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Transforming victims into active citizens



PRESS RELEASE: Khulumani Support Group resonates with the content of the “Betrayal of the Promise” Report: 28 May 2017

Khulumani Support Group congratulates the State Capacity Research Project convened by Professor Mark Swilling for publishing a comprehensive report on its interpretation and construction of “State Capture”. The title of the report resonates deeply with Khulumani and its members. Khulumani Support Group is a membership organisation of victims and survivors and their families of apartheid-era gross human rights violations. Our membership presently stands at about 104,000.

One of the features of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was that victims of such violations, would be granted reparations in return for the sacrifice of their right to lay criminal charges, or to bring civil claims against perpetrators who were granted amnesty. Many perpetrators are walking freely, while a majority of their victims find themselves still in the very confines of the apartheid trap they were struggling against, without reparations. This is a betrayal of the promise.

Another betrayal is the expectation that those victims and survivors and their families (of gross human rights violations) who did *not* appear before the TRC would receive reparations. These reparations would literally *repair* the destruction and disruption of individuals’ lives wrought mainly by the security forces of the apartheid government, but would also repair the structural destruction and disruption of their lives brought about by the policies and actions of the apartheid government itself. A component of reparations established by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (commonly referred to as the TRC Act), is that half of the funds received and entrusted to the President’s Fund established by the Act, should be dedicated to community reparations. At the end of the 2016 financial year, the President’s Fund had R1.2 billion available.¹ Figures for 2017 have not yet been published on the Department of Justice’s website. There are some unconfirmed reports that only R744 million may be left in the President’s Fund.

This is of grave concern given that the delivery on the promises of the TRC would require R2,4 billion to provide the initial R30,000.00 once-off payment to all verified victims of apartheid gross human rights violations with a budget required for verification of their status as victims, of R10 million. Thereafter, the provision of a “reparations pension” to victims of confirmed apartheid gross human rights violations, about 100,000 individuals, would require an annual allocation of R150 million to provide a payment of R1,500.00 per month for 5 years towards fulfilling the TRC’s

recommendation that each victim receive a total of R21,000.00 per annum for 6 years as a means of dealing with the devastating impacts of the violations they suffered.

On 24 May 2017, Khulumani's National Organiser made a presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Appropriations on the funds required to fulfil these promises and recommendations of the TRC to all victims of apartheid gross human rights violations (as defined by the TRC). Beyond the R2,4 billion to fulfil in a non-discriminatory manner, the promise of reparations, additional funding of R10 million per annum for 5 years is needed to provide for psychosocial rehabilitation services that have never been available to most survivors, and to facilitate economic skills-building and community memorialisation activities. The setting up of a Khulumani Centre for Memory and Transformation as the victim-coordinating centre in each province would require a budget of R6 million per centre, a total of R54 million.

It is of great concern that almost none of the recommendations of the TRC have been delivered to victims to date. Khulumani Support Group is of the view that individual reparations for victims of apartheid-era gross human rights violations should be prioritised, and that community reparations should follow after that. In spite of regular interaction with the TRC Unit of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development), the Head of the TRC Unit, Ms Lufuno Mmbadi has been visiting communities with promises of setting up community infrastructure using funds from the President's Fund. It would appear that a network of intermediate role-players (similar to those described in the "Betrayal of the Promise" report as "brokers") may have been developed by the TRC Unit. These "brokers" have seduced the "elites" (as defined in the report) of a few communities into accepting the TRC Unit Head's plans for community infrastructure proposals. It is striking that meetings are called for "victims" only after the TRC Unit official first meets with the local business community, then with the Moshate (the local traditional leaders), and then with the officials in the local municipality being targeted by the TRC Unit for disbursement of 'victims' reparation funds'. None of these proposals has been endorsed by the victims of gross human rights violations in these communities. None of their requests for the minutes of these three pre-meetings at various sites, have been made available to the community of victims of apartheid gross human rights violations in the areas targeted by the TRC Unit.

Khulumani is of the view that any community reparations should come from carefully developed democratic interactions and agreements with the "victim" members of the communities themselves, and not just with traditional leaders, local government officials or local business people. The betrayal of the promise to the victims (and survivors and families) of gross apartheid-era human rights violations has created a deep woundedness in the community of victims and survivors of apartheid gross human rights violations who now carry a triple burden of victimisation: from the original violations, from the TRC processes, and from the betrayal of the promise of victims' reparations!

Khulumani members will never give up on the struggle for an inclusive and non-discriminatory programme of reparations to heal the terrible wounds of the past.

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¹ <http://www.justice.gov.za/reportfiles/other/presfund-anr-2015-16.pdf>

