



DA slams disruption of labour hearings

The Congress of the People and the Democratic Alliance said on Thursday that they would no longer participate in public hearings on labour brokering.

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 the situation 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."

According to COPE and DA officials, ANC officials at the hearing did little to calm the situation and as a result many people who did not agree with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) were not given a chance to speak.

They said the public hearing turned into a union rally.

"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 they were "extremely" disappointed.

"I never thought when we talk of democracy in our country - it's in that level. Lives were not safe as they were threatened when they voiced a different opinion," he said.

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

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

The two opposition parties said they were going to ask the Speaker of Parliament Max Sisulu to intervene and "bring the ANC and its affiliates in line".

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

They said their stance on the labour brokers' issue 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 South Africa (Numsa) issued a statement condemning COPE 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".

The office of the ANC chief whip also issued a statement describing the COPE and DA withdrawal as an attempt to discredit a legitimate process - adding that the opposition parties' actions came after the public voiced strong objection to the practice of labour brokering.

"It is the tired strategy of the DA members, now unfortunately acquired by those in its new ally, Cope, to concoct lies and rubbish parliamentary processes when things do not go their way," the ANC said.

The party also dismissed claims that the parliamentary process, aimed at acquiring the public's views on the matter, was a mere formality because a decision had already been taken.

"This undermines the confidence the people have in Parliament and does a gross disservice to the constituency the two parties claim to represent in Parliament," the party said. - Sapa

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