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CIVIL UNREST SURVEY IN KZN: NARRATIVE REPORT

The human impact of the
civil unrest in the greater
Durban area

DEMOCRACY
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME, OCTOBER
2021



Democracy Development Program NPC

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REPORT OUTLINE

TITLE: CIVIL UNREST IN KWAZULU NATAL SURVEY REPORT

1.INTRODUCTION

The Democracy Development Programme (DDP) recently undertook research to assess the human impact of the recent civil unrest in the greater Durban metro and its adjacent locations. The participation of those affected allows them to have a say about the recent events and allows DDP to provide some conclusive data of how Durban residents experienced the unrest to inform its interventions with various stakeholders. The DDP is an NGO based in Durban that has the core mission of deepening the practice of democracy in South Africa. Our core work is entrenched in helping to build strong and active communities committed to holding those in power to account, this is achieved through: encouraging citizen engagement in burning issues within the political sphere, championing public and political forums leading to meaningful dialogues, promoting civic education, election observation and fostering relations between civil society and local government.

The organization is rooted in living and reflecting the core values of ubuntu, where communities benefit from skills sharing, joint opportunities for knowledge transfer and work opportunities. With the organization being based in Durban, and the occurrence of the civil unrest in Durban and surrounding areas, the organization saw it fit to prioritize stakeholder interventions that will be aimed towards understanding the root cause of the unrest and what measures to implement. As an NGO with a strong focus on deepening the practice of democracy, this report serves to record, assess, and archive the events following the unrest and leading up to the mayhem.

The report serves to offer insights informed by lived experiences of those affected and unaffected by the unrest in Durban, these accounts will help us better understand: the root cause of the unrest, the extent of the damage witnessed, possible state interventions, the immediate reactions, and policing efforts in affected communities. Furthermore, the report can be utilized as tool to identify communities that can benefit from citizen engagement programs, where crucial dialogues and interventions can be used to foster positive change.

Beyond this, the report is crucial to the DDP as it allows us to further understand the current sociopolitical climate in Durban and areas affected by the unrest, assist us in spearheading discussions that are aimed at redress, policy change and ultimately radical shifts in our current

status quo. Fundamentally the mission of the DDP is to hold those in power to account. This report serves to accurately record and depict the events and motivating factors leading to the recent spikes of violence recorded in different parts of Durban and the rest of the country.

Nonetheless to also call on local, provincial, national government and civil society to commit towards ensuring the safeguarding of our democracy, strengthening efforts towards reducing poverty, inequality, and the high rate of unemployment. The report should assist us in planning and possibly forecasting future threats to our democracy towards the lead up to the general elections in 2024 and the upcoming local government elections in November. Lastly the report assists us in strengthening our work as an NGO with close relations with members from affected communities in Durban and helps us provide them with a platform and resources to hold dialogues and ultimately resolve the immediate identified threats to democracy and better responses to such occurrences.

2.BACKGROUND TO THE CIVIL UNREST IN SOUTH AFRICA: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world (StatsSA, 2020). The country has a plethora of issues contributing to the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor. These issues range from poverty, deep levels of inequality and a high rate of unemployment, these have been further worsened by the COVID 19 pandemic. Research figures from 2020 show that 25% of the population in South Africa live below the food poverty line of R561 per month, while 40% live below the lower-bound poverty line of R810 and only 55% live below upper bound poverty line of R1,227 (StatsSA, 2020). [Poverty lines](#) are crucial tools that allow for the statistical reporting of poverty levels and patterns when planning, monitoring, and evaluating poverty reduction programmes and policies. These help us measure poverty against the money-metric. These lines focus on both food and non-food items that constitute consumption expenditure in a household

It is also important to understand the varying levels of poverty, the definitions provided are those of lived experiences of the poor and they [define poverty](#) as experienced through hunger, poor nutrition, unemployment or lack of income, poor health, inability to access proper sanitation etc. Due to the multidimensional way South Africans experience poverty this puts them under

vulnerable conditions and exposes them to violence. What further deepens the multiple crises of poverty and inequality here is that it is context specific and largely concentrated among specific demographics and geographic locations. Women and those in rural areas are more vulnerable and tend to experience higher levels of poverty, this is largely influenced by intersecting factors such as race, class and gender and the unseen work of care workers which largely remains as a space facilitated by women and tends to be overlooked and not considered as an area that can be formalized and turned into a key contributor to the economy.

