

**#UNITE
BEHIND**
A JUST AND EQUAL SOCIETY



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Dear President Ramaphosa and Chairperson Maleka

MEMORANDUM: ELECTRICITY ACTION CAMPAIGN - #FIXESKOM

We have gathered today because of our pain, suffering, anger and fear at the destruction of Eskom over more than two decades. We refuse to accept this any longer.

#UniteBehind and our coalition partners have convened an Electricity Action Campaign (EAC) in order to help #FixEskom. Our campaign includes education, building people's power movements, and litigation to find solutions to the loadshedding crisis.

Let us speak to you directly.

Our rights to health and life is violated by loadshedding

I am Nokupiwa Doyi. My child suffers from a rare bone disease which requires daily medication. His medicines must be refrigerated. When loadshedding occurs, his medication becomes less effective and when loadshedding reaches stage six, his medicines go off. I have come here today to say that my child's life is endangered by corruption and mismanagement

of Eskom. My son's rights to health, life and dignity are violated by government's failure to address the electricity crisis.

Loadshedding violates the rights of women to be free from all forms of violence – we will build our people's power to #FixEskom

My name is Vuyiseka Dubula-Majola. I work with girls and women in the Activist Education and Development Centre. I am also the former General-Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign. Darkness is destroying our lives and women live in a special darkness. Walking home from work at night or leaving before sunrise makes the lives of women and girls darker than it is because of the dangers of rape, robbery and murder. At home, the inability to ensure hot meals causes distress, anger and unnecessary expense. We will #FixEskom through educating ourselves about corruption and state capture at the electricity provider, the maintenance of power stations, the dangers to our lives and the costs of coal. We are learning about solar power and other renewables, electricity generation, transmission and distribution. Our efforts based on research, mass education, mass struggle and other forms of pressure will ensure that your government fulfils its constitutional duties.

The corruption at Eskom violates our right to education

Mr. President, my name is Lukho Nozaza. I am a learner at Thandokhulu Senior Secondary School in Khayelitsha, I am an Equaliser who organises learners at my school for our movement Equal Education. We know you care deeply about education but for the last 15 years the government has made countless promises to us but it has failed us. We were promised that the Norms and Standards for Schools would be implemented but today classes are overcrowded, the struggle for safe and clean toilets at school seems to be a dream. Scholar transport in rural areas hardly exists. The corruption at Eskom further violates our rights. We cannot study properly at night. Our computer labs at some schools cannot function without electricity equipment. Often, we cannot get a warm meal. When our parents are paid

less because of loadshedding or pay more for transport because the trains are not working we suffer. Children are forced out of school because Eskom and PRASA do not work. We know our experience is a harsh one, and, therefore, we commit ourselves to learn about electricity in order to campaign with knowledge.

You can assist us by ensuring every school in working-class communities has solar panels and batteries.

Our communities suffer and LGBTIQ+ people now face greater danger in darkness

Mr. President, my name is Nikita Busika and I am an activist in Free Gender, a Black working-class lesbian organisation based in Khayelitsha. Our community suffers from the damage caused to electrical equipment and appliances such as refrigerators by loadshedding. The power surges when rotational load-shedding ends places us at greater risk especially during the day when no-one is at home. Teaching and learning especially in specialised schools that need electrical equipment are negatively affected. Over 15 years many of our members who are lesbian and our LGBTIQ allies have been brutally murdered, raped or assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As women and girls, lesbians are particularly vulnerable in the darkness caused by loadshedding.

Loadshedding destroys small business enterprise

Mr. President, my name is Lindiwe Myandaba. I have struggled for many years to put together a small poultry farm to support myself and my family. You have seen the death of chickens on television and newspapers. I saved money to buy an incubator for my chicks so they can grow faster. All of them died and my incubator was destroyed in a power surge. Small businesses like mine will not survive and the few people we employ will lose their jobs. Who will feed them? Will government pay us for the loss?

We lost our savings and Christmas food

My name is Nonqaba Melani. I am a member of the Movement for Change and Social Justice in Khayelitsha. I have helped organise this march. Our stokvel saved money to buy our families meat for Christmas. We do this every year. Last year the freezer we used was destroyed by a power surge during loadshedding and we were not aware. When we fetched the meat, it smelt like a dead animal because it had gone off. Our savings and Christmas lunch was gone. And, the owner of the freezer lost their property.

The rights to practise one's trade and work are eroded by loadshedding.

President Ramaphosa, my name is Mushtaq Ally and I support the #UniteBehind Electricity Action Campaign. I own Studio 47, a fabric supplier to many home-based clothing workers. During loadshedding, I spend R200 per hour on diesel to keep my business open. I cannot pass this cost on to my clients because they are poor working women supporting their families. I support #UniteBehind's Electricity Action Campaign.

Clothing workers are on short pay.

