



**NUMSA press statement on the Special NEC decision on NUMSA's posture towards the May National Elections
21 May 2024
Press statement**

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) consulted its structures regarding the upcoming national elections on the 29th of May 2024. Guided by the fact that NUMSA is a trade union that has for decades linked shop floor struggles with community struggles, and that our members are confronted with the continuous deepening crisis of socio-economic conditions of the working class, we represent both the organized and the unorganized, it was impossible for NUMSA to keep quiet and for the union not to take a political posture on the elections. Our decision on this question must serve as political guidance for workers and the working class, without deciding for them. Because as a union we are very clear that in any class-divided society, the dominant class that oppresses and exploits the working class, reproduces itself in the state and over time we have grown to learn that the state in a capitalist mode of production, is nothing but an organ of oppression.

As a militant red revolutionary union which is inspired by Marxism and Leninism and guided by Marxism that: *"communist disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions"*.

We were left with no option faced by these deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the working class and the poor, we had to remember that the trade union whilst it is the prime mass organization that must defend its legal status all the time as correctly advised by Joe Slovo in 1988 in the South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution:

"A trade union is the prime mass organisation of the working class. To fulfil its purpose, it must be as broad as possible and fight to maintain its legal status. It must attempt, in the first place, to unite, on an industrial basis, all workers (at whatever level of political consciousness) who understand the elementary need to come together and defend and advance their economic conditions. It cannot demand more as a condition of membership. But because the state and its political and repressive apparatus is an instrument of the dominant economic classes, it is impossible for trade unions in any part of the world to keep out of the broader political conflict.

Especially in our country where racist domination and capitalist exploitation are two sides of the same coin, it is even more clear that a trade union cannot stand aside from the liberation struggle. Indeed, the trade union movement is the most important mass contingent of the working class."

NUMSA is very clear that in the past three decades, the South African working class and the poor of our country have gone beyond being victims and statistics of the triple crisis of poverty, unemployment and inequality. They go to bed without a plate of food to eat, not just on one day but most days and poverty and unemployment is their daily struggle.

What has become very clear over time in the post-1994 political break through is that what we won was political power without economic power. And this is why in 2013 we said enough is enough, the working class must organize itself as a class for itself.

In 2019 we launched a vanguard party, the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) of the revolution which we continue to build as the working class needs its own vanguard party. In this round of elections the SRWP is not contesting elections, however as the union and the SRWP we are very clear that in a class divided society there is nothing neutral. We cannot keep quiet and allow the working class to vote for their worst political butchers simply because we are not contesting this round of elections. Hence our adoption of this political posture of NUMSA which we are announcing today, to guide the working class on how it should vote on the 29th of May 2024.

For the past 3 decades South Africa has been plunged into a deepening crisis where the masses have continued to be dispossessed, landless and economically marginalised, as it was during Apartheid. Therefore, it is NUMSA's political posture that these coming national elections on the 29th of May must be about a political and ideological clarion call on all political parties whose constituency is the working class and the poor of our country, who are the victims of all failed neo-liberal policies that were advanced by the ANC government, in the context of right-wing capitalist globalisation and, the Washington consensus. Faced with this crisis, as a union having listened and read some of the political manifestos, we have been dismayed by some backward and primitive measures from capitalist right-wing political parties who are contesting these elections. Their mission and task is to attack all the hard won gains of the working class. Below are a few examples:

- Political parties who have no shame in openly promoting xenophobia, and who vow to liquidate the very idea of the existence of trade unions and the very idea of a national minimum wage. They are anti-worker and union bashing champions of labour broking, casual work, and slave wages instead of a living wage.
- Political parties that are extremely patriarchal and have not even moved an inch in understanding the strategic importance of gender equality between men and women.
- Political parties who have gone public to support the racist, Zionist genocide taking place in Palestine and whose policies, aims and objectives, are to continue to deny the African child access to free quality compulsory education.
- Political parties who regard it as a crime to affirm the African majority into ownership and control of the economy, and are doing everything to ensure that blacks and Africans remain on 13% of the land whilst the white minority continues to control over 80% of the land.
- Political parties that continue to champion Apartheid spatial development, right-wing capitalist austerity measures, and the collapsing of the role of the state in the economy. Backward parties whose involvement in politics is to advance privatisation of state assets, and to reject and refuse public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy with a state which must intervene in the economy to direct and re-direct development.
- Political parties who see no need to smash and collapse the inferior apartheid infrastructure which was deliberately built for black and Africans in the township and replace it with modern proper infrastructure that brings back the dignity and true liberation our people deserve.
- Political parties who still want to keep our people away from city centres by promoting apartheid style spatial development which leads to uneven development and unequal access to quality services.
- Political parties that are champions of these inferior conditions suffered by the black African masses that obviously lead to all social ills such as crime, violence, breaking down of the family unit, drugs and various forms of murder and killings. They are the first to champion the call for bringing back capital punishment.