Despite this, the varying levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa can be attributed to the crippled economy, unresolved infrastructural failures inherited from the apartheid government and the post independent leadership failures and ever-growing corruption. With this being the case there have been various interventions aimed at addressing these challenges and these include the: Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) adopted in May 1994 following the end of apartheid rule. Here the ANC outlined a comprehensive plan to reduce poverty and inequality, which emphasized the plans for economic growth, improved service delivery and human resource development for previously disadvantaged groups.

This was followed by the introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy in 1996 to reboot economic activity (Edwards 2005; Edwards and Alves 2006). Later the BEE was introduced and its aim was to assist in realizing the country's full economic potential while helping to bring the black majority into the economic mainstream (Levinson, 2007). This [policy remains widely criticized](#) due to failure of regulation and monitoring by government and it still remains the largest contributing factor to the lack of transformation within companies resulting in further inequality and the formation of a few black elites whilst the rest remain in abject poverty (Saba, 2018).

Subsequently the Skills Development Act, intended to improve the skills of workers by promoting education and training in the workplace. This was preceded by the EPWP targeted towards providing poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed to carry out socially useful activities. Despite these policies, the review of the National Development Plan (2020) acknowledged the efforts and progress to address poverty, especially in relation to expanding social services and social assistance to reach poor households yet there were failures when it comes to the set targets of the NDP and general redress. This occurs due to poor planning,

weak coordination and accountability measures, rampant corruption and looting of state resources meant for the alleviation of poverty as witnessed in the PPE corruption scandal during the COVID 19 lockdown. Other issues include weak state capacity coupled with lack of trust between the state, business, and labor.

With these issues rocking South Africa since the dawn of democracy, it doesn't come as a surprise that the country is dubbed as the protest capital of the world. News reports are filled with daily updates of protest action usually sparked by the lack of provision of service delivery, inadequate access to clean drinking water, proper sanitation, inability to access opportunities of employment etc. The violence displayed here can be understood as a relay of the frustration and anger of living under abject poverty (Friedman, 2021). Fast forward to 2020, where the covid 19 pandemic has exacerbated the extent of this multidimensional poverty, the relief efforts by government to curb the crises were deemed unsustainable and only creating people who are dependent on welfare, yet these measures have assisted in easing the devastating effects of the pandemic, job losses/lack of income. Yet what remains is that the failure to redress and the adequate policy planning, implementation and fragmentation will never resolve the issue of poverty, inequality and unemployment and will always put those who are less privileged in a volatile position.

2.1 CIVIL UNREST IN KWAZULU NATAL

South Africans are no strangers to instances of unrest and to understand the root causes of the recent spikes in violence one must consider the layered history of this country and the increasing disgruntlements which have long gone unaddressed and exacerbated by the COVID19 pandemic. Data shows that protests of service delivery and unemployment have increased gradually over the years, with a nine-fold increase each year when 2004-2008 figures are contrasted with those between 2015-2019 (Visagie, Turok & Swartz, 2021).

Daily news reports are littered with reports of protests throughout the country especially in townships and poorer areas, these often lead to extensive property damage, burning tyres and standoffs with the police (Goebel, 2011). The occurrence of these protests has gotten increasingly violent over the years and depicts the increasing level of discontent by South Africans.

The issues which force many onto the streets with burning rage are usually tied to lack of service delivery examples include failure by municipalities to deliver clean drinking water, the collection of waste refusal, electricity cuts, running sewage, unsanitary living conditions, lack of proper housing and roads etc. There is a plethora of issues which lead to these protests, which go by unaddressed long after demonstrations by concerned and angry citizens. Despite these protests becoming a common occurrence, the large contributing factor remains the current sociopolitical and socioeconomic landscape (Botes, 2018).

Furthermore, the extent of the angry protests displayed by citizens reflects frustrations and concerns around issues of local and national government corruption, unemployment, poverty and inequality. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world (StatsSA, 2020) with a clear divide between the rich and poor, those on the other end of the spectrum often find themselves on the streets just to express their anger and disappointment for their leaders.

