

#UNITE BEHIND

FOR A JUST AND EQUAL SOUTH AFRICA

• 6th Floor, Vogue House, 11 Hans Strijdom Avenue • (T) +27 21 418 1302/1384 • info@unitebehind.org.za

Tuynhuys

Private Bag X1000,

Cape Town

8000

Fax: +27 (0)21 462 2838

presidentrsa@presidency.gov.za

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Dear President Ramaphosa,

DECLARE COMMUTER RAIL A NATIONAL DISASTER

#UniteBehind is a voluntary association of people's movements and legal, policy, and research support organisations, dedicated to building a just and equal society where all people share in the country's wealth, participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and where the environment is sustainably protected for future generations.

One of our central demands is the creation of a safe, reliable, affordable, efficient and quality public transport system. Our #FixOurTrains campaign is directed at remedying the current crisis facing our commuter rail system, which includes state capture, systemic unreliability, theft through organised crime, the lack of safety for commuters, and most urgently now, the program of sabotage directed against Cape Town's trains. We refer to our letter of 6 February 2018, which, regrettably, has not yet had a response from your office. (Attached for your convenience).

These attacks cost lives. In May this year, one as yet unidentified person died, and another, Leanne Jansen, sustained serious burns across her body. The continuous arson attacks, corrupt, unqualified, non-PSIRA registered security, and theft of key equipment and infrastructure have crippled our commuter rail system. These are not random acts of violence, but a concerted effort against Cape Town's public transport system, and by extension, our economy. Our City and around half a million rail commuters are under attack.

We have consistently engaged with all the appropriate authorities including yourself, Parliament, Metrorail, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), the Department of Transport, as well as local government. #UniteBehind has a number of matters in court supporting PRASA against a number of companies, such as Siyangena Technologies and Siyaya Rail Solutions. These companies, along with other agents of state capture, have looted our public services for far too long.

It is now clear that the scope of economic sabotage is beyond the powers available to provincial government and PRASA. #UniteBehind believes that your Government must now take the necessary emergency measures required to get our trains back on track.

Alternative Information and Development Centre, Centre for Environmental Rights, District 6 Working Committee, Equal Education, Environmental Monitoring Group, Financial Sector Campaign Coalition, Ndifuna Ukwazi, People's Health Movement, Reclaim the City, Right 2 Know, SAFCEI, SA First Forum, Section 27, the Social Justice Coalition, Sonke Gender Justice, the Treatment Action Campaign, Trust for Community Outreach and Education, the UDF Veterans, the Wellington Association Against the Incinerator, the Western Cape Religious Leader's Forum, the Women and Democracy Initiative, and the Women's Legal Centre.

On Friday 27 July 2018, we attended a ‘stakeholder’s meeting’ with Minister Bonginkosi ‘Blade’ Nzimande where no plan was tabled. Instead, we were all invited to an Imbizo. #UniteBehind refuses to believe that an Imbizo will solve the current crisis. Leadership, a plan, and decisive action is what is needed.

The emergency faced by millions of working class people using public transport, particularly rail, requires the power and leadership of the executive. President Ramaphosa, we urge you to convene the Departments of Transport, the South African Police Services (SAPS), Cooperative Governance, and Treasury along with provincial and local authorities to urgently and decisively change this dire situation.

We call on you to convene the Disaster Management National Centre to make the determination that the current arson attacks are a National Disaster in accordance with section 23 of the Disaster Management Act of 2002. A national disaster is one in which a single province is unable to deal with the disastrous event effectively (s23(6)(b)). This is clearly the case here.

We call on you and your government to provide:

- Unified action between the relevant authorities, including PRASA, local government, national government, SAPS, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) and the National prosecuting Authority;
- Forensic units to find those responsible for these acts of sabotage;
- Daily updates on progress, communicated across all channels to commuters;
- A dedicated monitoring room to track incidents and actions;
- Specialised and trusted police units to support the interventions.

We call on you to #FixOurTrains.

We look forward to receiving your reply as soon as possible, but expect it no later than **Monday 6 August 2018**.

Sincerely,

#UniteBehind