



9TH PROVINCIAL CONGRESS DECLARATION

FREE STATE

23- 25 March 2022

Mangaung

Declaration:

“32 years of working class consciousness, defending workers’ rights and building a self-sustainable union”

We, delegates from 10 Locals representing more than 11 000 members from institutions within the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and Traffic; all policing the entire criminal justice cluster met over the past three days at Imvelo Safari Lodge in Mangaung.

We met at a time wherein we took note of the adverse impact caused on our membership due to natural attrition, retirements, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and severance packages by the government, aimed at reducing the public service.

The POPCRU Free State Provincial Congress was convened to take stock of the work of the union in the province since our 8th Provincial Congress, and was held under the theme “32 years of Working-class consciousness, Defending Workers’ Rights and Building a Self-Sustainable Union”. This exercise has indeed been a Parliament of workers both in content and character, and has given a broader direction covering organisational, political, international, socio-economic, bargaining, educational and policy issues within the union and within the broader society at large.

This congress also included giving effect to the aims and objectives of the union and to assume such powers as necessitated by our constitution. This provincial congress had a task to fulfill its constitutional mandate in the interest of the organisation and its members.

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) in the Free State province held a successful Congress amid a Covid-19 pandemic period which has devastated the world’s economies including tourism industries, sport and education throughout the world. We pay homage to many of our fellow citizens who perished due to the pandemic. We are hopeful that its ultimate end will usher in a new era of development, progress, prosperity and peace in our country and beyond.

With a provincial population of 588 000, the Free State province now has the second highest unemployment rate after the Eastern Cape, it has the potential to create more job opportunities for people if the provincial and local governments could deliver basic services such as providing reliable electricity and water, ensuring a safe roads network, ridding the province of drug peddlers who contaminate our youth and show a commitment to fighting other crimes.

It rests on our shoulders as members within the criminal justice cluster to intensify our work with all stakeholders in taking up these issues across all our communities.

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We have noted recent statistics released by Statistics South Africa which indicate massive unemployment figures. We are particularly disturbed by the statistics of youth unemployment which are shocking and calamitous. We call for aggressive and direct state intervention in all key sectors of the economy and for massive industrialisation and beneficiation of certain commodities as a way of growing the economy and boosting job creation.

We met at a time when our movement has just suffered humiliating defeats at the November 2021 Local Government Elections. It was also for the first time that we registered an average percentage below 50% since 1994. Most of the causes for this situation are the subjective weaknesses inside the movement itself as well as general discontent occasioned by rampant corruption and ineptitude within the state machinery.

Accordingly, we recommit ourselves to continue to fight the 'new tendencies' that have accumulated in the movement: ill-discipline, self-enrichment, factionalism, dishonesty, corruption, patronage, and arrogance. Congress took firm cognisance of this regrettable but overarching context in agitating for a non-negotiable and principled involvement in the Renewal of the ANC as a "leader" of the Alliance and the society. POPCRU is guided by this conviction in striving and pushing for a purposeful and reconfigured Alliance as a matter of extreme urgency.

We rededicate ourselves to continue fighting gender-based violence in particular, and corruption and crime in general as well as hunger amongst our people, and Congress calls for swift action by all relevant authorities to ensure that all persons implicated in corrupt activities are brought to book without undue delay.

This Congress convened amid Russia's ongoing military operation in Ukraine and the imperialist NATO's aggression in respect of the complex issue of Ukraine. Whilst we call for an end to the war that is evidently affecting everyone including the working class, innocent women and children, we equally understand the rationale behind Russia's decision to defend itself against US-led expansionism. In the same light, the western media and governments should act consistently and apply the same condemnation measures as it relates to the situation Apartheid Israel continues to subject Palestinians to.

We take this opportunity to enhance our commitment to international solidarity with the progressive people of the world suffering from dictatorship, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

We also continue to pledge our solidarity with the people of Venezuela, eSwatini, Western Sahara, Palestine, South Sudan and East Timor.

We rededicate ourselves to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and for gender equality in our province, our country and the world. We recommit ourselves to continue to expose and crush all forms of unequal gender relations in our society.

The Provincial Congress paid tribute to our fallen heroes and heroines, and millions of others across the world who have perished as a result of the pandemic, and those who have died in the line of duty.

Among some of the key leaders that have since passed on are Cde Pakiso Mokalapa and many other leaders of our people.

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Also addressing the Provincial Congress were comrades Mzwandile Thakudi on behalf of the ANC, Cde Phel Parkies (SACP CC member) on behalf of the SACP, Cde Manyatso Mahlatsi on behalf of COSATU. We were empowered by their presentations, particularly on issues dealing with police killings, empowering the police to deal with criminality and a common call for structures in our province to work to unite the alliance and the broader community.

We commit to fighting side by side with the progressive forces of our society to rid our province of all forms of criminality.

We were further addressed by the departments in which we organize and we commit to continue engaging them to better the conditions of our members.

This congress received the keynote address from the president of the organization comrade Dr. Zizamele Cebekhulu who, among others dealt with the urgent need for real transformation and restructuring in the police in order to deal with the scourge of crime. He further emphasised the need for coordination of the work in the departments in the criminal justice cluster not the current situation where they work in silos.