Following former Presidents Zuma's arrest for contempt of court, instances of violence were witnessed in the province with calls from allies for his release. Roadblocks were set up and trucks burnt on major highways on both the N2 and N3. This spread to other parts of the province where malls and shopping outlets were broken into, looted and burnt. The lootings eventually spread to the rest of the country, where some malls were looted and damaged (Africa News, 2021). Before the lootings and damage to property took place, social media users noted increased inciteful posts calling on others to join the mayhem. It was only after the situation had gotten out of hand with many rendering these places lawless that members of the SANDF were deployed. The damage observed was estimated at R10 billion lost to stolen goods, burnt and destroyed property, with an even bigger damage to the economy (AfricaNews, 2021).

The [response](#) by the provincial government was marred by speeches and press briefings of the leaders calling for an end to the violence, they pleaded with the protesters to acknowledge the negative impact the violence had on the economy, the damage to infrastructure and the extent these had on small business owners. The government's response was to mobilize community structures into calling for law and order whilst also calling for joint policing efforts from both the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the South African Police Service (SAPS), this led to the recollection of alleged stolen goods where houses were searched and alleged "looters" were asked to [produce receipts](#) of supposed stolen goods found in their properties. These measures failed

to counter the volatile relationships citizens have with the SANDF which was further highlighted during the first lockdown in 2020 where instances of police brutality became a norm in communities around the country where members of SANDF were responsible for exhibiting violence towards peaceful citizens and ultimately responsible for [their killing](#).

3.METHODOLOGY

For this report we used qualitative methods to gather data, this method is defined as a process of systematic inquiry into the meanings which people use to make sense of their experiences and guide their action (Mcleod,1994,78). The objective of this type of study is to generate authentic descriptive accounts of certain experiences (Mcleod, 1994)

The qualitative data gathered included creating a google survey with a list of questions compiled to better understand the human impact of the unrest. The survey was circulated with the intention of collecting response from those situated in the greater Durban metro and its adjacent locations. The questions compiled were aimed at extracting information such as; geographical location, the extent of the damaged witnessed and/or sustained, loss or damage of property witnessed or sustained, efforts by law enforcements to curb the violence, opinions on the deployment of members of the SANDF, assessing the level of different policing methods within different communities in the affected areas, the presence or lack thereof leadership from members of political parties, people's opinions or accounts of what led to the unrest, the display of leadership or lack thereof from local, national and provincial government and lastly how the resurgence of these acts can be curbed and what constitutes the role of citizens in this instance.

These were then collated into a google document survey which was circulated via different social media platforms by DDP such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, Twitter and the DDP website for a certain amount of time to allow for respondents to input their own accounts. These were then used as part of an analysis which forms as a major part of this report. The survey was directed towards respondents who are based in Durban and surrounding areas who were affected and had witnessed the extent of the unrest and were willing to answer a set of survey questions and record their own interpretations of the events and what could have possibly led to the violence and how it can be avoided.

The limitations of this method of collecting data is that the accounts recorded may have been of respondents who have access to the internet and those without the internet could have provided insights that are completely different to the majority of those recorded. The sample size may also have not been large enough to extrapolate the data as a single representation of the entire community of respondents in the affected areas.