If these political parties are not stopped by workers and the working class, if given the chance to lead, they will take the working class back to slavery. Their mission is not just to privatise and collapse the role of the state in the economy, they are also about privatizing our country's energy provision so that Eskom and electricity does not remain in public hands. It is NUMSA's view that energy must be de-commodified and remain as a public good. Noam Chomsky warned us when he said, *"The standard technique for privatisation: defend make sure things don't work, people get angry, and you hand it over to private capital."*

NUMSA has taken a conscious political decision that we will not dictate to the working class in general which political party they must vote for, it is for them to choose. Just like a union is a voluntary organization NUMSA is very clear that history will judge us harshly if we were to keep quiet and allow our members without guidance to vote for the worst political butchers in the form of these right-wing capitalist political parties who have no mercy for the working class.

All they do in elections is to promise the working class heaven and earth and after securing the votes of the working class, all what they will do, is to attack the same working class. Karl Marx in explaining a state that will form from such backward right-wing bourgeoisie political parties said that: *“the state... is truly a sphere for the fomentation of the most scandalous acts of corruption, of all the scandals of the bourgeoisie, and the arena for its total putrefaction.”*

NUMSA identifies the following political parties as the worst, which the working class must not vote for, and they are:

- Democratic Alliance
- Action SA
- Freedom Front
- Patriotic Alliance
- Freedom Front Plus
- Build One South Africa
- Rise Mzansi
- ACDP
- NUMSA also called on the working class not to waste votes by voting for individual candidates.

NUMSA is not mincing its words about what our country needs. Our country needs a revolutionary political agenda and we are advancing the following demands to all political parties that are voted into power by the working class and the poor:

1. As a militant red revolutionary union we are very firm that there is no replacement in this country for going back to the liberation vision which is about the full implementation of the Freedom Charter, on whose centre stands the affirmation of our people into ownership and control of the economy, in order to restore the land back to the people. The land must be distributed by a democratic state. This is the only way of equalizing power relations in society, and to realize genuine non-racialism, free of patriarchy and a democratic society.
2. As a manufacturing and industrial union we are calling for the building of a democratic state that takes public ownership of all commanding heights, of all our mineral endowments at the back of these minerals we need a state that can beneficiate them, and that can diversify them to build new sectors and champion manufacturing and industrialisation to create quality jobs that are paying a living wage.
3. We demand a state that intervenes in the economy, a state that directs and redirects development, a state that builds SOE's and that plays a catalyst role in the economy by using measures such as procurement, and designations to champion localisation. We need a state that ensures that Eskom remains a public utility and that energy is maintained as a public good, so it continues to deliver into the economy a competitive electricity tariff, to power the economy and electrify our communities at an affordable cost.
4. China has become the power house it is today at the back of driving manufacturing and industrialisation. As we speak, The Peoples Bank of China has established a 41,5 billion dollar (approximately 700 billion rand) funding program to help SOE's buy unsold houses. There is nothing stopping a progressive government, from consciously investing in building proper houses for the people, in order to smash squatter camps and the apartheid form house that we would have characterised as a box of matches and build people proper houses that can restore their dignity. The

state can do this by setting people up into housing co-ops where people are trained to make bricks and to build their own houses, funded directly by the state.

