



NUMSA Press Statement

8 June 2026

NUMSA RESPONDS TO THE COORDINATED ATTACK ON THE UNION'S LEADERSHIP AHEAD OF THE 12TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

NUMSA rejects the allegations contained in the News24 article and places the following on record:

- NUMSA is putting the record straight that its leadership has not stolen union funds and we reject the accusation that our General Secretary Irvin Jim is a billionaire, living an opulent lifestyle.
- No NUMSA leader has been captured by any individual, organisation or business interest. NUMSA is a democratic worker-controlled union governed through constitutional structures that extend from the Factory, local and regional levels and to the national level. Decisions are not made by any individual leader acting alone. They emerge through mandates, debates and resolutions adopted by elected structures representing members across the union's nine regions. The suggestion that a single individual, organisation or business interest could direct the policies and positions of NUMSA is absurd and ignores the reality of how the union functions in practice and the collective processes through which decisions are taken. The repeated lies that we have been forced to respond to are nothing else but the old propaganda strategy to create doubt; repeating lies with the hope that they will be accepted as truth. This campaign seeks to undermine and stigmatise the union and its leadership and must be understood for what it is: a desperate smear campaign in the run-up to the 12th National Congress.
- The relationship between NUMSA and Comrade Roy Singham is a longstanding political relationship based on shared commitments to working-class and anti-imperialist struggles.
- NUMSA is not apologetic about the security arrangements it has implemented for the safety of the General Secretary and other NUMSA leaders and comrades. The security measures deployed for the protection of the General Secretary are not the personal property of

Comrade Irvin Jim. They exist to support the safety and operational requirements of elected NUMSA leadership. NUMSA continues to implement security measures for its leadership when required, based on risk assessments. The union has maintained security arrangements for its leadership for many years, in accordance with mandates adopted by its constitutional structures and in response to security concerns.

- The union remains fully accountable to its constitutional structures and complies with the laws of South Africa.

The full statement below provides the political, historical and organisational context necessary to understand these matters.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) has received a set of questions from a News24 journalist regarding the affairs of our General Secretary, Comrade Irvin Jim. News24 has since published its article. We respond to set out the union's perspective on what is being attempted and to place on the public record the matters our membership and the working class have a right to know.

The timing of this enquiry by News24, through its journalist Sikonathi Mantshantsha, is no coincidence. NUMSA's 12th National Congress is on the horizon, and as a union, our political work to build unity among working-class formations in this country and around the world is intensifying. These developments are unwelcome to those whose project is to crush working-class politics in South Africa. They are doing what such anti-working-class forces have always done when threatened: weaponising the bourgeois media.

The questions News24 has put to us make it clear that the publication is on a project to portray our General Secretary as a billionaire. The line of inquiry and the conclusions have been settled in advance. What the union says in reply will not change what was falsely written; the demonisation of the General Secretary, the union, and the union friends who have stood with the union in good times and bad times. What is clear about this counter revolutionary project orchestrated by these forces, is that they will not spare those who stand with NUMSA, that includes the fact that they will not relent in their project of liquidating its national Leadership. We respond not to persuade the publication but to set the record straight for our members and the working class.

There is nothing new about this exercise. Sikonathi Mantshantsha's desperate story is not breaking news. The substance of these allegations has been recycled at every NUMSA National Congress for more than a decade. In the build-up toward the 11th National Congress in 2022, the same materials resurfaced within the same framework — that the General Secretary had been “captured”, either by the NUMSA Investment Company or by Western interests through Comrade Roy Singham, or both. When those allegations failed to achieve their intended political objective — the removal of the General Secretary from NUMSA's leadership at the Congress — they were shelved, awaiting the next Congress.

They are off-the-shelf again: like old wine in new bottles. The language has shifted from “corruption” to “capture”, from “theft” to “conflict of interest”, and from “misappropriation” to “undisclosed relationships”. The substance has not changed, because there was no substance to begin with. The campaign now under way has a familiar shape, and its intention is clear.

The same propaganda has been waged against Comrade Roy Singham in the United States, where readers have been told that *“circumstantial evidence suggests that the Singham network became an increasingly coherent political project intertwined with the propaganda and disinformation machinery of certain state actors, most importantly the Chinese Communist Party.”* In South

Africa, the propaganda takes its local form: that the General Secretary of NUMSA has been paid by Comrade Roy to drive the union back into the ANC Alliance. The reader is invited to ask: whose class interests are served by these false allegations against the General Secretary, against NUMSA, and against our friend Comrade Roy?

On NUMSA's political character and why it is targeted.

