

VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

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FOUNDATION

The Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

<http://www.karibu.no>
voices@karibu.no

The Karibu Foundation
Kirkens Hus
Rådhusgt 1-3
0151 Oslo
Norway



Kairos Southern Africa is a network that provides encouragement and/or support for those who live out a Kairos spirituality, those that carry forward the legacy of the 1985 Kairos document, and those that connect with other Kairos prophetic voices on the African continent and in the rest of the world.

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What's Next for South Africa? Struggling for Justice 20 Years after 1994

On April 27th, 1994, South Africans of all ethnic backgrounds were given the historic right to vote for their future as the apartheid regime fell. On May 7th of this year, South Africans are again going to the polls, though in a different political climate than 20 years before. The movement that led the local fight for equality for all people, the African National Congress (ANC), is now the political party in power and is increasingly being criticized by civil society and churches of straying from their original vision of justice for all.

In this month's "Voices from the South," Rev. Edwin Arrison, General Secretary of Kairos Southern Africa, critically reflects on the lived realities of South Africa 20 years after the fall of the apartheid regime, the country's upcoming elections, and the need for a new "Kairos" moment in South Africa's history.

By: Rev. Edwin Arrison

General Secretary, Kairos Southern Africa



Rev. Edwin Arrison

The ANC's current president and President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, has recently been found partly responsible for spending an inordinate amount of public funding on his private residence; this in a country where about half the population lives below the poverty line.

This is the first time that a constitu-

tional body in South Africa has found him guilty of an offense. Previous attempts to charge him with more than 700 charges of corruption were manipulated and those charges withdrawn in order to prevent him from having to answer to a court of law.

He is also the President who has presided over the deaths of 34 miners at Marikana. A commission of enquiry is still probing the reasons for this massacre.

He is also the President who has presided over the dismantling the movement that held the "centre" of South Africa polity together, and that has ensured a working-class bias for political and economic policy in South Africa. At least R30 billion per year is lost to corruption and mal-administration, and many of South Africa's poor have begun to lose patience with this corruption.



Photo: South African Elections in 1994

Basic things such as sanitation and clean water have to be fought for and poor people have lost their lives because police have been unable to manage these protests.

A new pro-working class united front is now in the process of being launched under the leadership of the biggest trade union in South Africa. Their analysis, bluntly stated, is that a white oppressor has now simply been replaced by a black oppressor.

The implications of all of this for a young democracy have meant the increase of impunity in South Africa and the gradual delegitimation of the new democratic State, which is supposed to uphold the principle that every South African citizen is equal before the law.

South Africans who struggled against the injustice of apartheid now see a new injustice being perpetrated in South Africa, all for the sake of one person, his family and cronies.

A new party consisting mainly of unemployed youth (of which there are at least 5 million in South Africa) and led

by a former ANC youth league leader, has vowed to occupy the Union Buildings in Pretoria from about 10 April 2014 if the President does not step down or if the ANC does not recall him. Whether this occupation will happen or not, remains to be seen. But if it does and if others join in in such an occupation, it means that South Africa faces a possible "Egypt scenario" over the next few weeks.

It also holds grave implications in for the future of South Africa. If the occupation happens and the President refuses to step down, the question may well be asked whether a credible election on 7 May is possible.

People from outside South Africa may well ask: But why does the South African public not just vote the ANC out of power on May 7 if it does not replace such a leader?

This might be the most logical thing to do for those looking in from the outside, but is not the thing that most South Africans who fought for democracy can contemplate at the moment. South Africans do not vote for a person but for a party. The ANC is more than

100 years old and that still carry the hopes and dreams of many people in South Africa. The fact that it has a leader that represents the opposite of Madiba is something that can be corrected, and if the ANC does not do that within its internal processes, it could be that an "Occupy South Africa" movement is the only thing that will do it.

There is at the moment no credible opposition party that can take over the State and govern in a way that would benefit the majority of South Africans, and it would simply be sad that the movement that Nelson Mandela led, be voted out of power so soon after he passed away.

Fortunately, the memories of struggle and the memories of injustice did not die with our founding father, and as new formations take the struggle for justice and human dignity forward, South Africa will once again be saved "from below": by those who are continuing the struggle to ensure that the society truly becomes one that is truly oriented and biased towards those who are excluded and marginalised. We now face a new "Kairos" Moment in our country. ■

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Edwin can be reached at: kairossouthernafrica@gmail.com

