

# Violence against NUM alarming

The *National Education and Health Workers Union (Nehawu)* notes with alarm the increasing use of violence and assassinations against the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) members especially those of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) by a band of criminals and warlords disguised as worker representatives.

**H**istorically and economically we have always understood that mineworkers operate at the commanding heights of our economy because of our history and the structure of the local and global economy. It is no surprise at all then that any social restlessness and upheaval will be more expressed in that sector of the economy.

Unfortunately the divisions that we currently witness amongst the workers are not the solution to the plight of the working class. It is self-defeating and naive for some in the middle class and civil society to encourage mineworkers to define themselves outside the working class and to paint themselves as the super exploited.

It is also baffling that there are some who believe that by fanning divisions amongst the workers they are providing leadership and offering a solution. Some self-appointed leaders who form part of the middle-class intelligentsia have condoned and encouraged violence against Cosatu members as a tactic to allegedly expose the federation. We warn them that they cannot have their cake and eat it. If they encourage a

witch-hunt against Cosatu they must be prepared to shoulder the responsibility for the violence that is perpetuated against the federation.

Someone has to account for the injuries that were sustained by Billy Zulu national organiser of the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (Ceppwawu), who was attacked by criminals on 27 October at a Cosatu rally in Rustenburg. They must be prepared to give answers to the families of NUM shop stewards that are being assassinated daily. Those who condone the divisions and encourage anarchy amongst the workers cannot distance themselves from the killings and the violence that we see in the mining sector.

Our union calls on the police and other law enforcement agencies to make sure that these criminal elements that are killing people and their cheerleaders are made to account and face the full might of the law. They must be permanently removed from society and sent to prison where they belong. We send our sincere condolences to all the families that have lost

their loved ones in the on-going mining upheaval and wish a speedy recovery to the injured. We hold to be true the workers' motto that says, 'An injury to one is an injury to all'.

These barbaric acts of intolerance by these thugs cannot be tolerated in a democratic South Africa where our Constitution protects the right to freedom of association. The human rights enshrined in our Constitution apply to all the country's citizens. They were paid for in blood and will not be hijacked from us by some self-serving and intolerant criminals.

Trade unionism since time immemorial has been about improving the lives of the workers and not destroying them; and healthy contestation between unions has always existed with workers afforded an opportunity to choose their representatives without intimidation or violence. There is nothing wrong with workers organising themselves according to their ideological orientation and belief systems as long as it doesn't lead to criminality or anti-social conduct. In a democratic society there is no place for violence and assassinations.

It is disconcerting to witness the concerted violent, political and propaganda war that is being waged against the federation by those who are uncomfortable with its strength in the revolutionary alliance and posture in the revolution. Some of these people have identified the giant mineworkers' union, NUM as a

for blacks during the liberation struggle. Some commentators are triumphantly declaring that the federation is on the ropes and are offering nothing as a solution except cheerleading for the anarchists. We have also seen some obscure politicians, with questionable political support, who have been hovering on the

violence and we warn some in the legal fraternity not to create victims out of criminals that have destroyed lives and livelihoods.

When their public posturing and hysteria has died down and they have gotten their headlines, there will still be lingering bitterness and lack of trust amongst the working class that they cannot erase. Our union is concerned by the attempts in some quarters to redefine criminality and also the loud condemnation of the law enforcement officers that are doing their jobs.

We cannot subject our laws and the justice system to the temporary and subjective whims of the moment as this will have long-term consequences.

#### INVESTIGATE ASSASSINATIONS

Our union calls on government to set up a police task team to investigate the mine violence and assassination squads that are killing NUM members. We also expect the police to be fair and proactive so that we do not have clashes between workers.

The weaknesses and the failure of our government to adopt radical socio-economic policies has given space and oxygen to reactionary and counter revolutionary forces that exploit the plight of the poor. Government therefore cannot afford to watch this crisis from the side-lines because the mining robber barons cannot be entrusted with any responsibility or project that does not benefit them; their greed is insatiable and knows no bounds.

Nehawu re-affirms its total support for the collective leadership of Cosatu that is busy working with the NUM to resolve the genuine plight of the mineworkers. No amount of anarchy and intimidation will coerce the federation and its affiliates into submission. **LB**

Zwelinzima Vavi on Twitter



*Billy Zulu from Ceppwawu sustained injuries in an attack at a Cosatu rally in Rustenburg. He was admitted to a hospital for three days and is recovering at home.*

soft underbelly of the federation because of the strategic nature of the mining sector in our economy and the reactionary nature of employers in this sector.

It is no coincidence that the establishment across the board has been using all manner of tactics to attack the federation including the divide and rule tactic that caused such destruction and pain

fringes of South African politics for years, opportunistically engaging in proletarian posturing by crowning themselves modern-day messiahs.

This is not the solution because as we know violence begets violence. It is always easy to light a fire but very difficult to extinguish it. It tends to consume even those that made it. As a country we have a bloody history of black-on-black