**Speech by Chris Pappas**

DA Premier Candidate for KwaZulu-Natal

DA KZN Rescue Rally

Curries Fountain Stadium

Durban

Saturday 11 May 2024

***It’s time to rescue KwaZulu-Natal***

Friends

Democrats

Fellow South Africans

During the struggle years, Curries Fountain Stadium was a meeting place for activists of all colours and political stripes.

‘Curries’ was a place for political gatherings, for sports matches and for fellowship where people were united in their goal to bring freedom to our country.

Now, in 2024, it is exactly thirty years since our country gained freedom from the oppressive apartheid regime. In 1994 we gained the freedom to choose our government and our leaders.

And, on May 29, we will again be given the opportunity, the responsibility, to exercise our democratic right to vote for the party of our choosing.

We must make this an historic day – a day that future generations will remember for years to come.

I was born in 1991 – nearly two years after Nelson Mandela was freed from his lonely prison cell. I was just two years old when our parents went to vote in South Africa’s first democratic election.

I am proud of my country, of what we have achieved together. But I am sad at the potential we have wasted and what the leaders in government have done.

We honour those who fought for our Freedom, but today, 30 years later, many of those leaders have forgotten us, blinded by greed and power.

We can be a winning nation, the kind of nation that our parents and grandparents believed we could become on election day back in 1994.

I believe it is my obligation to play my part in liberating South Africans from new forms of oppression under this current government.

Because – thirty years after the fall of apartheid – the people of this country, and of this province, remain oppressed.

The struggle for freedom was won, but the struggle for a better life continues.

Our people are oppressed by the poverty that keeps them trapped in informal settlements without electricity and without clean water.

They are oppressed by the hunger they feel in their stomachs on a cold winter’s morning.

They are oppressed by the lack of job opportunities – there is no dignity when you cannot feed your family or take your child to the clinic.

They are oppressed by the criminals that roam our streets, stealing, killing and raping with no fear of punishment for their evil deeds.

Most of all, our people are oppressed by a corrupt government that stopped caring about them a long time ago.

They are oppressed by democratically elected politicians who steal from the very people that put them in power.

The great tragedy of the ‘new’ South Africa is that those who claim to liberate us have turned into the oppressors.

The people we trusted to deliver a better life for all, brought only a better life for themselves.

Fellow democrats, friends.

Since we launched this campaign exactly two months ago, I have travelled to each and every corner of this province.

I met Mr Mjili who farms a small piece of land in Ntuzuma. Mr Mjili sells vegetables to the local community to make a living. But, because of the sewage leaking into the river near his field, he can no longer water his plants and produce vegetables to sell. He said to me, “Chris, I am not a phara, I want to support my family.”

I visited Mrs Haripersad, a single pensioner living off a state grant in an RDP house in Trenance Park. The contractor who built her house only got the tender because he was a crony of people who worked in government. The house is so badly built that, every time it rains, her house floods with dirty water. Sadly, Mr Haripersad is also the victim of rampant crime. She has lost everything as criminals target her and the police do nothing. As she cried on my shoulder she said, “The DA is my only hope.”

In Umlazi I spoke with Xolani, a young man who has no family and lives by himself in a mud house. He has no job because he was not given the opportunity to finish school. Xolani embraced me with genuine love and said, “Thank you for seeing me as a fellow human being.”

I talked to the Govender family in Northdale, Pietermaritzburg. Their beloved son died in front of them because the ambulance took four and a half hours to arrive at their door. Mrs Govender trembled and a tear flowed down her face as she said, “All I want is a normal day in South Africa.”

In Manguzi in the Mkhanyakude district, I sat down with Mrs Mthembu to hear her story. She is the single mother of three kids, living off of child support grants. She has lost hope of finding a job. Twice a day she fetches water from a nearby stream where the animals drink and people wash their clothes. As we sat under the shade of a tree in her garden, Mrs Mthembu said that she only lives to receive a grant on the 7th of every month; she has lost hope that life can get better.