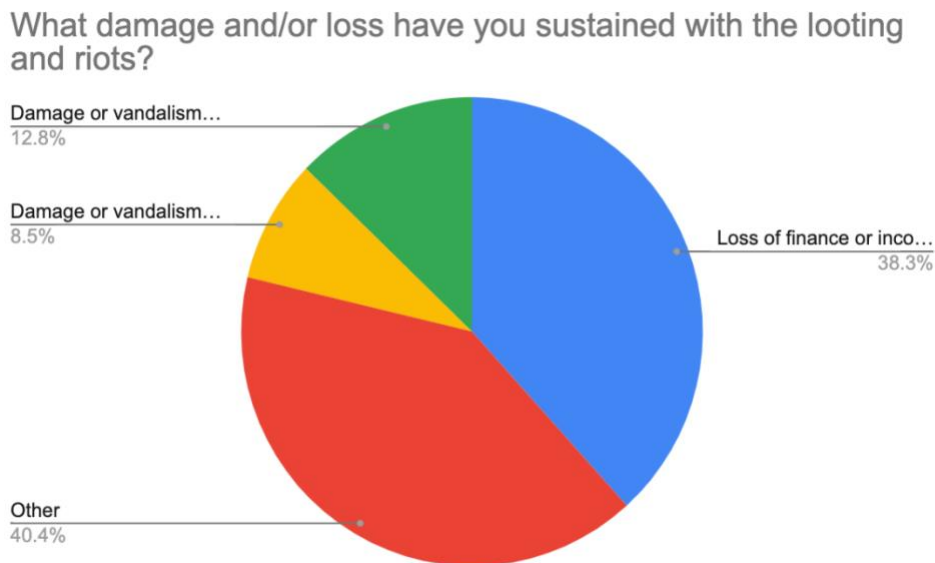
4.KEY FINDINGS

The study was based on data collected from a survey which was ran online and distributed among respondents who are based in Durban and the greater metropolitan areas. The respondents are mainly located in these areas; Adams Mission, Bulwer, Durban CBD, Inanda, Durban North, KwaMashu, Morningside, Newlands East, Pinetown, South Beach and Umlazi.

Damage to property

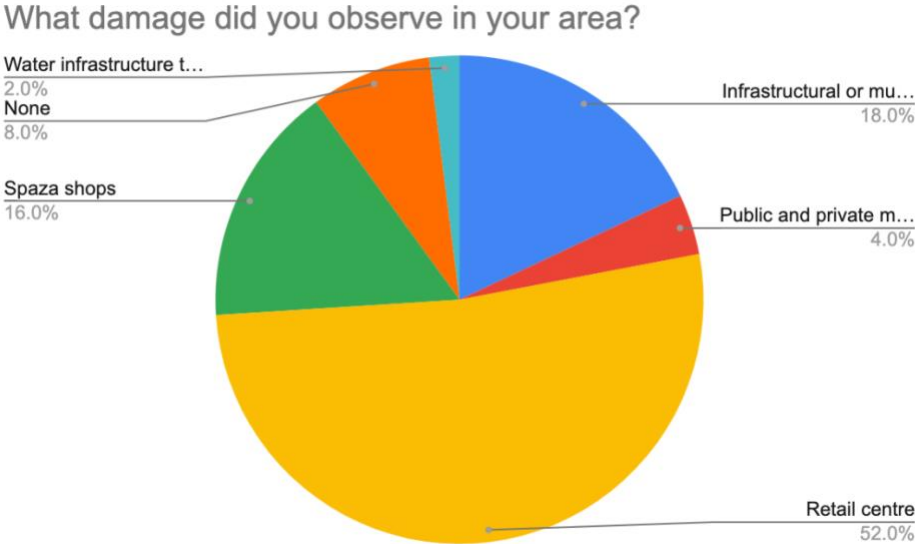
On property damage or loss witnessed out of 47 responses a staggering 40,4 % witnessed damaged other than the mentioned damage to property or vandalism, damage or vandalism of business etc. while 38,3 recorded losses of finance and income while a small percentage of 8,5% was recorded for damage or vandalism of private property.

Figure 1. Damage to property



On damage observed in the areas in which respondents reside, 52% of the responses observed damage to retail centres, followed by infrastructural damage and municipal property damage at 18%, followed by damage to spaza shops at 16%.

Figure 2. Damage to property

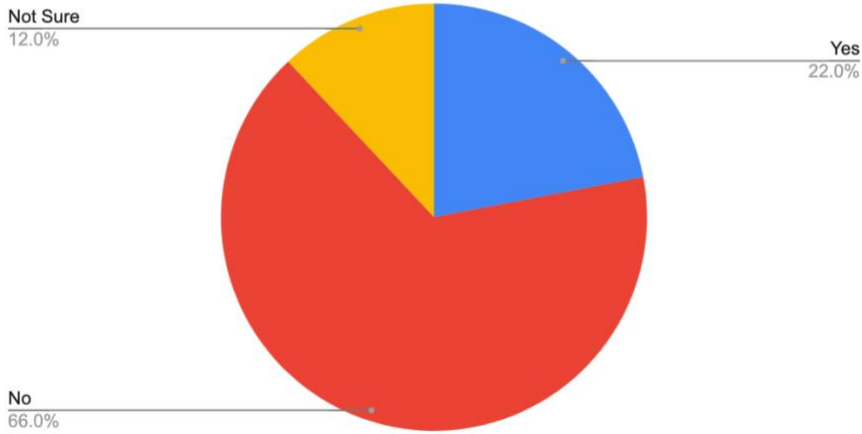


Perception of local law enforcements efforts

When respondents were asked if they deemed the law enforcements efforts in their areas adequate, a staggering 66% said no while 22% said yes and 12% out of 50 responses were unsure.

