortured for liberation. They bled and got killed for liberation. Some of them disappeared without trace, while a number of them died in exile. They sacrificed their jobs and education and went to live on the mountains and forests of foreign countries. Today, many of them are not employable and are with no income as a result of their contributions and sacrifices for liberation. If Parliament and the various legislatures were meant to give content to freedom in terms of realising the aspirations of the struggling people, then AZAPO is qualified to be in Parliament and ensure that which the Azanian martyrs died for finds expression

in Parliament and the development agenda that will ensure that the quality of the lives of Black people change for the better. Through your votes, AZAPO deserve to be in Parliament and continue the liberation struggle outside and inside Parliament.

We should never forget that Parliament is another site of struggle in an electoral democracy. While AZAPO remains an unapologetic Liberation Movement, we do not see any political sense in the call that AZAPO should not ready itself into a political party to contest Elections. It was not the choice of AZAPO that the armed struggle was aborted by the sellout negotiations with the result that all the conditions for that armed struggle were wiped out. If you reject the presently available electoral democracy route, then you have to go the military route whose conditions for waging are for now non-existent. It is therefore our conscious decision that AZAPO is marching with the people to Parliament.