

■ ELECTIONS

Push for workers to vote for ruling ANC

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA,

SIHLE MAVUSO and ANA

THE Parliament of South Africa said yesterday that May Day was important to celebrate achievements made for workers' rights but more needed to be done.

"We remain mindful of the great strides we have achieved as a nation towards transforming the labour relations landscape through eliminating restrictive and oppressive labour laws and replacing them with a progressive constitution and pieces of legislation that guarantee inalienable rights of workers such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, right to strike and workplace freedom," read a statement from Parliament yesterday.

Last year in May, Parliament passed an amendment to labour laws aimed at bolstering worker's rights.

This amendment saw the minimum wage being set at R20 an hour covering all sectors except farmworkers, domestic workers and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers.

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Jeremy Cronin
SACP POLITBURO MEMBER

The rate for farmworkers was 90% of R20 which was R18 an hour; domestic workers was 75% of R20 which was R15 an hour; EPWP workers would be paid R11 an hour which was 55% of R20.

Parliament conceded that much more still needed to be done to fully realise the ideals many workers struggled for and laid down their lives to achieve.

"As such, we recommit ourselves to build a true people's Parliament, that spares no effort in ensuring that life-changing laws are made, where all workers enjoy the rights enunciated in the constitution," said the presiding officers.

Jeremy Cronin, an SACP politburo member, said this year's May Day was as significant as that of 1994.

"It occurs at a time our country needs leadership and to move forward," Cronin said.

Speaking in Durban, Cosatu president Zingiswa Losi said it was time the government acted against mining bosses where loss of life underground had become normal.

She made reference to Sibanye-Stillwater, where 1 800 workers were kept underground, for their safety, for two days, saying that was not acceptable. The workers eventually made it to the surface. "Mr President, today we are facing a disaster at Sibanye mine where miners are trapped underground.

"We are saying to the government of the ANC, we are tired of counting dead bodies of people working in gold mines.

"We demand that the minister ensures that there is compliance and if there is none, the bosses of the mines must face the wrath of the state because workers' lives are precious."