The forces mounting this campaign do not target NUMSA at random. They target NUMSA because of what NUMSA is, as a trade union and politically, and because of what NUMSA continues to do. NUMSA is the union that rejected the South African 1996 bourgeois constitution and the negotiated settlement, which gave the masses of our people political power without economic power. We demanded the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy and of all mineral wealth. We affirmed that the ordinary masses of our people, who remain economically marginalised and dispossessed more than three decades after the April 1994 elections and the advent of bourgeois democracy in South Africa, must come into ownership and control of the means of production.

Our firm stance — demanding full implementation of the Freedom Charter, the return of the land to its rightful owners, the nationalisation of the mines, questioning whether the Tripartite Alliance served the interests of the working class, and demanding a Socialist South Africa — led to our expulsion from COSATU in 2014. We were defined within the Alliance by the then leadership of the SACP as a “lingering irritation” that must be defeated.

NUMSA catalysed the formation of instruments of the working class, including SAFTU. We adopted a political stance against GEAR, the NDP, the Washington Consensus, and the rating agencies coordinated by the National Treasury. That stance rendered us, in the eyes of those who serve capital and the ANC Alliance, which has worked since 1994 to rehabilitate capital, political enemy number one. That is the NUMSA work that has always been attacked and it was during this period and in response to this perspective taken by the union that the question of safety of NUMSA leaders became an important factor.

It is not a custom and practice, let alone the culture of the union to discuss security matters with the media as we cannot be asking our enemies how best we must secure ourselves. NUMSA has always been in the spotlight, and even during the dark days of Apartheid, its leadership, shop stewards, the likes of Jabulile Ndlovu and many others have been attacked and killed by the enemy camp.

However, with the ruthlessness and the slander that has been unleashed on NUMSA and its leadership, which insinuates that these questions of security which involve the union leadership is about the leadership of the union having been captured and abusing power, it is important to state

that NUMSA has always dealt with questions of security in its own structures. It has passed many resolutions that mandated the leadership to discuss the question of security and measures to be taken as strictly confidential.

By way of illustration, we cite a number of decisions taken by NUMSA's constitutional structures on this question. These decisions, together with many others not listed here, have informed and authorised the security measures put in place for NUMSA leaders at various levels where circumstances require them. These arrangements have evolved over time through democratic organisational processes, and we do not require the permission or approval of any media house or unscrupulous journalists in determining how we protect our leadership. Below are excerpts from some of those decisions:

“On NOB security – The CC noted not everybody like what Numsa is currently articulating on a range of matters in the public discourse. We are threatening finance capital and some individual's in the state. For example on the eve of the Cosatu National Congress 2 unknown but well dressed individuals, as could be seen on video, entered Head Office on the pretext of waiting to see someone and eventually left having removed two laptops from the Numsa HO. The previous CC dealt with our own security which has not yet been attended to.”

- NUMSA Central Committee of 5-8 December 2009

“Numsa NOBs must make sure that there are sufficient measures in relation to security for NOBs as well as for the organisers in Rustenburg in volatile situations.”

- NUMSA National Executive Committee 29-30 October 2012

“Threats and security risks

The NEC resolved that we need a risk and security analysis so that the organisation better understand the internal and external threats to the organisation. Refresher courses must be paid for by Numsa (tools) so that a broader layer of leadership is able to defend and protect themselves.

The NOB's must work on developing a security policy for submission to the next NEC. The NOB must also operationalize the Numsa Security Desk as per the CC approved organogram. We must await the outcome of the drafting of the policy before we engage with refresher courses and implementation of security features.

- NUMSA National Executive Committee Meeting 21-23 July 2015

“In the light of consistent propaganda that has been orchestrated against NUMSA and its leadership in the media that we are working to overthrow the state and many other developments in the intelligence space including the new surveillance machines that have been reported on, it has become important to take the issue of security seriously.

The NOBs are seized with the task of making sure that the organisation remains vigilant and necessary meetings to deal with issues on this front will be convened as and when required at all levels of the organisation.

We however want to make an open call to all our comrades, activists and shopstewards that it is time for maximum discipline. Comrades must continue to watch who they socialise with and where they socialise.”

– NUMSA National Executive Committee Meeting 26-28 February 2016.

The political tendencies arrayed against the union are not new. Trotskyist formations, ultra-leftist tendencies and elements of the capitalist NGO complex have, for years, characterised NUMSA's alignment with the National Democratic Revolution, the Freedom Charter, and the discipline of democratic worker control as inadequate to their own theoretical preferences. The political force now being assembled against the union draws on these tendencies, supplemented by figures who were until recently embedded in NUMSA-supported political work. Some individuals who helped catalyse the formations we built have since turned against the union. That turn does not erase the political work. It explains the resentment that has fuelled the present campaign.