Mr. President, I am Belinda Diedericks. I am a textile worker at National Cap in Ndabeni. Loadshedding affects us hugely, it's bad. I am a member of the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union. You know our union very well because our former General-Secretary is Minister Ebrahim Patel. I hope you and he will listen to our cries. At National Cap, we now only get paid for four days a week because we have to sit at work for 2 hours a day when there is loadshedding – unpaid. This is known as short-time. It's not nice. I have to pay school fees, taxi fares and for food. It leaves a big hole in my pocket. And tomorrow it's the same story. We lose at least 8 hours a week, sometimes 10 hours! And what wages does that leave me with to take home? We get too little money and food is very expensive now. I have to ensure my daughter, Katie, has her taxi fare to school every day. Katie's taxi fare is R350 per week and mine is R120 a week. I spend almost R500 on transport a week for the two of us. I get just over R1000 a week. Pressure on us as workers is high. We're stressed out. The bosses

still expect us to make our production targets for the day and the week with loadshedding and all! We the people have to #FixEskom.

The struggle of Thando Makhubu

Thando Makhubu was interviewed by the Sunday Times on 5 February 2023. You applauded him during last year's opening of Parliament because he used his R350 distress grant to start a successful ice-cream business. Thando told the Sunday Times:

Soweto Creamery is my main source of income, followed by photography. As a new father I need every rand received to support my family. At this point we haven't retrenched anyone, but I have to sacrifice my salary, marketing and future plans to run the petrol-eating generator.

I am truly honoured that the President mentioned me and Soweto Creamery, but since things are going from bad to worse I worry where South Africa is headed. I already feel that we live in the most unequal nation in the world. It seems like our leaders are prioritising politics over the South African citizens.

We are committed to help #FixEskom

My name is Zukiswa Vuka. I have been the coordinator of #UniteBehind and for about six years I have been leading the #FixOurTrains Campaign with other comrades. I raise this issue to illustrate the work that we will do to help #FixEskom. President Ramaphosa, you are fully aware that we have exposed state capture at PRASA and that our work led to your suspension of Justice TAN Makhubele who will face an impeachment hearing. You are also aware that #UniteBehind's lawyers have sent you a letter of demand to ensure that PRASA is placed under the supervision of our courts so that our rail service is revitalised. We are ready to work with you to ensure that state-owned entities such as Eskom, PRASA and Transnet are fixed but we are also ready for mass struggle.

Eskom is in severe crisis. Loadshedding is destroying our country. It is estimated to cost our economy R4 billion per day. The effect is much worse for people who are poor and working class, for whom sustained loadshedding is often life-threatening:

- Increased criminality: Without household, street, and area lighting, crime increases. Robbery, murder and rape have all increased under the cover of darkness. The police are less effective and often do not patrol areas under loadshedding, which means further terror for many of our communities, especially women, LGBTQI+, children, and people living with disabilities.
- Fires: Loadshedding forces people to use candles, kerosene, gas and paraffin lighting and heating sources. Power surges from the return of electricity after loadshedding cause appliances and wiring to short-circuit. The combination of the two mean that many people are living in tinder boxes, not homes, particularly those living in informal housing. Loadshedding is often the cause of fires, widespread damage, destruction, injury and death.
- Lack of healthcare: Many people at home require electricity for effective ventilation. Medicines need to be kept in a fridge or freezer, otherwise they lose their efficiency. Life-saving medicines expire due to loadshedding. People who depend on medicines are endangered by the lack of access to cold storage. Hospitals and clinics that experience loadshedding are unable to help patients in need.
- Loss of income, property, savings: Loadshedding causes many small businesses to close down and others to cut back. People lose their employment, income and savings due to loadshedding. Power surges break appliances, costing poor families thousands that they do not have. Our communities are unable to feed their families.

The roots of loadshedding are many and complex. However, there are several clear contributing factors:

- Successive incompetent and dishonest governments have not acted upon repeated warnings that the country lacks generation capacity. Since 1998, the lack of generation capacity has been identified as a key concern. President Thabo Mbeki ignored government policy with

wilfulness and denial. Under the criminally convicted former President Jacob Zuma, state capture and radical excuses for thievery at Eskom by the Guptas and others have caused the power utility to crumble. Development of generation capacity stalled. Yet increasing capacity has not been a priority. Your government has not fared any better. While Minister Pravin Gordhan played a central role in the political defeat of state capture, his record as Minister of Public Enterprises is mired in political interference and micro-management. He has not been able to lift Eskom out of its disaster. Although Minister Gwede Mantashe has been Minister of Mineral Resources & Energy since 2018, throughout the height of the loadshedding crisis, he has not added a single megawatt of power through public procurement. Minister Mantashe, Treasury and SARS also refuse Eskom the right to buy wholesale diesel to lower the stages of loadshedding

- Exacerbating the problem has been the criminal neglect of infrastructure maintenance and upgrading. We now have an aging, sub-standard, polluting fleet of 15 main power stations, consisting of 90 units. Around 45 of these units are out-of-service, which means that we often have less than half the generation capacity required. Due to the lack of capacity, Eskom is unable to switch off units that require maintenance, meaning that they break, eventually.
- From the attempted Russian nuclear power stations to the Gupta's coal interests to contractor-gangster rackets, the energy industry is rife with systemic, deep-rooted corruption. This has hampered development and maintenance of new and old power sources, respectively. There has been insufficient accountability for those responsible for corruption and malfeasance. Minister Mantashe accused Mr. Andre de Ruyter of sabotage although he has made good progress in ridding Eskom of corruption. And, Minister Mantashe is yet to say a word about the fact that Mr. Sello Mametja, the Tutuka Power Station manager, has to have two bodyguards and wear a bullet-proof vest. Mr. Mametja's children go to school with bodyguards and his wife goes to work with bodyguards because he has exposed massive corruption.

