

The closest sphere of government to the people has failed the people

Speech by Eleanore Spies MP, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Today, we gather to commemorate a day that should be marked with the highest respect and honor, a day that has been trampled upon and disregarded by those in power. The tragedy of 21 March 1961 is a day that could have been any day in Apartheid South Africa, a workday, a school day, or even a church day. It was a day that saw the violation of our people's rights, a day that saw the loss of 69 souls in Sharpeville, a day that marked the struggle for human rights in our country.

As we stand here today, we must acknowledge that although this tragedy happened before our time, we continue to experience the violation of our rights as citizens. Every day in the new South Africa is a day without power somewhere, a day without water somewhere, a day where corrupt officials and their incompetent administration make decisions that deprive our people of their birthrights...local government as the closest sphere of government to the people has failed the people...

During the 2019/2020 Audit it was found that the Chris Hani District Municipality in the Eastern Cape could not account for how it had spent R1-billion of the R1.043-billion it had received in equitable share and grant allocations.

Similarly, the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality in North West, which received a disclaimer, was unable to account for how it spent R582-million of the R697-million in its bank accounts. MPs were told bank accounts were not reconciled, but double payments were made to suppliers.

22 municipalities went through R5,5billion that they could not account for...of the R6.45-billion taxpayers contributed via the national purse to those municipalities through equitable share and conditional grant allocations, only R980-million remained by municipal financial year-end.

R5,5 billion rand could have been used to fund 1 million more indigent households with free electricity, water, sanitation and refuse removal services across the country. R5,5 billion would have cleared Eskom debt in:

- 21 municipalities in the Northern Cape;
- 11 municipalities in the North West;
- 11 municipalities in the Eastern Cape;
- 8 municipalities in Kwa-Zulu Natal;
- 6 municipalities in Limpopo;

Die ANC se vernedering gaan gepaard met volgehoue beloftes van beter doen, dat dit nie weer gaan gebeur nie, dat hulle altyd besig is om te vra vir nog 'n kans. En daar is ook mos nog altyd die arrogansie. My grootste frustrasie met hierdie regering is dat hulle nie die balk in hul eie oog wil sien nie. Dat hulle Menseregtedag wil herdenk, maar nie wil veg vir menseregte nie.

Op 21 Maart herdenk ons die die verlies van 69 siele in Sharpeville. Maar Menseregtedag is vertrap deur hierdie regering en is nou maar net nog 'n dag.

We must not forget that the struggle for human rights did not end with the fall of Apartheid. We must demand that the government takes responsibility for their failure to uphold the rights of citizens.

Let us take a moment to remember those who lost their lives in Sharpeville, and let us commit ourselves to the struggle for human rights. Let us fight for a government that is accountable to its people and one that will uphold the rights of all citizens.

We must never forget the tragedy of 21 March 1961...we must continue to fight for the rights of all South Africans and hold the ANC government accountable for its actions. We owe it to those who lost their lives in Sharpeville to fight for a better South Africa for all!