

30 June 2026: A Normal Day in South Africa to Spend R600 Million (Approx. US\$36.4 Million) While South Africans Are Struggling.

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Opinion 001 | 1 July 2026

With over [8.1 million of us officially jobless at a rate of 32.7%](#), and GDP limping along at just 0.5% growth, this is the reality 30 years into democracy.

The South African Government spent [over R600 million on massive security operations](#) across all nine provinces, focusing heavily on Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape to prevent violence during planned anti-immigrant protests. This included nationwide police, tactical units, air support, and protecting critical infrastructure. In my view, this was really to divert attention from its incompetent governance. That is not to suggest that I condone violence. No, I am against violence towards our fellow Africans and other foreign nationals, despite their circumstances, just as we are against gender-based violence (GBV) towards women and children in this country. But had our government been a great government to its people (us, South Africans) in the first place, South Africa wouldn't have been in this unruly state today. Just think about it. We wouldn't have been here.

Spending such a large amount of money is insane. Acting Police Minister Cachalia admitted that this cash was diverted from budgets meant for community safety and police stations, while the government argues that it's cheaper than the [R50 billion lost in 2021's unrest](#). Even the government's own South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) confirms that figure. Yet preventing unrest through competent governance would have cost far less than either. Choosing this approach while the root problems remain untreated is, in my view, injudicious. As I've already said, I believe this serves to divert attention from incompetent governance while also suppressing South Africans who are supposed to be liberated. This act by the government will only result in more tension between it and South Africans, and more hatred and acts of violence between South Africans and our fellow Africans and other foreign nationals.

Many South Africans' major request is a country where citizens have freedom of speech and expression, human rights, job creation, access to basic needs, a safer society, competent governance, strict borders, equality — just to name a few. What many South Africans want, just like citizens in any other country, is for foreign nationals to be in our country legally, recorded by the Department of Home Affairs, and able to contribute to our country's development through the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the same way we're expected to as South Africans. Then eliminate cheap labour.

Cheap labour is one major factor contributing to South African unemployment because some employers exploit undocumented immigrants due to their legal status in South Africa. They take advantage of their vulnerable circumstances, knowing many will accept unfair working hours with little pay as long as they get paid. Even [President Ramaphosa has admitted](#) that some employers hire undocumented migrants precisely because their legal status prevents them from standing up for their rights. And that's just cruel.

See, for the past 30 years, the South African Government had sufficient time to eliminate unfair laws inherited from the Apartheid regime, develop new laws or build on the remaining fair laws, then create a system based on those laws, test it, improve it, and implement it impartially and without corruption. Then maintain and continuously improve it, and, most importantly, respect and protect it. But it seems like the government has failed, and it keeps on failing daily. As the voice of its people, their cries go unheard, while promises remain unkept.

The livelihood of many South Africans is truly heartbreaking. Many South Africans may reasonably view what the government did on 30 June 2026 as evidence that its priorities are disconnected from the daily struggles of ordinary citizens. As long as its administration is living well, it's all good to them.

Fifty years after the 16 June 1976 Soweto Uprising, the youth sacrificed their lives for freedom. Today's youth continue to struggle with unemployment, even though they have matriculated, and some even went further to obtain professional qualifications at tertiary institutions. I am one of the unemployed educated youth. And the number of us keeps on increasing, as Stats SA puts [youth unemployment \(15–24\) at a devastating 60.9%, with 4.7 million young people \(15–34\) out of work](#), while our GDP grows at a measly 0.5%. This is further proof that the economy is failing us because of incompetent governance, not the other way around.

Otherwise, those funds should've been used to try and create more jobs and improve the livelihood of South Africans. Instead, they're being used to try to send South Africans to jail, leave them with criminal records, and/or send us to an early grave, while causing more tension and division instead of unity.

But with respect to the current illegal immigration issue nationwide, these funds should've actually been used to fix the Department of Home Affairs systems, resolve the documentation issues involving undocumented immigrants, make sure that all immigrants are legally staying in South Africa, and ensure they have work permits to work and contribute to our country's economic growth. In recent operations, the government arrested just 5,056 individuals for immigration violations and admitted it needs 10,000 labour inspectors to properly enforce the laws, but it can only phase them in due to "budgetary concerns." Yet it found R600 million for security. It's clear that the choice is not about affordability. It's about priorities. In my view, that appears to divert attention from years of institutional neglect.

If foreign nationals aren't in South Africa legally, or in any country in the world for that matter, it's right and lawful to say that they should return to their respective countries and only come back with proper documentation if they wish to. But our government is remarkably failing at highlighting that. It continues to make promises it fails to keep, and it doesn't properly communicate.

In this situation, the government should prioritise border security and defence, internal law enforcement, and functional public policy — not spending R600 million in ways that, in my view, suppress South Africans' voices and create unnecessary tension between government and its people, while increasing division between South Africans and our fellow Africans and other foreign nationals.

About the Author

Edward Tshepo Sibeko is an ICT professional who occasionally writes opinion pieces on issues that matter. His writing reflects his personal views and aims to encourage informed and constructive discussion.

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author. They do not represent the views of any employer, organisation, institution, or political party.

Sources

The factual claims, statistics, and official statements referenced in this article are drawn from publicly available reports and statements issued by the respective institutions listed below.

- **Statistics South Africa (Stats SA).** Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), Quarter 1 2026. Source of the national unemployment rate (32.7%) and youth unemployment rate (60.9%).
- **South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).** National Investigative Hearing Report into the July 2021 Unrest. Source of the estimated R50 billion economic impact.
- **Ministry of Police / South African Police Service (SAPS).** Public briefings and statements by Acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia regarding the R600 million budget reallocation for the nationwide security deployment on 30 June 2026.
- **The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa.** Public statements by President Cyril Ramaphosa regarding the exploitation of undocumented migrants in the labour market.
- **Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) and Department of Home Affairs (DHA).** Operational reports relating to immigration enforcement (5,056 arrests) and the reported need for approximately 10,000 labour inspectors.

Author's Note

I welcome respectful discussion and constructive criticism. If you believe any factual information in this article is inaccurate, I encourage you to share credible evidence so that I can review and, where necessary, correct it. My goal is to contribute thoughtfully to public discussion through reasoned opinion supported by verifiable information.

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