

## **Statement on Global Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy**

**(13 November 2024)**

We, the undersigned civil society organisations in South Africa and individuals, will be participating in the 12th Global Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy to be held between 20-22 November 2024 in Gauteng, South Africa.

The Global Assembly will attract over 600 civil society activists and leaders from 100 countries, many of whom are actively involved in varied struggles against repression, undemocratic rule and autocratic regimes in their respective countries.

Many of these activists are engaged in day-to-day struggles to advance democracy, human rights and freedoms in their home countries, including minority rights where such minority communities are victims of discrimination, violent repression and oppression.

We consider the Global Assembly as an opportunity to engage with these activists and leaders, learn from their experiences of struggles for democracy and human rights and pledge solidarity with their struggles, where appropriate and possible.

The Global Assembly takes place in the context of a world where right-wing movements and political conservatism have been growing, posing a threat to democracy globally. This forum and others must be seen as a place where discussion and response to these issues is promoted and supported.

At the Global Assembly, we will showcase the strength of our democracy since 1994. We will critically examine the threats and challenges that we face in strengthening our democratic institutions and culture. We will, among other issues, articulate our concerns relating to inequality, poverty, hunger, gender-based violence, joblessness, state capture and corruption in our country.

We have noted the publicly expressed objections from some South African civil society activists regarding the part-funding of the Global Assembly by the US-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Their concerns relate to the reported involvement of US security agencies in undermining democracies and legitimate governments in the past and present, particularly in the developing world. They perceive the Global Assembly as an imperialist project aimed at weakening democracy in countries around the world, including South Africa.

We are grateful that they have voiced their concerns publicly, but we do not share their views about the Global Assembly. We are acutely mindful of and remain committed to our historical values and principles rooted in our struggle for liberation in our country. We have and always will retain our organisational independence in our affairs and activities and will be guided by our democratic ethos and backgrounds during our engagements with our counterparts at the Global Assembly.

We commit ourselves to highlighting the desperate plight of the Palestinian people, activists, humanitarian aid workers, journalists and political prisoners at the Global

Assembly. We will use the Global Assembly to draw attention to the genocide and atrocities taking place in Palestine, Lebanon and the wider Middle East, as well Sudan, the DRC and in other conflicts around the world. We will denounce threats to genuine democracy and peace, including from the United States and others, as we have always done in the past, and will continue to do in the future.

Our solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for peace, freedom and democracy remains stronger than ever before and we will champion their cause at the Global Assembly and beyond. We will never compromise the right of the Palestinian people to national self-determination and freedom, and we will campaign ceaselessly to end the occupation of Palestine by the Zionist-apartheid state of Israel.

We call on all state and non-state actors engaged in armed conflicts in the world, and particularly in Palestine, to comply fully with their obligations in terms of the Geneva Conventions, international law and international humanitarian law.

We applaud our government for lodging the “Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)” before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and filing the subsequent “Memorial” against Israel at the ICJ. We call on the ICJ to expedite its proceedings in this matter to hold Israel accountable for its brutal and genocidal actions.

There is a wide array of civil society groups, including our own government, that are making significant contributions to the growing worldwide solidarity movement with the people of Palestine. The efforts of each group are and should be valued and respected by all.

Our view is that South Africans should utilise the Global Assembly to highlight the plight of peoples around the world who suffer under the yoke of oppression and to pledge solidarity with them. We should also learn from the struggles and experiences of those who have gained credibility from years of fighting for their causes. For us there is more to gain from attending and participating in the Global Assembly than from boycotting it.

**SIGNED BY:**

**Ahmed Kathrada Foundation**

**Be the Future Foundation**

**Campaign On Digital Ethics (CODE)**

**Centre for Good Governance and Social Justice NPC**

**Defend our Democracy**

**Freedom Under Law**

**Human Rights Institute of South Africa**

**In Transformation Initiative**

**Kuhlase Disability Center NPO**

**Mark Heywood**

**Msunduzi Association of Residents Ratepayers and Civics**

**National Youth Coalition**

**Phoenix Settlement Trust**

**Rivonia Circle**

**The Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation**

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**For media enquiries, call:**

**071 037 6138 or 083 278 8832**