Figure 3. Law enforcements efforts

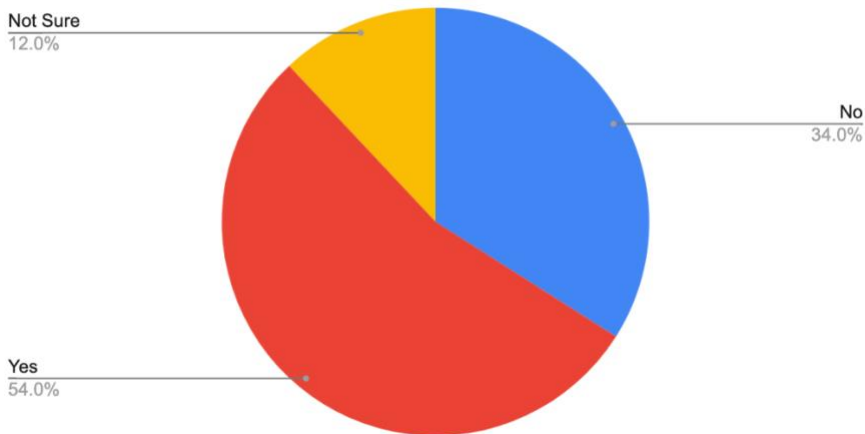
Are you pleased with the local law enforcement efforts in preventing civil protests in your area?



When respondents were asked about their views on the deployment of members of SANDF to affected areas, their responses varied in range with 54% of them agreeing with the decision, and only 34% disagreeing whilst only 12% were unsure.

Figure 4. Perceptions on the deployment of members of the South African National Defense Force

In your opinion, was it appropriate to deploy members of the SANDF in response to the unrest?

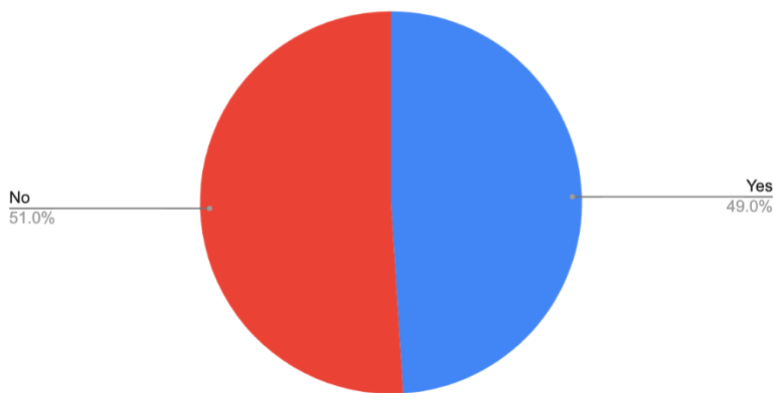


Respondent's involvement in community policing

The question on respondent's levels of involvement in community policing efforts such as Community Policing Forums (CPF), neighbourhood watch and any citizen led group safeguarding of communities saw an almost balanced difference with 51% of the respondents agreeing to being active within these structures whilst and the rest, 49% were not.

Figure 5. Community involvement

Have you been involved in any neighbourhood watch, community policing forum or any citizen-led group to gaurd a...

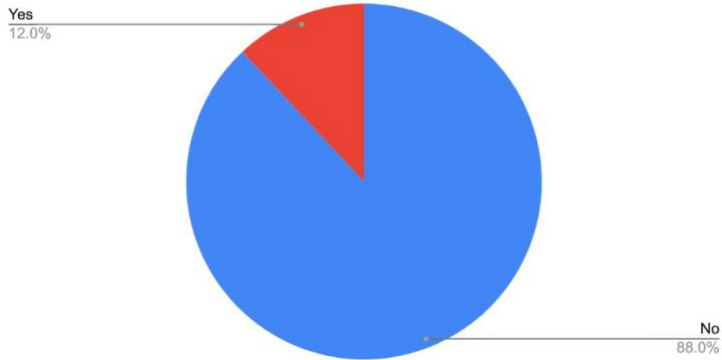


Visibility of leaders during the unrest

Here the results posit an interesting split, when looking at the visibility of leadership members during the unrest and what they could have done to potentially ease the situation the results show that 88% of the respondents disagree that leaders were visible during the unrest and the rest, 12% agree.

