

# **The Illusion of Progress**

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**By Paul Mothapo**

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South Africa's official statistics continue to paint a picture of managed decline, but the deeper reality is one of deliberate opacity, institutional capture, and taxpayer-funded elite enrichment. Stats SA and SAPS data face ongoing questions of quality, timeliness, and independence, while the Madlanga Commission \_ now extended by President Ramaphosa until August 2026 \_ keeps exposing the same systemic loopholes in the criminal justice system.

Unemployment is the clearest indictment. The latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey shows an official rate around 31%, with modest job gains trumpeted in the media. Yet layoffs in trade, manufacturing, and the informal sector far exceed new sustainable employment. ***Organisations flood the market with "ghost vacancies" \_ fake postings designed to signal opportunity, test wages, or maintain the illusion of growth\_while actual hiring remains stagnant.*** This shadows the real data and keeps discouraged workers invisible.

At the core lies a broken educational system that has failed an entire generation. Basic literacy and numeracy are in crisis, *TVET colleges produce unemployable graduates, and the skills mismatch is glaring.* The most competent candidates for scarce-skills roles (engineering, IT, specialist healthcare) come from overseas. **Local talent is funnelled into low-pay entry-level jobs to create the optics that "opportunities exist."** This is not merit; it is structural exclusion dressed up as transformation.

Crime is rampant, corruption operates with impunity, and infrastructure is a patchwork of "a little bit good, a little bit bad." Power outages have eased in some areas, but roads, rail, and water systems continue to collapse under chronic neglect. **Shady government contracts\_awarded to politically connected "tenderpreneurs"\_deliver low-quality work that guarantees repeat maintenance jobs and endless profit cycles. These contracts are not anomalies; they are the business model.**

The HIV statistics remain another contested area. South Africa still reports roughly 7.8 million people living with HIV. While the epidemic is tragically real, ***the scale has long been linked to maximising international donor funding from PEPFAR and the Global Fund. Larger numbers unlock larger aid flows\_until external funding freezes expose the fragility.*** Independent voices question whether presentation is sometimes optimised for cash rather than pure accuracy.

The Madlanga Commission, probing criminality, political interference, and corruption in SAPS and the broader justice system, continues to lift the lid on these failures. Whistleblowers who tried to expose high-level misuse of state funds have been sidelined, intimidated, or in some cases taken out entirely. Testimony has revealed disbanded task teams, stalled investigations into political killings, and senior

officials shielding networks of patronage. These are not isolated scandals; they confirm the political system's loopholes remain wide open.

No faction is clean. **The ANC, DA, MK Party, EFF (widely seen as ANC offshoots), and most smaller parties are entangled in the same web of funding, tenders, and cadre interests.** Even ActionSA\_often positioned as a cleaner alternative\_draws large donations from the same narrow pool of tycoons and business interests that fund the rest. Critics ask whether the funders are ultimately the same people wearing different party colours.

*We do not need another leader linked to the current system. Fresh minds and fresh blood exist among ordinary South Africans\_the person who could deliver a truly functional government already lives among us. Yet every "saviour" who rises eventually becomes entangled in the state's shadows, perhaps the deep state itself.* A visionary **dictator** might force innovation and discipline... or deliver something far worse. The honest truth is brutal: *there is no **fucking** saviour waiting in the wings.*

Taxpayers' money\_our money, continues to bankroll political lifestyles while the real indicators scream: **broken schools, rampant crime, endemic corruption, repeat-tender scams, and statistical smoke screens.** The Madlanga Commission, whistleblower casualties, and ghost vacancies all point to the same conclusion. **South Africa does not need better spin doctors or new party logos. It needs radical transparency, depoliticised institutions, and accountability that actually bites. Until then, the illusion of progress will keep costing us everything.**

*I said what I said... I still do not have a solution either... The truth is that it is still being coiled...*

## **About the Author**

### **Paul Mothapo**

*Paul Mothapo is a human, just like you. Nothing more to say and nothing less to say.*