He called for the need to revisit the location of correctional centers. We are calling for these centers to be located in rural areas and for the utilisation of prison labour towards contributing to the rural development of our land. He emphasised the need to build a self-sufficient department of correctional services

He decried the budget cuts that are not informed by the challenges that we face as policemen and women. These budget cuts are done while we face critical manpower shortage that hampers the police crime fighting capabilities. Indeed as this congress we echo what the president has said that "as workers we are on our own". This is the line of march, we commit to take it to the streets to fight for our rights as police officials, warders and traffic officers. We have not been paid what is due to us and we are tired of endless negotiations. Delegates to this congress commit to mobilise all workers to fight for our salary improvement as the costs of living keep rising.

The increase in gender-based violence is the new pandemic that is devastating our societies and increasing the responsibility on our members to be vigilant and professional in dealing with such cases.

This Provincial Congress provided us with an opportunity to engage on matters that affect us as workers and further charted a way forward in ensuring that good relations are forged with all the Departments. We are fully aware of all current challenges within these Departments, but we will never be discouraged by such, we will continue building healthy relations with the prime aim of ensuring that a POPCRU member indeed remains a priority and their interests are always rightfully represented. This Provincial Congress provided the necessary measures as a sign of a democratic culture within the organization, building unity and cohesion.

We further had an opportunity to thoroughly voice out our members' grievances for decent jobs, employment, and environmental protection and against the flaunting of agreements by the employer. This is a direct attack on collective bargaining and we commit to do all we can to defend these workers' gain which did not come easy. The expansion of the information economy also places a new challenge on trade unions in general to put in place new methods of organizing. POPCRU members must be capacitated to fight.

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There must be a balance between workers struggles and broader societal social, economic and political issues as they continue to impact on our live directly. In this regard political education of our member's is very important.

The Provincial Congress observes that the degeneration of political consciousness and closing of robust comradely and honest debates in the movement creates other centres of engagements outside of the organisation.

Factionalism must be defeated, and dissenting voices must be accommodated and listened to. POPCRU will not be drawn into factional battles but build unity and support the ANC. The new tendency within the movement of using money and other forms of patronage to buy political allegiance must be defeated.

The Provincial Congress took time to debate extensively the organisational challenges and matters including the leadership issues in the organisation with a clear purpose of strengthening the union and build true unity and cohesion. Leadership restructuring is a critical measure to renew the organisation and must be seen as a natural process of rebuilding, realignment and capacity building.

We therefore resolve and declare thus;

- There must be one law that regulates members of the Police which must be the Police Act. Those employed under the Public Service Act must be translated to the Police Act so that there is synergy and resource allocation at the Police station level;
- There must be capacity in fighting crime by releasing many of those who have been removed from operations to join the fight against crime. The police structure in particular is top heavy and there is serious shortage of the tools of the trade which makes our work difficult in fighting crime.
- Restructure the Police force to be able to make a lean head office and resourcing of the HAWKS to be able to do their work adequately.
- The fighting of crime must be a joint effort together with the prosecution; reconfigure the criminal justice system under one ministry to be able to have a centralised and coordinated effort to fight crime.
- A Policing Indaba is of paramount importance to streamline and reshape how the system works as a whole inclusive of other departments such as Justice, Prosecution and Correctional Services.
- Government must take all necessary steps to alleviate overcrowding in Correctional facilities as this puts the lives of our members in danger.
- Rehabilitation of offenders must have a local content so that rehabilitated inmates can be safely re-incorporated into society; and we will push forward with the eradication of Private Prisons.

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- The decrease in membership is a worrying development and the Provincial Congress calls on every POPCRU member and structure to embark on an aggressive recruitment campaign to put POPCRU back where it belongs as the overwhelmingly preferred union in the sector. This will also help strengthen our financial capacity to be able to implement the many programmes that we have assigned ourselves.
- We need to consider and re-consider the restructuring of our Collective Bargaining approach in terms of members' interests and improvement of their working conditions. Failure of the employer to implement the wage agreements has demoralised our members, COSATU must be engaged to lobby the ANC to review this bad decision.
- POPCRU supports the COSATU-led campaigns and will intensify solidarity campaigns in support of progressive struggles across the world especially our neighbouring countries.
- The Provincial Congress further dealt with issues of leadership consolidation and accordingly and constitutionally elected the following comrades:

Provincial Chairperson: **Thabo Lefalatsa**
Deputy Provincial Chairperson: **Sandile Peake**
Provincial Secretary: **Chakale Mahlatsi**
Deputy Provincial Secretary: **Tshediso Motwane**
Provincial Treasurer: **Mpho Mashane**

We, therefore, conclude that the discussions, debates and the resolutions adopted at this august occasion – the POPCRU Free State Provincial Congress, have provided an intense reflection of our strategic position. The outcomes of the Provincial Congress must be implemented as a matter of urgency in order to realise the aspirations of our members.

Long Live POPCRU Long live!

Forward to workers Unity!

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