- We fully understand that coal must be used by Eskom to ensure base-load. Minister Mantashe is however obsessed with coal. We are coal-dependent and we are poisoning our people and our environment through sulphur dioxide pollution. We are the worst emitter in the world. Eskom's coal-fired fleet is also responsible for the majority of our greenhouse gas emissions. Coal is clearly susceptible to systems of patronage and corruption. There are substantial conflicts of interest within the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE). It is not a stable source of energy, as Minister Mantashe would have us believe. Renewable sources of energy such as solar and wind, are 3-4 times cheaper and renewable power stations can be built in less than four years. Coal-fired power stations can take up to ten years to build.
- There has been insufficient investment in transmission capacity. Consequently, new renewable power stations cannot be put online in ideal areas such the Western or Northern Cape. The generation, transmission and distribution sectors of the power utility have been earmarked for separation for many years. However, this action has yet to materialise. The separation of the utility will allow for greater focus and profitability within each sector. It will also allow for greater procurement of power from independent producers.
- In this vein, Eskom's near-monopoly on the energy market has stifled its growth and health. Independent producers can and must supply renewable energy at lower rates and greater quantities than Eskom. Capable municipalities can produce and distribute their own power.

OUR DEMANDS

1. Accountability requires that Eskom must be freed from the political control of the Ministries of Public Enterprises and Minerals and Energy. An independent Board with credible experience, skills, expertise and without ANC deployees is necessary to provide an ethical,

professional, efficient, effective Eskom that puts the needs of people first. Section 195 of the Constitution compels the government to ensure that Eskom serves the people.

2. Eskom can only function if its management is supported in their efforts to stabilise the entity. Management can only rebuild the morale of dedicated professionals if they are not berated by Members of Parliament who have not taken the time to learn and consult before speaking. We demand that Parliament supports the efforts of Eskom to rebuild the entity its members assisted in destroying.
3. The DMRE must immediately allow Eskom to procure wholesale diesel to decrease loadshedding. If this is not done by 28 February 2023, we will make an urgent application to court and ask for personal cost orders against those responsible.
4. The government, businesses and individuals must be held accountable for destroying Eskom and the lives of many people through state capture. Accountability must extend to the previous regimes of Presidents Mbeki and Zuma, as well as the current regime of President Ramaphosa. We must imprison individuals such as Matshela Koko, Brian Molefe, and the Guptas. We must prosecute the companies that destroyed Eskom with fake and substandard coal. All the criminals responsible for the corrupt Medupi and Kusile deals by government and the ANC with Hitachi must be brought to book.
5. The World Bank and the African Development Bank must cancel Eskom's R450 billion debt. The World Bank was aware of the criminally corrupt deal between Hitachi and the government but still gave money to a corrupt multinational. This debt is unlawful and odious.
6. We demand that you find legal means to scrap the proposed electricity price increase and that government ensures Eskom receives the money it needs. This can only be sustainable if the debt incurred unlawfully is scrapped.

7. Local, provincial and national governments must encourage, subsidise and install household solar for all. Working-class homes should receive free solar panels.
8. Independent Power Providers (IPPs) must be regulated to ensure that they sell energy to Eskom at an affordable and sustainable level.
9. Eskom's generation, transmission and distribution sectors must be separated and transmission scarcity must be fixed by building new power lines and substations immediately.
10. National government must enable and encourage capable municipalities and provinces to generate or procure their own low cost electricity.
11. We demand that the government and the private sector invest in renewable energy sources; not new coal power stations.
12. We demand that the government stops corruption in the energy industry and safeguards existing infrastructure.
13. President Ramaphosa must fire Minister Gwede Mantashe and Minister Pravin Gordhan must retire and create a dedicated Energy Ministry and Department, separating it from the conflicted interests of mineral resources.
14. We demand that the **Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings** takes on our demands and ensures that they are addressed diligently and without delay by the President, responsible ministries, Parliament and organs of state. The #UniteBehind Electricity Action Campaign regards this memorandum as a letter of demand and requires the Select Committee to respond on or before 1 March 2023.

Through mass meetings, workshops and conversations held with our supporters, we have the mandate to lodge the above demands.

Sincerely,

Zukiswa Vuka

#UniteBehind, Movement for Change and Social Justice, Amadoda Qotho, Changing Life, Free Gender, Activist Education and Development Centre, Social Justice Coalition, People's Law Centre for Paralegal Education, Reclaim the City, Neighbourhood Watch Associations, Right to Know, African Climate Alliance, Sonke Gender Justice.

Signatures:

Name:

OBO: President Cyril Ramaphosa

Name:

OBO: Chairperson Dimakatso Maleka

Name:

OBO: #UniteBehind