5. NUMSA continues to demand that the Reserve Bank must be placed in the hands of the people, it cannot be an insulated institution whose only role is to champion inflationary targeting and maintenance of high interest rates to protect the value of white wealth whose dominance is untransformed finance capital. The Reserve Bank should be releasing liquidity to enable a progressive agenda of government to move away from austerity measures to have an expansionary budget whose focus must be to build infrastructure in order to stimulate economic activity and to drive demand.
6. There is no replacement for breaking of the strangle hold that has held back the wheels of history for years in South Africa which is the power of White Monopoly Capital which has centralised its dominance within the National Treasury and the Reserve Bank together with finance capital which has been left completely untransformed. This sector has been allowed to do as they wish. It has refused to transform and it is militating against government to champion manufacturing and industrialisation. This is a sector which has been at the centre of allowing capital outflows, both legal and illegal. The devastating blow which set the South African economy back was the liberalisation of trade and the removal of exchange controls that allowed money we desperately needed to be invested in productive sectors of the economy, to leave our shores where it ends up in London, Melbourne and leads to financial speculation. This contributed to serious levels of de-industrialisation.
7. Ever since the global financial crisis, when many countries abandoned neoliberal austerity and ramped up government spending to boost aggregate demand and save jobs, our Treasury has been rigorously engaged in fiscal consolidation—a process of curtailing government spending with a view to contain the increase in public debt. The problem faced by financial capitalists is that if government were to increase spending, their conservative framework requires that government borrows from financial markets by selling bonds. However, since government bonds are among the biggest assets in their balance sheets, the increase in the supply of bonds to fund deficits will decrease the price of the bonds. Therefore, financial capital fights against deficit spending. As a result, because Treasury is controlled by financial capital, Treasury has opted to pursue austerity through fiscal consolidation.
8. As part of our agenda to drive manufacturing and industrialisation the South African government must take the necessary measures to reverse the current failure to transform minerals, energy and finance complex which has consistently advanced one path of development, which has resulted in the extraction of our minerals without beneficiating them. There is an obvious need to declare some of our minerals as strategic minerals, such as coal, and the need to ban exportation of chrome ore and push for its beneficiation to produce ferrochrome. This is a glaring example where China has built several smelters at the back of South Africa's chrome ore whilst they have no chrome ore. A country like Indonesia has banned the exportation of nickel as they have taken a very strategic decision as it is a key ingredient to manufacture electric vehicle batteries.
9. When it was not fashionable to defend Eskom, NUMSA has been very consistent that what we need is a just transition which must be about making sure that we retain existing jobs and we must embark on an aggressive campaign to create the much needed jobs. We have maintained that as a sovereign country we must have a right to decide on what energy mix is suitable to reliably power our economy and to electrify our communities. That is why we rejected, with the contempt it deserved, a foreign agenda to dictate to South Africa that it must dump coal. This being done by the West led by the Empire the USA, with the World Bank and the European Central Bank when their base load in the North is on coal, gas and nuclear.
10. NUMSA has been very clear in the IRP2023 that as a country we must insist on the quality maintenance of power stations to receive 75% Energy Availability Factor to take our country out of the crisis of rolling blackouts that have ruined our economy. The focus of our energy mix must be on dispatchable sources of energy such as gas, nuclear and coal whilst doing everything to connect

other sources of energy such as renewables. As a union we reject the expensive scam of breaking Eskom up into 3 separate divisions as a device whose target is to accelerate renewables without consulting the public, and the mechanism to privatise transmission lines.

11. The ultimate end objective is to privatise the country's energy provision. When this is successfully done the victims will be the public who will lose affordable electricity tariffs. It will be manufacturing and industrialisation which will lose a competitive electricity tariff at a time when we are supposed to go back to basics and industrialize. For example the government needs to take ownership of ArcelorMittal and ownership of Kumba Iron Ore so that we can go back to what was a working competitive cost plus regime to stimulate steel production in the upstream and to create jobs in the downstream.
12. NUMSA is extremely irritated by the DA which has vowed to do away with all incentives targeting sectors such as the auto sector, tyre industry, the rest of the component value chain and the textile sector. The DA's proposition is not to have subsidies for electricity which means growth in all other sectors will be destroyed. This is further illustrated in the DA Industrial Policy Pyramid which effectively removes industry from its industrial pyramid which will not only lead and be harmful in deindustrialising the country. But very clearly the DAs mission is to destroy industrialisation, clearly their plan is to take South Africa back to a police state.

What the DA is targeting is to destroy the jobs of our members and we call on our members, just like when we go on strike we all tool down in order for our strike to be effective. No NUMSA member should vote for the DA as the DA is targeting the job security of workers and the essence of the outcome of what they want to do when they get power, will destroy 6% of the GDP as a result of destroying the auto industry. The impact of such a senseless decision by the DA in terms of backward and forward linkages in the economy will lead to the shutdown of many towns and worsen a situation where already many towns as a result of austerity measures that have been championed by GEAR.

