

## South Africa penetrated by organised crime

International mafias such as the Italian, Indian, Israeli, Russian and Triad (Chinese) are attracted to the protective climate or culture of systemic corruption.

South Africa increasingly seems to provide a safe haven for these mafias to operate with protection from some politicians and elements within the police. One such example is the so-called Travelgate scandal in which the Scorpions seized R1 billion of contraband, 83 members of parliament (MPs) pleaded guilty, 1891 arrests were made and 1 305 investigations were finalised, making this one of the biggest parliamentary corruption scandals in South African history (Sipho).

The scandal resulted in direct costs of R26 million debt to the taxpayer. The majority of the implicated MPs were from the ruling party, the ANC. President Mbeki did not interfere with investigations by the Scorpions. However, under President Zuma's leadership, the ANC decided to halt the parliamentary investigation and dismantle the Scorpions.

Although these MP's were not prosecuted, their activities with syndicates that smuggle prohibited articles, illegal imports and exports and unlicensed goods, were curtailed. This scandal, as well as the Jacky Selebi connection with the mafia boss Glen Agliotti, is an indication that moral political leadership in South Africa has been compromised. The implicated MPs were supposed to represent the poor in parliament. Organised crime has infiltrated the highest offices of the state.

Sipho is of the opinion that South Africa can be considered a penetrated state and provide some evidence to demonstrate that the highest political leaders are connected to kingpins of organised crime.

In the absence of clear indicators of what a penetrated state is, it is not possible to say what the magnitude of such penetration is. However, it is possible



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to say with certainty that South Africa is demonstrating a propensity for protecting organised criminal groups.

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Such protection comes at a price. It hampers national and investment security, and is a red flag if South Africa aspires to attract increased foreign and portfolio investment for addressing social security issues such as poverty, housing and health. Indirectly, such protection damages the country's international credit rating and does nothing to help (amongst numerous other variables) to slow down the continuing devaluation of the Rand against the American Dollar.

Tsheola is of the opinion that the Western "popular framing of corruption" could be "divorced from reality", that it is biased and based on cultural stereotypes. He sees corruption as context-based and culture-based, which is indeed the case. This implies that corruption in Norway is not the same as corruption in South Africa. Based on this understanding, we need to ask: Which values are paramount? Which values represent most citizens? Probably a fusion of traditional ethnic, cultural and Western values. However, the answer to these questions do not change the perception that South Africa can be considered a penetrated state.

#### • References

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Die Republikein 21/8/15