Figure 6. Demonstration of leadership in affected communities

In your opinion, did political parties provide leadership during the unrest to calm the situation?

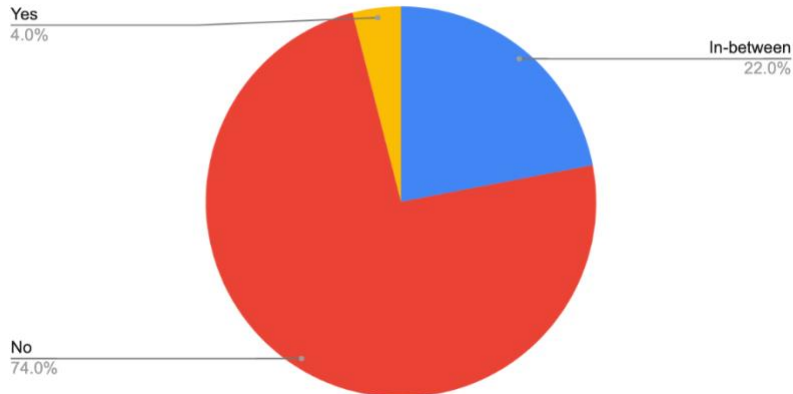


Public's perception of government's response to the unrest

When trying to understand the response of the local, national and provincial government only 4% of the respondents attest to seeing involvement from government. Whilst a staggering 74% disagree and only 22% of respondents who were uncertain.

Figure 7. Perceived governments response to the unrest

In your opinion, has the government (local, provincial and national) responded sufficiently to your expectation?



Additionally, when respondents were asked for opinions on the reason for the unrest, poverty and unemployment are listed as the highest factors contributing to the varying levels of unrest and instability with many mentioning the rampant corruption in most municipalities the violence erupted in. Others point to the rising levels of dissatisfaction in government particularly the lack of relief measures during the COVID 19 lockdown. Former presidents Zuma's arrest is mentioned the least as most believe that the reason for the unrest is purely based on fake news and criminal elements being used to influence the actions of the poor and uneducated.

When asked how the resurgence of a similar situation can be avoided, the respondents mentioned that; the SAPS and the instruments of government need to have a proper response plan and not leave the responsibility for community safety to the citizens who are neither trained nor equipped to handle this situation. The people in leadership positions also need to be mindful of the narrative they use to describe these incidents as it serves to incite and make the situation worse. Government must listen to the outcries of the masses timeously and must have a proper strategic plan for those who may lost their jobs due to lockdown levels. But fundamentally, socio economic challenges such as service delivery, poverty and unemployment should be addressed and dealt with as these instances are borne out of former and current worsening conditions.

Finally respondents had varying views on what the responsibility of citizens ought to be in instances of civil unrest. Respondents mentioned that it is crucial to act responsibly by not getting involved in destructive activities. Many mentioned the importance of establishing neighbourhood watch forums and WhatsApp group for mobilizing against "intruders". Furthermore, moral consciousness to not get involved in criminal activities and working together in a lawful manner to patrol and protect communities is mentioned. Respondents suggest that necessary authorities should be made aware of any criminal activity that could potentially take place. And most importantly businesses that employ and bring services should be protected and citizens should act as "brother's keeper" (some people died because they were being stepped on during looting) and look after others who might be vulnerable. Finally respondents mention lending a helping hand to those who are less privileged and cannot afford basic human needs by buying or sharing what they have.

5.DISCUSSIONS

Analytical pieces and opinions pieces following events which took place in KZN, and Gauteng paint the unrest as one the greatest threats to our democracy. Friedman in his article mentions that the violence which erupted did test our democracy and that it was aimed at ensuring that democracy is rendered useless (Friedman, 2021). Yet he also claims that our democracy won at the end but only time will reveal if this test (the unrest) will strengthen our democracy. Friedman also points to a crucial component surrounding the unrest, which is the longstanding violence in KZN between councilors.

