

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY SPEECH

SHARPEVILLE, VEREENIGING

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President: UCDP

It is 54 years ago that 69 people in this area met their Waterloo. As they rose to stand up and speak out to the powers that be in order to make a change in their lives they were mowed down with guns while they were only armed with the discredited dompasses they were planning to hand over at the police station.

We in the United Christian Democratic Party wish to register our commiserations with the families and all next of keen who suffered the indignity of being killed as if they were in a battlefield.

In a sign of healing the wounds of the day, former President Mandela signed the acceptance of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa into law here in Sharpeville back in 1996. This was an effort to say, the new Constitution is going to attend to the human rights and part ways with the past.

We observe 21 March on a national calendar to reflect on what human rights mean to us as a nation.

We believe that the government should be customer-focused meaning that no efforts should be spared to deliver services to people, nationals and foreigners simply because they are human beings.

The UCDP believes that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be loved, they deserve to be respected; they deserve good services from government, they deserve to be consulted if something has to be done for them; programs should not be imposed on them and the need to be tolerated. While some may be agreeable at once others take long to follow and government should therefore not lose patience with them.

We find it difficult that twenty years into democracy we have had police mow down people at Marikana, Bekkersdal, Qwaqwa and Mothotlung. This shows that we may be speaking human rights but we have yet to come to appreciate what that entails.

It is unfortunate that even government institutions are caught pants down in this area otherwise how do we explain R33 billion the Auditor General terms as wasteful and unaccounted for expenditure

It is interesting that advanced countries like Australia only introduced Human Rights legislation in 1998 much later than the new kid on the block among the nations of the world, the Republic of South Africa. The question is what is it that we can show for that?

The rights of people are still being trampled in this country:

- As we go into the elections next month some people will vote for parties they did not intend to because of their disabilities. The electoral officers more often than not cause the illiterate, the incapacitated and the poor to vote for a party the officers favour. People with disabilities have their human rights trampled upon as they are even denied secrecy to their votes
- Inadequate access to education is another instance of our poor record of human rights. Children are caused to trundle inordinately long distances in their quest for education. Even if there may be a semblance of schooling in their area they are caused to go to where the facilities are better. Education is a right and has to be accessible at the doorsteps of our all children
- Human rights demand that services follow people not that the people should go to hunt for their rights
- It is still common practice in the employment world. People are struggling to be remunerated as they should hence the unending labour strikes even in the public service let alone on the mines.
- Unemployment is rife especially among young people
- We still have staggering numbers of homeless people of South African origin let alone the foreigners. The sprawling shacks all over

the country attest to this. A home is a human right as it gives one dignity

- In the health sector we still have clinics in rural areas that open at 08:00 in the morning and close at 16:00 during the week and remain closed over weekends and public holidays as if disease knows the time to attack

There is need for improvement of Corporate Social Responsibility.

We hope and believe that in the interest of promoting human rights government will develop principles to guide mining companies that will engage in resource development on indigenous land. We hope they will work with banks to ensure that their services are accessible to people with vision impairment; very few banks if any have access to auto teller machines for wheel chair bound people because these facilities are just too high and are designed to meet the needs of the normal people.

The lack of Corporate Social Responsibility is also noted during this election phase of our democracy. Some corporate houses are selective in making resources available to political parties. They provide some with all needed amenities such as funds and vehicles to make it easy to reach out to their supporters while other parties are left on their own as Steve Biko would put it. Such disparities in supporting entities that follow a common course make it difficult for other parties. It is almost like putting Usain Bolt in the same track as a man on crutches and expect them to complete the same race. Our companies have to accept the responsibility to respect human rights with the responsibility it deserves.

The lack of Corporate Social Responsibility is also seen in the type of accommodation people who serve and work in those mines for instance live in. They live in decrepit poorly constructed shacks that give no sense of pride to own them and then give a debilitating effect on their productivity.

In reflection to the 54 years that the Sharpeville people were so dehumanised, the 20 years of democracy and the 18 years since the signing of the Constitution of the Republic into law as Act no 108 of 1996 here in Sharpeville, can we say we have met all human rights listed in the Constitution? The UCDP

says it is a long, long way to trundle but we must stand up and speak out against all shortcomings to the lives of our people.

I thank you