

Cope, DA stand firm on labour broker walkout

COPE and the DA said yesterday they would no longer participate in public hearings on labour broking.

The two parties said their decision followed a disruption of Parliament's labour portfolio committee public hearing on labour brokers in Germiston on Wednesday.

They described it as violent and a "mutilation" of the dignity of Parliament that could not be tolerated.

"Participants wearing Cosatu T-shirts waved sticks and threw empty bottles and tins at participants who did not agree with them," they said in a statement.

According to Cope and DA officials, ANC officials at the hearing did little to calm the situation and many who did not agree with Cosatu were not given a chance to speak.

"The ANC and Cosatu are equally guilty of tarnishing the parliamentary process - the ANC for encouraging the chaos and Cosatu for not showing any respect for such a crucial function of government."

Cope member and MP Willie Madisha said: "I never thought when we talk of democracy in our country - it's on that level. People's lives were not safe as they were threatened when they voiced a different opinion."

Madisha said people who did not agree with Cosatu's wish to ban labour brokers were labelled "counter-revolutionaries who should be dealt with".

DA shadow minister of labour Ian Ollis said the two parties would only go back to the hearings if they would be conducted properly - with the respect and dignity that they deserved.

The two opposition parties said they would ask the Speaker of Parliament, Max Sisulu, to intervene and "bring the ANC and its affiliates into line".

Cope and the DA said, however, they were only withdrawing from the public process and not the parliamentary discussion on the matter.

They said their stance on the issue of labour brokers was that they should function in a regulatory environment within the country's laws.

"We don't want a situation where people are being exploited. There are people who benefited from these brokers, who were placed in jobs by them," said Madisha.

The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) issued a statement condemning Cope's and the DA's behaviour at the public hearings on Wednesday.

"Cope and DA prioritised their honeymoon by rudely walking out from the public hearings," the union said.

Numsa said their withdrawal from the hearings was informed by their realisation that "throughout our country an overwhelming majority of people want labour brokers to be abolished".

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