Countless reports especially towards election season are littered with news of political killings, intraparty violence, and reports of fear among contending councillors. This led to the [Moerane Commission of Inquiry](#) being established in 2016 by the premier at the time after an incident involving a meeting being held between ANC members in eThekweni's Ward 54, "where men on the back of a bakkie opened fire, killing Beatrice Dlamini (75), Ncami Shange (34) and Philisiwe Jili (39) and injuring five other women and one man. They were standing in a queue to vote for an ANC councillor candidate" (Makhaye and Mkhize, 2021). Following countless killings in this manner a study revealed during the duration of the commission that the province has a culture of blood-letting, mainly for positions in social and political structures and that the long history of violence cannot be broken without feasible social and economic transformation. For these to be realized there has to be political will from governing structures which has been absent (Makhaye and Mkhize, 2021).

Therefore with the province being characterized by a long history of brutal killings and violence particularly in the political space, what triggered the violence following former President's Zuma's arrest can be attributed to a plethora of brewing factors. Despite this one apparent takeaway is that there is factionalism in the ANC and that Zuma's supporters have proven to be a large component in the ANC's victory in certain wards and regions where it has remained the leading party. This shows the tug of war between those who support the rule of law and those who resort to violence to settle scores. This is an interesting angle especially since there's a lead up towards the local government elections.

Nonetheless, the unrest has certainly highlighted the weak parts of our democracy and potentially exposed those who are against the rule of law and the extent they might go to render democratic structures useless.

Civil society and various stakeholders in south Africa continue to go above and beyond in their efforts to alleviate the after effects of the current government and mitigate its failures and shortcomings that it seems CSO's have taken the role of government which shouldn't be the case. CSO's still find themselves playing the role of pushing back against the state's failure to adequately serve the interests of the people. In recent years, "CSOs have increasingly become the last line of defence fighting on behalf of ordinary citizens against out-of-control corruption, public service delivery failure and abuse of power by elected and public representatives" ([Gumede, 2018](#)).

CSO's have continuously without fail stepped up to the challenge to defend our constitution, democracy and its institutions, fought public and private corruption. In addition to protecting vulnerable South African citizens from government abuse they have strengthened the capacity of the state by often providing alternative public services where the state [fails](#). Thus these institutions will be at the forefront of safeguarding our democracy without fail. Other stakeholders who should heed this call, is the media which has to strengthen its role of being the 4th estate and assuming a strong role of watchdog particularly with instances of abuse which may have been otherwise swept under the carpet such as the state capture, Nkandla gate etc.

Furthermore chapter 9 institutions have to remain as independent entities to the state and serve as guardians to the guardians. Additionally political leaders across the board, are entrusted by the Constitution to respond with due respect and to use due process. [Section 181](#) in Chapter Nine of SA's Constitution asserts that 'no person or organ of state may interfere with the functioning of these institutions'. It recognises that our institutions are 'independent, and subject only to the Constitution and the law; must exercise their powers and perform their functions without fear, favour or prejudice. Other organs of state must assist and protect these institutions to ensure their 'independence, impartiality, dignity and effectiveness'. Therefore no one is above the law and the constitution.

It became apparent during the unrest that law enforcement is underfunded and lacked the capacity to contain the unrest. There was also visible lack of cooperation between investigation task teams

and the [NPA](#) looking at the amount of ammunition that was lost during the unrest (PMG, 2021). Beyond this there were claims and evidence of police involvement in the lootings and slow response from their side especially in cases where violence was reported.

Finally the security cluster has to [reform](#) certain parts of their divisions to ensure effective functioning to avoid such occurrences in future (Cilliers, 2021). An article by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) reveals that removing political interference in senior appointments, further strengthening the prosecuting authority and focusing on competence rather than factional loyalty can improve our security cluster and their efforts in instances of unrest (Cilliers, 2021).

6. SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

To curb the resurgence of the unrest there are a myriad of issues that have to be resolved and implemented such as ensuring that the security cluster acknowledges the failing system and commits to its reform. The 2018 State Security Agency report shows that budget allocated to the police was increased yet the study done by ISS shows that the performance by this sector had decreased drastically looking at key indicators (Cilliers, 2021). Our intelligence services require innovation, experience and professionals who aren't involved in party politics or seek to be seen as loyalists. Rather as suggested by the ISS, senior leadership and practice should be overhauled enabling people to rise the ranks through merit. This can only be established through a transparent, merit-based recruitment process. Crime intelligence should be prioritized along with public protest training to ensure our security cluster is equipped for these instances of mayhem.

Furthermore, what also seems to add to the myriad of issues is that of fragmentation which has proven to be a significant problem in government interventions. South Africa spends close to R1,2 trillion per annum on social development interventions. These include welfare programmes, skills development and job training interventions yet these are not yielding expected results. Despite these shortcomings the existence of social assistance programmes and how they have served as a safety net for those in extreme poverty is something to be considered as a positive factor especially during the COVID19 pandemic. The existence of the grant programme has ensured income support to over 18 million South Africans despite there being shortfalls in that there are gaps where unemployed adults aged 18 to 59 who are physically incapable to work are excluded. The pandemic has highlighted the shocking levels of malnourishment, poverty, excessive

unemployment but mostly for the introduction of sustainable and permanent relief measures for working-age adults with little to no income.

Additionally government has to adopt a poverty alleviation strategy, this has to ensure that inequality, unemployment and poverty is drastically reduced whilst also allowing for collaborations between different stakeholders such as CSO's, community based organizations, businesses, corporate etc. An economy with low barriers to entry must be established, support prioritized to small scale farmers, small business owners and entrepreneurs etc. For this to happen beyond just the establishment of policies or strategic plans government departments have to develop [a toolkit](#) based on shared good practice to help translate words into practical action with measurable indicators.

Furthermore, ensuring that basic infrastructure and timeliness of service delivery is cultivated, improved and sustained to minimize public protests. Evidence has shown that there is a clear link between access to service delivery and better socio-economic conditions and opportunities. Researchers describe capabilities as an individual's and a community's capacity to cope or recover from setbacks and to function in challenging times. People develop skills and knowledge through access to public services and education infrastructure that help them to transition out of poverty, and to social security that protects them against vulnerabilities. Thus these have to be prioritized and maintained to ensure an improved quality of life for those living in poverty.

Finally to ensure that the livelihoods of those affected by the unrest especially small business owners, township economy, it is crucial that various stakeholders such as CSO's, community organizations, local government and municipalities come together to create a politically stable, hospitable and secure environment. This can be established through a number of interventions such as community dialogues, skills transfers, municipal efforts to assist where they can and various other stakeholders to ensure peace building and the promotion of investor confidence in order to positively contribute to the economy.

7. CONCLUSION

The unrest in KZN occurred due to several reasons unpacked in this report, despite the countless reports pointing to the arrest of former President Zuma. Many have pinpointed the immediate trigger to the response in armed violence following his arrest but there have been underlying issues which have been brewing not only in KZN but the rest of the country which have made South Africa volatile and prone to instances of unrest. The report identifies these issues as the lingering presence of deep-seated inequality, the high levels of unemployment and growing rate of poverty which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. In lieu of being resolved the crippling effects of post independent SA corruption, lack of basic service delivery and rising disgruntlements by citizens with local and national government. The ever-growing public protests witnessed daily in South Africa are a symptom of a country reeling with unresolved trauma's, a failing leadership structure inherited from apartheid government, growing concerns of issues which continue to affect and determine the quality of life for those who cannot get a job nor decent drinking water.

The report has shown the multiple ways in which all spheres of government have continued to fail those it is supposed to lead and provide quality service for. Beyond this, countless interventions to solve the crises have seem futile as they are deemed unsustainable and cultivate dependance on the state despite there being research showing that out of all interventions in South Africa since the dawn of democracy, social assistance programmes are still the only means to ensuring South Africans can put food on the table. Although these aren't without criticism, the call for an adequate poverty alleviation strategy along with basic income support for the unemployed should be a call heeded by all stakeholders.

In conclusion, this report has tabled the various reasons, recommendations, and accounts of those who were affected and witnessed the devastating impact of the unrest in communities and to various property and basic infrastructure. These will render helpful in instances of planned community dialogues and identified community interventions dedicated towards peace building and social cohesion.

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