



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

PO Box 15 Cape Town 8000 Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 (21) 403-2656, Fax: +27 (086) 724 6398
e-mail: parliamentaryleader@da.org.za

23 November 2023

South African Human Rights Commission
Via Email: complaints@sahrc.org.za

Dear Commissioner

COMPLAINT: PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA HAS FAILED SOUTH AFRICA'S 4.8 MILLION STARVING CHILDREN

I hereby lay a formal complaint against the President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, for failing in his sworn oath of office to put the needs of South Africa ahead of other interests, thereby failing South Africa's 4.8 million children who are starving as a result.

I contend that as President, with the immense powers vested in his position, he has played the central role in bringing about the nation's current devastating reality: that almost five million of our children are starving.

According to the latest State of the South African Child Report by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, 4.8 million of the country's 20 million children are starving. I hold that this shocking and tragic situation is the consequence of sheer negligence and disregard for the plight of our children on the part of President Ramaphosa, who alone has the power to intervene decisively.

Instead, he has allowed this human catastrophe to unfold, even as catering costs aboard his presidential jet Inkwazi run to R24 000 per person for a single flight. There surely cannot be a great indictment on his presidency.

To be clear, this human tragedy of unimaginable proportions is 100% avoidable and the DA has long urged President Ramaphosa and his government to implement the interventions required to address it.

As set out by the DA in several [statements](#), his government should long ago have addressed this crisis head on by raising the Child Support Grant to the Food Poverty Line. This most obvious and urgent intervention would cost just R26 billion per annum.

The argument that South Africa cannot afford to spend R26 billion per year to save almost five million starving children should be rejected with contempt. The truth of the matter is that we can afford it if the President prioritises his country over his party, and makes good on his promises to reform the economy and cut corruption.

The human cost in terms of suffering and the effect of stunting and malnourishment across the full span of these children's lifetimes is incalculably large, far outweighing the cost of intervention.

The President is well aware of the economic reforms required to boost our economy and get it growing again. Implementing just a few of these reforms would grow our tax revenue sufficiently to

cover this cost, as would cutting corruption which his own government says costs the nation R27 billion per year.

The nation elected him on the basis of his commitment to bring these economic reforms and to cut corruption. In this, President Ramaphosa has failed dismally. Instead of putting South Africa's interest first, he has prioritised the need to constantly feed his party's gluttonous patronage system, by retaining and defending the extractive policies of preferential procurement and cadre deployment.

Just this week, Harvard Professor Ricardo Hausmann diagnosed the fundamental causes of poor state capacity and economic stagnation to be BEE and cadre deployment. These, he says, are the two key policies driving the collapse of the state and the economy. President Ramaphosa has defended these core ANC policies to the hilt - policies which enrich the ANC-connected elite at the expense of the nation and especially the children of this nation, whose future he and his party are literally stealing.

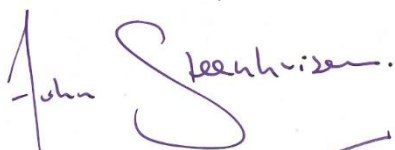
President Ramaphosa has failed to capacitate the National Prosecuting Authority so that it can do its job of holding corruption to account, and he has failed to implement the recommendations of the R1 billion Zondo Commission of Inquiry into state capture, both of which would save the billions lost to corruption that should rather be spent on raising the child support grant to the food poverty line.

On 8 September 2022, I [wrote](#) to the President urging him to act boldly and immediately to mitigate South Africa's growing hunger crisis. In that letter, I set out several ways that this could be done. The proposals are realistic and implementable by any government that cares enough to put the country's needs ahead of its own, and the DA continues to call for them. They include reviewing the list of zero-rated foods, with a view to including bone-in chicken, baby food, and other items most commonly purchased by low-income households.

Child starvation should keep the President awake at night. Addressing it should be his top priority. Clearly, this is not the case. Therefore, I urge you to find in favour of South Africa's 4.8 million starving children and to hold President Ramaphosa to account for failing them.

I trust you will carry out your constitutional duty with utmost integrity, including conducting your investigation without fear, favour or prejudice, thereby giving effect to the imperative that all institutions of state should act in the country's best interest. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Steenhuisen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'S'.

John Steenhuisen MP
Leader of the Official Opposition
Parliament of RSA