



# ZABALAZA FOR SOCIALISM

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

DECEMBER 2023

1. Our society is being overrun by crises. These are all related to the workings and consolidation of capitalism under the watch of successive ANC governments. Corruption, cronyism and state capture are not the source of these crises. They are symptoms of two simultaneous processes that reinforce each other:
  - Primitive accumulation of capital by an emerging and aspirant black capitalist class dependent on the state;
  - Neoliberal policies which have changed and reduced the role of the state. The purpose of this has been to cater to the interests of foreign investors and big business so as to maximise profit making.
2. A movement for socialism is desperately and urgently needed in the face of capitalism's worldwide destruction of the foundations of life. But it is possible only if the practices, strategies and perspectives of socialism are renewed.
3. In South Africa, the left has become less relevant in shaping the politics of the country. And so has the workers' movement, within which the left has flourished. A long and bumpy road lies ahead to ensure a socialist future.
4. This is why we have come together to launch Dialogues for an Anti-Capitalist Future - so we can build it now. Build it in the movements we are active in and also build it in our practice. Importantly, this means building it in our relations and solidarity towards each other.

### Our Socialism

5. Our socialism means freedom. It is democratic, it is collective, co-operative and caring. It is based on encouraging the deepest levels of solidarity amongst all oppressed peoples.
6. We are militants, active in the movements of the working class. We believe that capitalism and its drive to dominate and exploit everyone and everything is the root cause of society's ills. It is from this perspective that we believe socialism is the only basis for sustainably ensuring a better life for all:
  - Our socialism is very far from Soviet or Chinese bureaucratic and authoritarian systems. Socialism cannot flourish without democracy. It needs freedom of association and free speech. And it needs participatory and democratic control over production, distribution and consumption of the goods and services needed for a good life and for safeguarding our environment. Socialist democracy is for the full participation of the people. We must have the right to recall elected representatives. There must be majority decision making, especially about the economy and development. And there must be local consent and consensus before starting large projects, so that the rights of all are respected.

- Our socialism requires the collective, social ownership of the banks, mines, factories and big farms, as well as the land and natural resources. The heights and the foundations of our economy must be under democratic control.
- Our socialism is feminist. For us, the ending of the oppression of women is central. We must dismantle all the structures of patriarchy and power which facilitate the domination of men over women. These include economic, legal and cultural structures.

Women should no longer have to bear the burden of care alone. The unpaid labour of women will be ended. Housework shall be shared equally. The provision of decent public services, especially in health and education, will liberate women to play their full role in public life and in the economy. Equal and decent pay at work will ensure greater independence of women.

We need an organised women's movement to counter the waves of violence and killings of women and children in times of crisis. Such a movement must challenge and defeat oppressive traditions and patriarchy.

- Our socialism is for full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex peoples. All people must be able to express their sexuality freely and be allowed to live their lives with dignity. There is no normal sexuality. Our socialism will resist homophobia and transphobia.. Same sex relationships will be legally recognised. Transgender people will be able to freely choose their preferred gender in all official documents and circumstances.
- Our socialism is an eco-socialism. It is devoted to restoring the integrity of our society's relationship with nature.

The climate crisis is the most urgent aspect of the ecological disaster that humanity faces. But it is just one of the many environmental crises that capitalism is creating. Others include threats to marine life from oceans becoming more acidic. They include the loss of biodiversity through expansion of capitalist agriculture. They include the pollution of fresh water and the extreme degradation of the soil.

And these are just some of the ways in which capitalist growth, and the extraction of natural resources, contribute to threatening life on our planet. Decarbonising the economy and restoring eco-systems will require planning. We must take the key sectors of the economy into public ownership, especially energy and transport.

- Our socialism is anti-racist. It will put an end to racialised accumulation of wealth. It will ensure that wealth and land are redistributed, for the benefit of workers and the poor. Our anti-racism is concerned with affirming black people. It will ensure respect for indigenous land rights, languages and culture. Our anti-racism rejects the Apartheid categories which are used to divide the black oppressed. They are blocking the building of a single united nation. Our anti-racism opposes all xenophobia, especially when it makes Africans scapegoats who are, blamed for the impoverishment of the mass of South Africans.
- Our socialism is concerned with the violence of everyday life under capitalism. The ANC's neoliberal policies have brought extreme levels of unemployment, impoverishment and inequality. They are destroying the social fabric in working class communities. They are weakening traditional forms of social solidarity, which are part of working class culture and brutality is allowed to breed. These conditions promote gender-based violence and high levels of criminality.