On the Durban beachfront, once bustling with tourists and small businesses, I met Mr. Nxele, a young man who cannot find work even with a social worker degree. As he explained his story to me, he said he was looking for donated clothes so that he could look smart when applying for job opportunities. Mr. Nxele lives in the backroom of a mortuary next to dead bodies. He is my age – he is 32 years old.

This is the true reality of KwaZulu-Natal. A reality that the current premier and the mayor of this city deliberately ignore. The hardship faced by the people of this country is inhumane and it is unjust. I am running for Premier of KwaZulu-Natal because I know that the DA can alleviate this suffering, to get our province back on the right road.

When I am elected Premier on 29 May, I will immediately begin implementing my seven pledges to rescue KwaZulu-Natal.

Our greatest priority is creating jobs and growing our economy.

And when I talk about jobs, I am not talking about the ‘piece jobs’ that the ANC promises. I am talking about real jobs, permanent jobs. And these jobs must be for everyone not just those aged 18 – 35.

KwaZulu-Natal is full of entrepreneurs and small business owners, from the Bangladesh Market to the skin market. We must make it easier for small businesses to grow and thrive.

It is no surprise that four out of every five jobs created in South Africa are created in the DA-governed Western Cape. And in DA-governed uMngeni, we are supporting small businesses with equipment and funding.

For our economy to grow we must end loadsheddng. Now, I know that we have not had loadshedding for a while now. Isn’t it amazing how loadshedding stops during elections?

But you can be sure that, once the election is over, loadshedding will return all over the country.

To end loadshedding, we will build a diversified and competitive energy sector, including newly established public and private generators and Independent Power Producers. And we will do what the DA does where it governs in Cape Town – we will pay people cash for their surplus electricity.

Fellow democrats,

Our children cannot play in parks and our grannies are robbed of their pensions. Nobody should live their life in fear of other people. Crime is destroying our communities. Under President Cyril Ramaphosa, more than 140 000 people have been murdered – enough people to fill Moses Mabhida Stadium twice.

We need to do things differently if we are going to turn the tide against crime and keep the people of this province safe from violent criminals.

We need to stop relying on the national SAPS to keep us safe. Because a Police Minister in Pretoria, otherwise known as the minister of funerals and court appearances, cannot fight crime in Phoenix or Umlazi or Chatsworth or Imbali or Umhlanga or uMhlatuze.

When I am elected Premier, I will fight for the creation of a provincial police service that is well-resourced, well-trained, and free of political interference.

Corruption is another form of crime. It is a cancer that eats away at our society, robbing people of opportunities. Corruption takes away our electricity, it robs our children of an education and it means the taps eventually run dry.

When I am elected Premier, I will create an independent provincial anti-corruption unit with the power to investigate allegations of bribery and corruption.

There can be no surer sign of a corrupt and failed government than its inability to provide water, the most basic and most important commodity we need to sustain life.

On the campaign trail, I have been overwhelmed by the number of communities that live without access to clean water. How can it be that, in 2024, people must draw water from where the animals drink? Is this the better life we were promised thirty years ago?

When I am elected as your Premier, I will guarantee that there is water in every tap. We will do this by establishing a provincial infrastructure agency dedicated to solving the water and sanitation crisis. We must end the corruption around water tankers and put water back in the taps.

We have seen how thousands of qualified doctors and nurses cannot find work. Yet, our people are dying in hospitals and clinics.

It can take hours waiting in a queue to see a doctor at a clinic, it can take up to 90 minutes for an ambulance to arrive for a critical patient – if it arrives at all – and it can take up to 7 months to get an appointment for urgent surgical procedures. Patients have often waited 6 weeks to have fractures operated on and repaired.

When I am elected Premier, I will cut the waiting times for provincial health services by half. Waiting time for ambulances, waiting time for surgeries, waiting times to see doctors and nurses. Let us hire doctors, nurses, social workers and not more people in suits to sit in offices and drive fancy cars.

