

Cronin: We must know why the relationship between Zuma and Gordhan broke down

Speaking at the memorial service for Rivonia Trialist Ahmed Kathrada in Cape Town on Thursday, South African Communist Party (SACP) deputy general secretary and deputy minister of transport, Jeremy Cronin, said that the explanations given by President Zuma for axing finance minister Pravin Gordhan remain inadequate.

He said that the statement from this week's ANC's National Working Committee meeting that it had accepted that the irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between Zuma and Gordhan was adequate for the minister's dismissal, is not satisfactory.

"The National Working Committee is now saying it was a mistake for the so-called intelligence report to have been used as the basis for the clumsy recall from London," Cronin said. "That's not good enough. The National Working Committee has accepted that the irretrievable breakdown of the Zuma-Gordhan relationship was a good enough reason for Gordhan's axing. But surely it's not good enough if we are also not told why there was this irretrievable breakdown."

He said that the SACP had disagreed with Gordhan's removal because the party understood what was at stake.

"If there was a breakdown because Gordhan refused to rubber-stamp an unaffordable nuclear deal; If there was a breakdown because Gordhan stood his ground when the NPA and Hawks were unleashed against him; If there was a breakdown because Gordhan exposed the real rogue unit operating within Sars; If the breakdown was related to Gordhan's refusal to turn a blind eye to what was happening on the boards of SAA, Eskom, Denel and many others, then it is absolutely not acceptable for the ANC's National Working Committee to say blandly that they accepted President Zuma's grounds for firing him," Cronin said.

He also expressed concern that the ANC had acknowledged that Zuma had already told senior officials that his relationship with Gordhan had broken down as far back as November last year.

"That is bizarre because this is not an employer-employee relationship," said Cronin. "This is not a labour relations issue. This is a president and his most senior minister in government. So what steps were taken to remedy this irretrievable breakdown?"

He further questioned why, if the relationship had broken down months ago, it suddenly became such an urgent issue. "If they were told in November, why was there a sudden flurry of reckless events last week which have endangered our economy and country in all sorts of ways?" Cronin asked.

He reiterated that the SACP is calling for Zuma to step down, and will be engaging with the ANC to argue for this.

"We look forward to such an engagement and promise to stand our ground," Cronin said. "There is a crisis that we are facing, not just as the ANC and not just the Alliance, but as a constitutional democracy: If elected and collective leaderships are bypassed in making critical decisions whose content and timing are seemingly determined outside of cabinet, outside of parliament, outside even of the National Executive Committee or the Top Six of the ANC, then we are all in trouble."