



**PARLIAMENT**  
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1 March 2021

Dear Press Ombudsman

Sunday Times edition of 28 February 2021

On behalf of the Democratic Alliance, I hereby request that you compel a retraction and correction from the Sunday Times of two specific sentences published in the lead article of yesterday's Sunday Times (28 February 2021 edition).

This article is based solely on an interview where journalists Caiphus Kgosana and Thabo Mokone put questions to DA leader John Steenhuisen.

I attach a full transcript of the one-hour interview as proof that these two sentences misrepresent Mr Steenhuisen's words. I ask simply that you act without fear or favour in defending the truth.

The first inaccurate sentence which requires retraction is:

*"DA leader John Steenhuisen has opened the door to a possible coalition with the ANC should there be a stalemate in the 2024 elections – but only if President Cyril Ramaphosa is still leader."*

This is a misrepresentation of what Mr Steenhuisen said.

The second inaccurate sentence which requires retraction is:

*"Steenhuisen's stance marks a significant departure for the DA, which has long been opposed to any co-operation with the ANC."*

This is simply false.

Nowhere in the interview did Mr Steenhuisen say the DA would form a coalition with the ANC. Rather he said, just as past DA leaders Mmusi Maimane and Helen Zille have said before him, that the DA will work with reform-minded people within any party,

including the ANC, who share the DA's agenda for economic growth and prosperity.

In Mr Steenhuisen's reply to the President's SONA address just two weeks ago (16 February 2021), he spoke of the reformist bills that the DA will be tabling in Parliament over the next five months, each of which bills deals with an issue critical to SA's economic recovery.

Steenhuisen said:

*"It's not necessary for the entire ANC caucus to back these bills. It's not even necessary for half the caucus to do so. If our reform agenda is supported by the majority of these opposition benches, then we need little more than a third of your party to back them too."*

In the interview, Steenhuisen said: *"There are reformers in the ANC who are pro the growth agenda. There is potential for a realignment around the rational centre of SA politics. ... People with a pro-reform, pro-growth reform agenda – those people need to start finding each other and talking to each other about the future."*

*"We're tabling the President's reform agenda in parliament."*

*"Surely you (Ramaphosa) can find 85 MPs on your side of the house, to match our 85 and others in the opposition to table your reform agenda and pass it."*

The DA has long supported the building of a new majority in the rational centre of South African politics. Former DA leaders Mmusi Maimane and Helen Zille called for a political realignment where centrists in the ANC and other parties work with the DA to fix South Africa.

Previous DA Leader, Mmusi Maimane, was also very clear about the need for a political realignment in South Africa – the need for reformists in every party **including the ANC** to work together to fix South Africa. On 16 May 2017, Maimane made a [speech](#) in which he said:

*“In summary, the values that must form the core of our political realignment are: constitutionalism, inclusive economic growth, non-racialism, a capable state and zero tolerance for corruption. This is real transformation, this is real redress. Anyone who shares these values will be welcomed on board. **And this includes people in the ANC.** There are still many good men and women in the party who want what’s best for South Africa. It is time for each of them to accept that their party is irredeemable; that our country’s salvation lies in building a new political formation united around shared values.”*

To say the DA would work with pro-reform people in the ANC is not the same as saying the DA would form a coalition with the ANC. The DA has long argued for a realignment of politics, so this stance does not mark any departure for the DA from its previous position. I therefore request a formal retraction and apology from the Sunday Times.

I wish you good health.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mazzone".

**Natasha Mazzone MP**  
**Chief Whip of the Official Opposition**  
**Parliament of RSA**