On accountability and the democratic structures of the union.

NUMSA is the largest trade union in South Africa, with well over 330,000 members. It remains governed by structures that practise workers' control, internal democracy and democratic centralism: local shop stewards' councils, regional structures, the National Executive Committee, the Central Committee, and the National Congress. The General Secretary, the National Office Bearers, and all elected officials account to these structures continuously and in detail.

The union does not, and will not, supplement its internal accountability mechanisms with unsolicited media engagements whose framing is politically weaponised and indifferent to the way the union conducts its affairs. NUMSA is guided by its Constitution, not by the media.

On the assumptions underlying this line of inquiry and the since-published article, a few questions warrant asking.

Why is Sikonathi Mantshantsha deliberately and consciously concealing the history and context, a context saturated with political assassinations, heightened class struggle in South Africa where NUMSA is playing a leading role? Would the journalist have preferred that NUMSA decline fully

compliant, no-strings-attached solidarity and assistance from sympathetic friends and instead drain the union's dues — paid by metalworkers, who are paid low wages — to cover the operational, organisational, and security safety costs that any threatened public figure in this country incurs? Is the journalist proposing that the leaders of NUMSA, unlike business leaders, foundation executives, NGO chiefs, and other public figures, should account beyond what the South African Revenue Service, the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission, and other competent regulators require — accounting instead to a self-appointed mandate the media has taken upon itself, executing the tasks and responsibilities of the institutions the laws of this country have already constituted?

On the safety of our leadership.

South Africa is saturated with a crisis of political violence and targeted killings. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime has recorded 488 politically motivated assassinations between 2000 and 2023. As recently as Friday, 22 May 2026, three armed men stormed the Pretoria home of Dr Naledi Pandor, former Minister of International Relations and current chancellor of Nelson Mandela University, and held her and her family at gunpoint. As we write this, a founding member of the SRWP, Comrade Letsie Mokoena, was recently laid to rest in Potchefstroom after being riddled with 17 bullets. The leaders of Abahlali baseMjondolo at the eKhenana commune have been assassinated, and their killers remain at large. This is the country in which trade union leaders must do their work.

The safety of NUMSA's elected leadership has been a serious matter for the union since before 2009. The Regional Office Bearers and the National Office Bearers, acting on the mandate of the Central Committee, are responsible for the security arrangements for the union's elected leadership. We do not apologise for taking that responsibility seriously. We will not allow it to be suggested that the leaders of the largest metalworkers' union in this country should travel and live without security, as if the assassinations of Chris Hani, Lindokuhle Mnguni, Malibongwe Mdazo who was shot at midday at the CCMA in Rustenburg, and Chinette Gallichan, and many others had not happened and could not happen again.

It bears stating clearly: NUMSA provides for its own elected leadership. We house our National Office Bearers, including the General Secretary. We assist our staff in acquiring vehicles and provide car allowances. Comrade Irvin Jim has a home provided by NUMSA, like it provides all its national office bearers who come from outside Gauteng. The suggestion that the General Secretary depends on outside benefactors for the basic conditions of his work is false. Where outside solidarity has contributed, it has done so to the specific question of security and security-related operational costs — the need for a safe vehicle for a General Secretary whose work makes him a target, and the broader question of safe accommodation in circumstances of elevated risk.

When NUMSA was expelled from COSATU and the SRWP was launched, the security profile of the General Secretary changed significantly. The General Secretary of NUMSA became the Chairperson and face of political campaigns of the SRWP; effectively becoming a presidential candidate for this country and directly confronting South African Capitalism. It is important to state that the union leads campaigns that frustrates some in the state, and capitalist interests across sectors of the economy. This has invited serious security risk to NUMSA leadership at all levels of the union.

Clearly, the security arrangements required around the General Secretary of NUMSA who was also the Chairperson of the SRWP exceeded the arrangements then in place in NUMSA. It was at this point that it became inevitable to source additional solidarity support. It is within this context that the said vehicle was secured. This is not uncommon for individuals and organisations that confront capitalism. Just as NUMSA's leadership represented a head-on confrontation with capitalism, so too the leadership of Abahlali baseMjondolo which has confronted the sanctification of private property at places like Ekhenana had to be supported to ensure the safety of its leaders.

We make no apologies to anyone for the fact that Comrade Roy Singham, a friend of NUMSA, agreed with this principle of ensuring the safety of working class leaders.

We object to being dragged into publicly discussing the sensitive and necessary security arrangements we make for our leaders. All the security arrangements we make are well within the constitutional structures of the union and the laws of this country. We are disturbed that News24 appears to hold the position that worker-controlled mass organisations of the working class should invite the assassination of their leaders to give peace of mind to News24 journalists. It is extremely shocking that a major concern of Sikonathi Mantshantsha is that the vehicle driven by the General Secretary cannot be penetrated by bullets.

