



Marikana reminds us that freedom cannot be negotiated in boardrooms, it must be won in the streets!
17 August 2025
Press statement

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) remembers the Marikana Massacre. Every time the anniversary rolls around we are forced to confront the fact that in post-apartheid South Africa, the lives of the Black and African working class are expendable under capitalism. On the 16th of August 2012 we all watched in horror as members of the South African Police Services, fired live ammunition against unarmed striking workers, whose only crime was to demand a living wage from Lonmin mines. This was a labour dispute that could have and should have been resolved peacefully through negotiation. These workers were not criminals. Their desperate living conditions compelled them to engage in an unprotected strike. These deaths were not inevitable. They were a direct result of a government that has abandoned the revolutionary promise of liberation, and instead, it has entrenched the dominance of monopoly capital.

We also remember the lives of ten workers who were killed in the days leading up to the massacre. These include mineworkers, security guards and the policemen who were killed between the 12th and the 14th of August in the days leading up to the massacre. This remains a dark day in post-Apartheid history, and we must never forget the lives that were lost. To date, the families of all these victims are still struggling to live without their loved ones. The demands made by mineworkers were just and Lonmin, a British mining giant which was built on the bones of colonial plunder, chose violence over peaceful negotiation. Their deaths show that the state continues to serve the interests of capital over the lives of the poor.

NUMSA has long understood that the ANC-led state is not neutral, this has been highlighted by the choices the ANC made when choosing political parties to join the Government of National Unity. The majority of these parties, particularly the DA, the FF+ and also the Patriotic Alliance are organisations that drive an agenda for white supremacy and, for the ownership and control of the wealth of the nation, to remain in the hands of the wealthy minority. The ANC made a deliberate decision to exclude parties like the MK Party and the EFF from the GNU, because it was responding to the demands of the owners of capital and the markets.

The ANC is a capitalist state, designed to protect the property and profits of the dominant minority ruling class. The massacre at Marikana was a calculated act of repression, sanctioned by the highest echelons of government, including President Jacob Zuma (who was president at that time). Cyril Ramaphosa was the chairperson of Lonmin, and he used his political connections to call for 'concomitant action' against workers. This was a green light for slaughter.

These deaths would never have happened if the ANC government had been committed to genuinely transforming the South African economy for the benefit of the African working class. The senseless killing of workers, which was sanctioned by members of the governing party, confirm in our minds that there is no hope for the ANC. Marikana was an example of the state unleashing its full might in order to defend capital against poor workers, who simply wanted a living wage.

In 2013 NUMSA held a Special National Congress (SNC) and in our Declaration we said, *“The Alliance is dysfunctional and captured by right-wing forces. The Alliance is dysfunctional, in crisis, paralysed and dominated by infighting and factionalism. It has been captured by right-wing forces. As a result:*

- *The Freedom Charter, which we understood as the minimum platform of the Alliance, has been completely abandoned in favour of right-wing and neo-liberal policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP).*
- *Those who are perceived to be against neo-liberalism or to be advocates of policies in favour of the working class and the poor are seen as problematic, isolated or purged.*
- *There exists little common understanding within the Alliance of the real objectives of the National Democratic Revolution”.*

And we also said,

“The Alliance is just for elections. It is used to rubber stamp neo-liberal policies of the ANC and not as a centre of power that debates policy issues and implementation. It is our experience that the working class is being used by the leader of the Alliance – the African National Congress – as voting fodder”.

We also called on COSATU to break away from the alliance, saying that *“the time for looking for an alternative has arrived”*, and for this we were expelled from COSATU, a federation we helped to build.

NUMSA’s decision to reject the alliance has been vindicated. Since then the governing party has deepened its ties to Monopoly capital by intensifying destructive neo-liberal economic policies that continue to worsen poverty, unemployment and inequality. Ramaphosa’s government has accelerated the sell-off of state assets, enriching a parasitic elite while condemning millions to joblessness and hunger.

We will not be used to rubber-stamp policies that deepen our oppression. We will not be co-opted into a system that murders workers and calls it democracy. At the SNC we also resolved to establish the United Front, and later we formed the SRWP, a political formation whose ideology is centred on Marxism-Leninism, in order to drive a Socialist agenda for the working class. We were also involved in establishing SAFTU an independent militant federation. At the historic SNC of 2013 NUMSA also took the decision to organise mineworkers and we have been doing so diligently, since that watershed congress.

What is to be done?

We have learned that the ANC has no solutions for the working class. They have even given up on themselves to lead this country out of this quagmire. The only solution to end the perpetual suffering of the masses is to continue to organise the working class and drive a socialist agenda. There are no short cuts. Only a Socialist state that cares for the working class, can achieve the goal of genuine equality and freedom for all. We need a Socialist state that is willing to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy, including the mines and the minerals so that we can all benefit from the wealth of this country, and we can all finally live a life of dignity and genuine freedom and equality.

NUMSA remains committed to this struggle and we will continue to unashamedly promote Socialism as the solution to end the suffering of the masses. And this why we continue to support the rebuilding of and the strengthening of the SRWP and its branches in order to complete the work of liberating the working class majority.

NUMSA will continue to organize, agitate, and build power from below. Marikana was a turning point. It exposed the true nature of the post-apartheid state. It reminded us that freedom cannot be negotiated in boardrooms, it must be won in the streets!
Ends.

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