Socialism will secure the basic needs of the people. It will provide decent work and livelihoods, and a decent environment to live in. It will overcome the brutality of everyday life, restore dignity and provide hope for the future.

- Our socialism is based on international solidarity. We realise that poor and working class people in different parts of the world have more interests in common than with their governments, states and elites. We are for socialism in Southern Africa and the African continent. We are for the integration of the economies of the region, and for the free movement of people. We seek to overcome the colonial borders imposed on Africa. In that sense we are Pan-Africanists.

But we are especially for socialism at a global level. The resources and wealth entrenched in a few hands in the imperialist countries must be used to overcome hunger and disease, everywhere.

### **Our Strategy**

7. The Parliamentary system is a key part of the capitalist system. It is necessary for ensuring the compliance of the majority. It is a system that favours the elite and the rule of the market over the majority. Nevertheless, the road to socialism does not lie in rejecting democracy, elections or majority rule. It lies in extending it to every aspect of society. The road to power also requires entering the current parliamentary space. But the aim is to win elections as just one aspect of winning the majority to socialist goals and of ensuring the democratisation of society.
8. The power of the elites is entrenched in their ownership and control of the economy, the state and the media. We therefore don't believe winning Parliamentary elections is enough to begin the process of building socialism. It is the struggle on the ground that will shift the balance of power. This will reduce the power of the capitalist state to sabotage radical, transformative reforms and repress people's power.
9. Socialism will not be won in the board rooms or commissions. Socialism will be won through militant resistance and class struggle at the workplace, in the community and in society at large. We will build our parliamentary strategy and tactics on mass resistance in the streets and on grassroots organisation on the ground.
10. For us as socialists, parliamentary campaigns and platforms can support and complement the class struggles waged in society. It is struggles on the ground that will open the space for new, bottom-up democratic and participatory structures of direct rule. These can take the form of popular assemblies and councils in workplaces. They will also democratise traditional rule in rural communities and the management of key institutions of all who live and work there.
11. This is why the struggle for socialism will require powerful mass working class formations, trade unions, social movements and rural movements. It will also require ideological struggles and battles of ideas in places of learning, to defend and advance the interests of workers and the poor.
12. We must build these movements around the struggles to win immediate improvements to people's lives. These include ending the violence against women, as well as corporate and state violation of land rights. They include achieving decent work and living wages, as well as decent public services that don't leave essential posts vacant because of budget cuts. And they include ending tax privileges for the rich and stopping corporate profit shifting.

13. We must fight to end mass unemployment with a public works programme. Such a programme must be for repairing, maintaining and building public infrastructure. This includes provision of functioning electricity, water, sanitation, schools, clinics and local roads. And such a programme must also be used to expand renewable energy. Where the state is failing, popular movements should organise social security and repair local infrastructure. They should defend the social fabric in our communities, a task which at the moment is unequally and unfairly the responsibility of women.
14. We will resist such movements becoming transmission belts for party politics. We will defend their independence as autonomous vehicles to unify the workers and the poor in struggle. They must serve as schools for building class consciousness and spreading knowledge to all. In the end, they will be the foundations of the alternative power of the working classes and the dispossessed, which is necessary to challenge the rule of the minority elites.

### **Movement for Socialism**

15. While popular movements are the bedrock for the building of socialism, they are not sufficient. The working class needs its own political movement to direct the class struggle for democratising society on a socialist basis. Such a movement must be able to unify everyday grassroots struggles at work and in the community. It must integrate these with the struggle for state power. This will include participating in elections and mobilising behind the first anti-capitalist reforms, to redistribute wealth and resources. It must unify the oppressed and exploited layers of society around a programme for the reorganisation and transformation of society.
16. Historically, mass working class parties have emerged from upsurges in grassroots struggles. They do not come into being just because socialists proclaim them. This is especially true where the socialists are groups isolated from the everyday realities and struggles of the working class, poor and dispossessed peoples. The building blocks for such a party are its politics, practices and structures. They must be created in the course of ongoing struggles. Such a party will also be the result of different political groupings coming together and forming a united front movement for socialism. In that movement, different views and perspectives should be tolerated and allowed to flourish.
17. Such a coming together will not come about spontaneously. It requires campaigning and advocacy. It needs a catalyst. It needs a dedicated cadre, active in the grassroots movements and in intellectual life. That cadre must work tirelessly to advance socialism and working class organisation.

To this end, we have formed Zabalaza for Socialism.

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