Like healthcare, we need to drastically improve the quality of teaching and learning in disadvantaged communities. Too many of our children don’t have access to the education resources they need to achieve their dreams.

When I am elected Premier, I will establish a provincial School Evaluation Authority to ensure that higher teaching standards are reached and maintained. We must depoliticise our schools and remove the stranglehold that SADTU has on the future of our children. Teachers must be in schools, not union meetings.

We know the urgency required to turn this province around to stop the suffering and to restore hope. But the reality is that none of this will be possible if we allow the small parties that pop up in every election to succeed.

These flash mob parties, these popcorn parties spend more time fighting the DA than opposing the ANC.

We have seen it time and again: in eThekwini, in Msunduzi, in KwaDukuza, in Umdoni. Each and every time, small parties vote with the ANC and keep them in power.

Only the DA in KZN is truly opposed to the ANC; and the DA is the only party that offers a tried and tested alternative in this province.

It’s only the DA that has gone to court to stop the ANC’s abuse of your money because, in truth, only the DA is strong enough in KwaZulu-Natal to do this.

It is the DA that got a personal costs order against the Municipal Manager in Umdoni who attempted to steal our council seat in that municipality.

It is the DA the led the Zuma Must Fall marches in eThekwini when we warned against state capture years ago.

It is the DA who took the previous municipal manager in uMngeni to court because she refused to leave her office.

It is the DA that took the Msunduzi Municipality to court after they gave R27 million of your money to a billionaire to fund her football club.

It is the DA that secured a trial date of the 8th of August against the eThekwini Municipality for the ongoing sewage and water crisis.

And it will be the DA that brings the water crisis in the Ugu district to an end through our impending court challenge.

While the DA is fighting the ANC and fighting for better future, small parties are fighting the DA. And that is the truth of this election.

The DA is the only party that is getting the job done and fighting back against the ANC.

So, when you go to the ballot box on the 29th of May, you will have one choice to make, and that is between an ANC-led government in KZN or a DA-led government in this province.

That is the critical choice that every voter must make in this election.

Fellow Democrats,

For over six decades (65 years), the Democratic Alliance has championed the values of freedom, fairness, opportunity, and diversity. Our commitment is to the long-term progress of our nation, not just short-term wins. We are steadfast in our goal to see an open opportunity society for all where, no matter the circumstances of your birth, you can achieve your dreams.

I promise you my unwavering commitment, and this Provincial Executive’s commitment to rescue this province from the corruption and criminality of the ANC.

The people of my generation, like the generation that used to gather here at Curries Fountain Stadium all those years ago, must now fight for the freedom of every person oppressed by poverty and unemployment.

On May 29, we can make history. We can liberate ourselves from new forms of oppression.

In isiZulu we say, AMANDLA AWETHU, the power is ours. We need to use the power that previous generations fought for. And we need to use that power to create peaceful, meaningful and long-lasting change in our province. But we need to vote.

For the past six months, we have been hard at work showing the people of this beautiful province that change is within arm’s reach. We have told every DA voter that if they bring one other person to vote for the DA on election day we can win KZN. And that is why we have said that 1 + 1 = WIN.

Come May 29th, I believe the Democratic Alliance will stand as the largest party in KwaZulu-Natal. But to reach this milestone, our mission for the next 18 days is clear: we must reach every doorstep, share every video, change our WhatsApp statuses, engage with every voter, and make our presence felt on every street corner.

We cannot afford to wake up on May 30th with regrets, wondering if there was more we could have done. The hopes of future generations are upon us.

I know it’s been a long campaign. I am aware of the intimidation we face in our streets. Yet, the stakes of this election are too high for us to ever say, "We could have done more."

So today I am calling on all of you to stand up with me. Let us carry the message of hope throughout KZN. Join me in the fight to reclaim our future. For the next 18 days, let us cover every corner of this province, reigniting the spirit of 1994—a spirit filled with unity and endless possibilities.

Together, as the blue machine in KZN, we will march forward to reclaim power from those who are corrupt and uncaring, restoring power to where it truly belongs—with the people.