We might as well ask: how much, in rand terms, is a worker's life worth? One million? Two million? Five million? One billion? We at NUMSA think that the life of any worker, whether employed or unemployed, is priceless.

On Comrade Roy and political friendships.

Comrade Roy Singham is a committed socialist. He is a trusted and well-respected friend of NUMSA. His friendship with the union is, above all, political. He is not a "billionaire" of the kind News24 invites its readers to imagine. His mother was from the United States, his father from Sri Lanka, and he grew up in Jamaica. He has been part of working-class and revolutionary forces and came to NUMSA already politically formed. He first encountered NUMSA when the union was already on the political trajectory it continues to follow today, and the relationship developed around a shared commitment to working class struggle, Pan-Africanism, and anti-imperialist

politics. Over the years, this has also become a personal friendship between Comrade Roy and individual NUMSA leaders, including our General Secretary. None of this is strange, and none of it is hidden.

We make no apologies for our relationship with Comrade Roy or for his solidarity with NUMSA and the working class. The attempt to recast a known and openly acknowledged political relationship into the language of “capture” tells the working class more about the nasty, capitalist, political project of those mounting this campaign than it does about NUMSA and its leadership.

NUMSA has no illusions about why this relationship is being demonised. Those who support working-class causes globally, rather than those that fund capitalist causes, are demonised for that work. The lesson that is being taught through the harassment that is unleashed to those who support the struggles of the working class and the poor is that anyone who dares to betray their class privilege, by supporting the working class must be punished in order to set an example for other wealthy individuals who might side with the working class. The attacks now being mounted in South Africa parallels those already mounted in the United States, India, Latin America and throughout the world. They confirm the importance of our work and the political character of those who would discredit it.

On Pan Africa Today and the work of international solidarity.

The suggestion that NUMSA’s involvement with Pan Africa Today (PAT) amounts to capture by an external entity is rubbish. NUMSA is one of the forces that helped form PAT to coordinate the struggles of the working class across the African continent and globally, within what has become the International Peoples’ Assembly. The internationalist orientation of our work is constitutional. That working-class internationalism has political enemies should surprise no one.

To our members, our shop stewards, and the working class of South Africa.

This attack will not succeed. It did not succeed in its earlier iterations, and it will not succeed now. The political work of the union continues. NUMSA played an important role at the Conference of the Left, held from 29 to 31 May 2026, where we advanced the work of building unity among working-class formations in this country.

The 12th National Congress is on the horizon, and the political programme to be placed before our members is the one developed through our own structures, in line with the political line we have collectively decided. It is also important to remind these desperate forces that NUMSA has never elected its national leadership by arrangement. NUMSA members at a local level, regional congresses and at the 12th national congress, have the absolute right to nominate and to elect the

leadership they choose to elect. The work of uniting the working class behind a revolutionary working-class agenda will not be halted by the bourgeois media, by our critics, or by those who were our friends yesterday and have become our enemies today.

The current leadership of the union reaches the end of its mandate at the 12th National Congress in December. To those who position themselves to assume that mandate after us, we offer this: to lead NUMSA is to unite metalworkers, to stand with them when they challenge the bosses and the bourgeois state, to defend them against dismissal, and to organise them around collective bargaining for better wages, conditions, and benefits. That is the work. Everything else — including the noise being generated around our affairs at this moment — is secondary to it.

We assure all the members of NUMSA that their union is safe. NUMSA leadership has stolen no money, we are not involved in any scandal or corruption to benefit ourselves, our leadership has not been captured and our conscience is clear. We have been in the factories fighting job loss blood baths, defending workers jobs, negotiating across our sectors in an economy which has been bleeding jobs. We secured benefits and wage increases that improve the lot of our members through collective bargaining. We are currently busy fighting to defend collapsing sectors, to reverse de-industrialisation and to create jobs. We have just secured a groundbreaking deal, which the NUMSA national leadership led by the GS has negotiated to save our smelters.

We are in the silly season of elections as we head towards our 12th National Congress. Our members should expect to hear a lot of this kind of noise, as anti-working-class forces and union bashers and anti-NUMSA forces work to secure positions for their preferred candidates in the national leadership of the union with an intention to do exactly what they accuse us about, which is to capture the union for their selfish capitalist greedy mission. The task in our hands is to remain vigilant, the enemy is vigilant. Our members must consistently strive for maximum unity and to continue to root our union in its constitution and ensure that it remains a spear and a shield in the hands of workers as we fight against the bosses and the bourgeois state.

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