

Kasrils hits back at ‘gutter’ critics

April 24 2014 at 09:33am

By Marianne Merten [Comment on this story](#)



INLSA Ronnie Kasrils at the media launch of the Sidikiwe! Vukani! No-vote campaign. Photo: Antoine de Ras

Cape Town - Ronnie Kasrils says critics who turned to personal insults after the launch of the “Vukani! Sidikiwe! No-vote (Wake Up! We Are Fed Up!)” campaign have debased the political debate.

The former intelligence minister has been called “a factory fault” and had his anti-apartheid struggle credentials, including his leading role in Umkhonto we Sizwe, questioned since the launch of the campaign to strategically vote for opposition parties or spoil the May 7 ballots in protest against government corruption and maladministration.

“I’m an old hand. I’ve been through the mill 100 000 times. My skin is pretty thick and my shoulders are broad,” Kasrils told the Cape Argus. “That is not to say that I enjoy the way in which certain people in the ANC and the SACP have decided to descend to the gutter and spew out all sorts of insults... and totally debase the political debate.”

Kasrils said it was important that South Africans learnt “it was okay to disagree and remain comrades and friends in disagreement” in support of tolerance and political debate.

“Blade Nzimande and Gwede Mantashe have debased the political debate. Shame, shame, shame on them.”

In the wake of the campaign’s launch some 10 days ago, the ANC rejected the campaign as “reactionary” and another example of Kasrils’s “historical adventurism, ill-discipline and recklessness”, while on the campaign trail ANC secretary-general Mantashe wished the campaign good luck.

SACP leader Nzimande called Kasrils “a factory fault”.

“Every production process produces its own factory faults, so that’s what they are. Some of them are well-known factory faults, old factory faults, who are joining this campaign,” Nzimande said.

Several cabinet ministers also criticised the campaign, politely and poignantly pointing out the lives lost during the struggle to achieve today’s constitutional democracy. Among the ranks of anti-apartheid activists there are those, like Mavuso Msimang, who disagree and instead publicly urging for change from within.

The campaign sparked heated public debate on the relevance and correctness of spoiling one’s vote.

Political commentators agree it is “a legitimate tool”, but raised questions about its effectiveness. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) sought legal advice, although the electoral code only bans offering inducements or rewards for a particular outcome – something the campaign does not do.

Religious leaders have also weighed in on the campaign. On Easter Sunday, Cape Town Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said: “After prayer-fully reflecting on the party you want to vote for, please go to the polls and vote... And vote we must: too many people have suffered and died for us to stay away from the polls out of apathy”.

Zion Christian Church leader Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane told millions of congregants to vote intelli- gently. “(Pray for) the wisdom to elect leaders who will not forget about you once you have elected them.”

Political Bureau

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/kasrils-hits-back-at-gutter-critics-1.1679652#.VCEhTBacxfg>