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SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE IS POSTPONING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK PEOPLE

Once more, a civil servant was assassinated this past Wednesday in South Africa. An engineer with vast experience, Nceba Ncunyana, had his car ambushed in a drive-by-shooting on the N2 highway between Qonce and East London near Ntabozuko in the Eastern cape. This Buffalo City Metro (BCM) Head of Infrastructure in his 50s was driving home from a work meeting that took place around 15h00 in Zwelitsha. It turns out that his two bodyguards that were with him were injured in a hail of high calibre bullets. Heartfelt condolences to the family and relatives of Ncunyana.

If you wonder why a simple Metro Head of Infrastructure should be accompanied by bodyguards even when he goes to the loo, it's because Ncunyana survived an assassination attempt in 2021 when 5 men broke into his residence and demanded that he paid them a fee so that they would not carry out their plan to execute him. In August 2022, his car was under a flood of about 20 bullets when he was approaching his East London Residence. His bodyguards managed to return the fire, resulting in the assailants fleeing the scene. Ncunyana suffered a gunshot wound on his arm.

We now know that even Vice Chancellors of universities have to hire bodyguards if they dare investigate and stop corruption. University of Fort Hare Prof Sakhele Buhlungu is a case in point. Several attempts were made on his life. Some lives were lost in that university because the corrupt elements would not allow the closing of the taps of corruption. When I visited my home in eNqweba (Kirkwood) I was surprised to see a Black man driven around by two white armed men. I was told the guarded man was a Councillor with some attempts on his life. I remembered the tens of Councillors who got killed because their Comrades from the same political party wanted their positions. So, they would be killed to force a bi-election to open a space for the "Comrades" eyeing the position.

Further, I remember that the former ANC Youth League Secretary General Sindiso Magaqa was shot in his car and died in a Umzimkhulu hospital. It turned out that they, as members of the Executive Council, exposed some corruption that was taking place in the Council with regards to the construction of a memorial hall. Those accused of killing Magaqa include a former police officer and a businessman. The painful part is that the killers of Magaqa were politically known to him.

This is Black life in a democracy. We are no longer killed by the apartheid police. This time around, we are killed by a bullet coming from a gun operated by the hand of a supposed Black person. To put it crudely, Comrades are killed by their own Comrades. This happens because there are huge sums of money that are supposed to address the development backlog of Black people. Opening the corruption floodgates, the ruling party decided that these millions would be channeled to service providers through the tender model. Connected politicians and thugs hurriedly set up businesses to absorb these millions under the corrupt deal that they would kick some millions back to their political party and fellow corrupt politicians. The result is that the much-needed development never sees the light of the day.

These corrupt but connected politicians hire the services of “izinkabi” (mercenaries) to either threaten or kill people like Ncunyana who are in charge of these massive budgets. For instance, just after the August 2022 attempt on his life, it was revealed on social media that Ncunyana was in 2017 sent a threatening text: “We are asking you nicely, you know how you got the job. I called you but you did not pick. ... If you don’t resign, I will make a plan [and] it’s going to had hurt you badly”.

Apart from the exacting accusation that Ncunyana knows how he got the job, you can see that the extortionist is not happy that Ncunyana wasn’t cooperating by the refusal to answer their calls. It is probably the reason why he was threatened to step down from his job, which would probably be taken over by a corrupt person who would cooperate. By the look of things, and as evidenced by his hiring of bodyguards, Ncunyana chose to keep his job without any cooperation.

These killings are such a daily occurrence that the citizens have become numb and therefore feel no pain. It is like a situation where a dog has been knocked down by a passing car. When that happens, the car doesn’t stop to try and call an ambulance, or alert the police. The passers-by go about their business as though nothing has happened. It’s a dog, after all. It will lie there until it decomposes. Who cares to bury a dog? Burial of a dog is an occurrence that is unheard of in the Black community.

As I was trying to follow Ncunyana’s assassination on social networks, the few posts were cold and indifferent. “Another BCM official has been killed”; “Ziyakhala ke manje” (They’re now on each other’s throats); those were the vague but fatigued posts you could read on the social network streets. Tragically, I myself didn’t really take the trouble of finding out who was this “another BCM official”. It took a call from a distraught friend who told me about the loss of his relative in a drive-by-shooting. That took Ncunyana’s death out of the usual anonymity. I got to know that he may have been on the phone talking to his brother when he was being shot at. That being so, the likelihood is that his brother went through the ordeal of hearing the gunshots and his brother’s traumatic response.

At the time when Black people are supposed to be enjoying the gains of the liberation struggle, they are being killed by their own folks all because of corruption and greed. I have no information that white people slaughtered one another when they were enjoying racially exclusive development and opportunities. Their apartheid government deployed massive resources to ensure safety and security was enjoyed by the white tribe. There was no need for any neighbourhood watch because the police vans were patrolling every street in the white suburbs. There is no indication that the police and intelligence resources in the democratic dispensation are being sufficiently deployed to ensure safety in the Black communities. Otherwise, why is it that Black professionals are dying in their numbers under a cloud of corruption? It takes massive resources and time to produce an engineer or an accountant? Knowing how

prohibitive the circumstances are, it takes double the effort to produce the extremely few Black professionals we have. Yet not a finger is lifted by the authorities to come to the rescue of the Black folks.

This is unfortunate evidence of how Black people have come to accept as a normal routine that they would be killed by their own folks with the likelihood that the killers may never be brought to book. Nobody seems to be paying attention to the fact that these killings are a result of corruption that is reversing the development of Black people hundred years in time. These killings are undermining the fledgling democracy and the expected development for which Black people fought and sacrificed their lives. We deserve better under democracy.