

Open Letter to Abahlali baseMjondolo, AMCU, NUMSA and SAFTU

Why ALL Socialists and Trade Unions Have a Stake in Defending Julius Malema

Dear comrades,

Your organisations, along with all working people and oppressed black masses in South Africa, are facing a massive onslaught: brutal evictions, mass retrenchments, plant closures, destruction and privatisation of basic services – the list goes on and on, and the attacks get worse every week. We clearly can't place any hopes in the capitalist rulers or their GNU lackeys to defend the South African economy against the catastrophe that Donald Trump's trade war promises to unleash. Their "answer" to Trump's tariffs is to make workers and the poor pay the consequences, exploiting the crisis to cripple the trade unions and attack the black masses. And while there have recently been a few favourable court verdicts pausing some companies' retrenchment processes, these are nothing more than a speedbump slowing the relentless attacks.

The only reliable path to resist this onslaught is through uniting workers, unemployed and landless people for collective struggle to defend all our interests against our common enemies, the imperialists and white monopoly capitalists. We must have no illusions that this will be an easy task. The socialist and trade-union movements are weaker and more divided than they have been in decades. With the weight of mass unemployment and poverty bearing down harder than ever, the feeling of helplessness is widespread. This makes it easier for the ruling class to pit the oppressed against each other, picking off one sector at a time. Your organisations can help

turn this situation around by fighting to overcome the divisions and mistrust that have paralysed resistance up till now. We welcome SAFTU's declaration that your federation is "committed to breaking down divisions, overcoming the pettiness that has weakened our struggles, and forging unity of the exploited and dispossessed in action" ("SAFTU in solidarity with Abahlali baseMjondolo on the occasion of their 20th anniversary", 2 October).

We believe that a crucial part of this is building united-front defence of the left and workers movement against state repression. As the famous slogan says, "**An injury to one is an injury to all!**" We all know the important role this principle played in building the power of the black trade-union movement in the 1970s and 80s, making it the backbone of the anti-apartheid struggle. By building solidarity not on the basis of moral appeals but on our shared material interest, it was pivotal for combating the harmful effects of sectarian divisions and poisonous apartheid divide-and-rule. Think of the campaign to free Moses Mayekiso. This and countless other efforts mounted to defend trade-unionists and liberation fighters were key for unifying and fortifying the struggle.

But even though this slogan is often repeated, it has become more and more emptied of content even as the left suffers one defeat after another. The clearest example today is the deafening silence of most socialists and trade unions in response to the judicial vendetta targeting Julius Malema and the EFF. Obviously, Malema is not a worker. And we are well aware that each of your

We Need **UNITY** to Defend Ourselves Against US Imperialism!

organisations has its own criticisms, political differences and in some cases past organisational conflicts with the EFF. But to take that as justification for leaving the EFF to face this attack alone is the worst sectarianism, and will only worsen the current paralysis.

We all saw what happened in May when the GNU delegation met with Trump in the Oval Office. The commander-in-chief of US imperialism effectively put a gun to Malema's head, and ordered Ramaphosa-Steenhuisen to pull the trigger. And the heads of the GNU responded by appeasing their master. What else explains the fact that years-old cases laid by AfriForum suddenly get brought to trial and rubber-stamped with "guilty" verdicts? Only dupes and apologists for the GNU will believe it's a miraculous coincidence that this happened just a few short months after Trump demanded Malema's head. And only dupes will tell workers that the critical issue in his case is whether Malema allegedly fired a rifle into the air at an EFF celebration *seven years ago*. Even if he did it, this was a purely symbolic act that **harmed nobody**, and it's certainly no crime from the standpoint of the working class and oppressed. The real crime is that he's threatened with a single day in prison, and possibly a 15-year sentence! The liberation movement has a long history of celebrating our heroes with gun salutes. If we allow Malema to be prosecuted for this it means bowing before the oppressor.

We urge all socialists and trade unionists to reject this ruling and fight to have it overturned. Regardless of what other issues divide us, **all** of our struggles will be set back if we stand aside while Trump and AfriForum take out the EFF's leadership. Every struggle for land and housing will be weakened if the EFF can be targeted for being a prominent voice calling for land expropriation without compensation. Every fight against retrenchments and plant closures will be crippled if Malema can be silenced as an advocate of nationalisation of the mines and industry. For all these reasons, we urge your organisations to speak out: **Hands off Julius Malema! Hands off the EFF!**

Some leftists object that standing up in defence of Malema would be divisive, alienating workers who mistrust the EFF or support other political parties. Nothing could be further from the truth! By standing with the EFF against this attack, you will also be building the unity and fighting strength needed to beat back the attacks on your own members. If NUMSA, FAWU and other SAFTU unions fight Trump's repression of the EFF, then workers at ArcelorMittal, Ford, Daybreak Foods and countless other companies will be in a better position to defend themselves against the effects of Trump's tariffs. It will be easier for them to rally the unemployed, community members, unorganised workers and members of other trade unions to support their struggles against retrenchments, because their unions are showing that they are serious about fighting shoulder to shoulder against our common enemy.

In fact, what's divisive is to not stand up against US imperialism. We already see how xenophobic outfits like Dudula and March In March are growing as a result of the paralysis, scapegoating immigrants as a reactionary answer to the misery caused by imperialist austerity. Fighting together with the EFF in a united front against Trump's attacks is a way to undercut the base of these reactionaries.

United-front defence of the EFF does not in any way mean giving up one's own political independence and identity. All of your organisations, as well as workers loyal to other parties or no political party at all, must be allowed and encouraged to march under the political banner they choose. Doing so gives us a stronger and more solid base for common action against our shared enemy. **March separately, but strike together!** That is the meaning of the united front. We appeal to you to seize this initiative for unity to defend ourselves. This will be an important step to strengthen not just your organisations but the whole working class.

Comradely,



Azanian Section of the
Fourth International

Socialist Party of Azania



Committee to Defend Xolani Khoza

Solidarity Action
Committee Collective

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Get in touch and join
the campaign!



*organisation listed for identification purposes only

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