

Blaming the victim

The release of the Farlam report and its findings is welcomed with disbelief and confirmation of our suspicions. The commission appointed by the President had to serve the aspirations and wants of the master. To have expected anything other than what is in the report would equal to expect the responsible judge to bite the hand that feeds him. That would be disrespectful of the master – and nobody in his right senses would want to do that if his life is dependent on the master's feed. Having sat in on most of the hearings from Rustenburg to Centurion, I never expected anything that will favour the victims but would favour the one who calls the tune. So I am not surprised that once again the victim has been the subjected to blame by the powerful in the land. I think this was the reason of giving the Marikana Commission limited powers so that the truth does not come out but remains the reserve of the elitist classes who live on oppressing and exploitation of the working classes.

It does not make sense that the findings put much blame on the striking miners whose human rights were violated by both the corporation and the government. The workers in my knowledge only wanted to have the company discuss with them their grievances that would address their aspirations and restore their dignity. They, like all of us, desired to get out of the shame of mere survival and to live respectfully. The result of course is that they remain disgraced and humiliated. So they died in vain despite their votes that put the ruling party into power.

On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence that Lonmin is guilty of negligence for failing to attend to the rights of their workers – even to listen to their grievances.

In addition, on the one hand there is no doubt that the police collaborated with the government and used live ammunition on the indefensible and peaceful strikers who had assembled on the koppie to engage their employer on their living and working conditions, and on the other hand, there is no evidence that on the day of the massacre, the strikers charged at the police. The decision for the 'D-day' had been taken by the police, to 'kill this thing' because instruction had been given for a 'concomitant action' to be taken. At least this is what I understood from Lieutenant General Mbombo when I visited Marikana few hours before the massacre. Why did they not trust Mathunjwa who had been entrusted with the promise by management that they will talk? And why was I not listened to when I conveyed the striker's aspirations and needs. I have no doubt that one more day would have produced better results than the massacre.

Two days before the incident, Lonmin had been warned by the Bench Marks Foundation that there was possible eruption of violence in the mines because the workers and the locals were unhappy with the situation in Marikana due to the lack of housing and unhealthy living and dangerous working conditions. And now, even with the release of the Farlam report, the social conditions have not been attended to. So, blaming the worker's organisations is not justifiable but a travesty of justice and a vindication of state power and influence of capital.

The use of violence in any situation cannot be condoned – it is wrong and unacceptable. But there is need to do some introspection before pointing a finger at others lest one is blamed for wrong judgement. The outcome of the report shows lack of integrity on our leadership which is self-serving. If this was not true there

wouldn't be as many service delivery protests as there are. The report reflects preference towards an uncaring government which uses the working classes for its own end. The recommendation to further investigate is another whitewash and nothing tangible must be expected of it because there is enough evidence right now to prosecute those who contributed to the massacre.

It is a fact that Lonmin contributed to the deaths of its employees by forcing them to return to work knowing that the situation was dangerous and could result in injury, if not death. Cyril Ramaphosa encouraged action that would end the strike in favour of capitalism in order to protect his shares, and the police ordered use of force which killed 34 miners. The Justice cluster must have known that use of lethal force would result in killing people. The president knew that the house was on fire but left for Mozambique instead of intervening in the unprecedented massacre. If these facts are not good enough to make leadership accountable, nothing will.

The president's failure to apologise means it's time for him to go and all those who contributed to the massacre. Focusing on Phiyega and Mbombo is not an answer but a cover up for the executive. It is a well-known fact that both are unfit for the office they hold. So, the government owes the workers and their families an unconditional apology and compensation for the loss of their bread winners. The government must, as matter of principle, withdraw the Lonmin's license for mining. Lonmin have been promising an improvement in the housing conditions of their workers, yet they continue to live in slums.

Both the government and Lonmin must as a matter of restitution build a memorial monument in commemoration of the fallen workers and August 16th declared a public holiday. If these issues are not done, the report will remain salt to the wounds of our people and history is very likely to repeat itself.

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