That is why we must do away with austerity measures and the National Treasury must increase allocations to municipalities and go back to cross subsidisation of small rural towns that were destroyed by the introduction of metros. Below is a direct quote from the DA, this is the very same party we witnessed burning the South African flag:

“Perpetual subsidies, which provide benefits based on ongoing operational behaviour. Perpetual subsidies can become difficult to reduce as they eventually form part of the operational budget of beneficiary companies. These types of subsidies are aimed at creating or retaining industries that would not ordinarily reside in South Africa were it not for the subsidy. An example of these types of subsidies includes our automotive and clothing industries, which would unlikely continue operations within South Africa if subsidies were reduced. However, it is not clear that these industries produce benefits to South Africa that justify their high levels of subsidisation. If the subsidies are not yielding an economic benefit larger than the support provided, then their continued provision should be reconsidered. One example is the number of subsidies provided to the automotive industry, with only 9 out of 42 national departments receiving a budget larger than the R31 billion in automotive subsidies provided in 2021. Furthermore, from 2009 to 2021, subsidies to the automotive industry grew by 130 percent, while employment grew by 15 percent.”

13. We must have a government that moves away from targeting the public sector wage bill. Workers in the public service deserve a living wage, all workers in the public service such as doctors, nurses, teachers, police, social workers, prison wardens and traffic officers and that all vacancies in the public service must be filled. It is in this context that NUMSA supports NHI, if President Cyril Ramaphosa thought that he is just signing the Bill and champion austerity he will see the true colours of the working class in that there are no workers who will tolerate a signed NHI in name which is not being funded.

So our support for NHI is on the basis, that the state just like it must drive an expansionary budget it must drive NHI to ensure that there is a real meaningful universal healthcare system.

14. We are calling for a progressive state that will build an aggressive agriculture sector, to deal with land hunger and food hunger. Such a state must be prepared to invest in building irrigation schemes in rural areas, dips to take care of their livestock, such a state must be prepared to give people seeds and tractors. All of this will go a long way to smash poverty.

NUMSA continues to draw its inspiration and its resolve from the revolutionary perspective which was advanced by the liberation movement led by the then ANC that was very clear as it was articulated in Morogoro strategy and tactics in 1969. For years now NUMSA as a union has consistently maintained that there is something fundamentally wrong with South Africa's political transition. The union was clear at an early stage about the ANC's dumping of the liberation vision, its failure to fully implement the Freedom Charter and its refusal to live up to the Morogoro 1969 strategy and tactics vision. It was very clear about what should have been the revolutionary programme and an agenda beyond the political breakthrough of 1994, it said the following:

“Our drive towards national emancipation is therefore in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation. We have suffered more than just national humiliation. Our people are deprived of their due in the country's wealth; their skills have been suppressed and poverty and starvation has been their life experience. The correction of these centuries-old economic injustices lies at the very core of our national aspirations.

*We do not underestimate the complexities which will face a people's government during the transformation period nor the enormity of the problems of meeting economic needs of the mass of the oppressed people. **But one thing is certain - in our land this cannot be effectively tackled unless the basic wealth and the basic resources are at the disposal of the people as a whole and are not manipulated by sections or individuals, be they white or black.**”*

We remain firm that what you have not won in the base which is the economy, you cannot win it in the superstructure which is politics.

NUMSA as a union remains very resolute about the strategic importance of driving international solidarity as international solidarity is a critical component of the struggle of socialism. We are resolute that all wars must end and we applaud the South African government for taking a stand in calling on the International Court of Justice to move swiftly and impose cease fire in Palestine and we demand that the working class must vote for political parties who will not only call for cease fire in Palestine but who will go beyond that and demand that Israel must get out of Palestine and allow Palestinian people to have freedom. Nelson Mandela was right when he said *“our freedom is intertwined with the freedom of Palestine as our freedom will not be complete without the people of Palestine having their freedom.”*

Issued by Irvin Jim
NUMSA General Secretary

For more information, please contact:
Phakamile Hlubi-Majola
NUMSA National Spokesperson
0833767725
phakamileh@numsa.org.za

NUMSA Head Office number: 0116891700
NUMSA YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsUlgwplI34&t=31s>
NUMSA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NumsaSocial>
NUMSA Twitter account: [@Numsa_Media](https://twitter.com/Numsa_Media)
NUMSA Website: <https://numsa.org.za/>