



## RAMAPHOSA STANDS BY MEYER AS US ENVOY

*President insists diplomats must represent government policy, dismissing criticism of apartheid-era minister's new role*

LEE RONDGANGER and NTSIKELELO QOYO

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has pushed back against criticism of his appointment of apartheid-era minister Roelf Meyer as South Africa's next ambassador to the United States.

Speaking on the sidelines of the National Local Economic Development Summit yesterday, Ramaphosa said that any ambassador who does not follow the South African government line would be recalled.

"One of the criticisms levelled against Mr Meyer's appointment is that he joined the ANC. Now, you join the ANC, knowing full well that you are embracing the policies the ANC has articulated," Ramaphosa told reporters.

"Now, I am not emphasising his political affiliation, and as a diplomat, he obviously needs to be as neutral as possible. Mr Roelf Meyer is well attuned to the policies of this country, of this government, and every ambassador who represents me—as president, they represent both the president and the country. Every ambassador representing South Africa on foreign missions must comply with and articulate the policies of the government that has appointed them. If they do not, they must return," he said.

Ramaphosa's remarks come amid criticism of the appointment, with many citing Meyer's role in supporting the apartheid regime and later negotiating a settlement that did not benefit the majority of South Africans.

The Economic Freedom Fighters yesterday described Meyer's appointment as "tone deaf" and an affront to the country's democratic history.

In a statement, the EFF said Meyer's record in the apartheid government disqualifies him from representing South Africa. It highlighted his roles as a National Party MP and later as deputy minister of law and order and minister of defence—positions the party says placed him at the centre of state repression.

The party argued the appointment is especially offensive as it coincides with commemorations of Chris Hani, warning against the rehabilitation of apartheid-era figures who later repositioned themselves as democrats.

The ambassadorial post in Washington has remained vacant since March 2025, when US President Donald Trump expelled then-envoy Ebrahim Rasool. The move followed Rasool's criticism of the "Make America Great Again" movement during an academic discussion.

Political analyst and director of Surgetower Associates Management Consultancy, Siseko Maposa, said Meyer's appointment is significant on multiple fronts.

"Symbolically, as an Afrikaner who navigated the CODESA negotiations alongside Ramaphosa, his appointment signals to Washington that South Africa continues to foster cross-racial cooperative leadership, countering persistent

US narratives that Afrikaners face undue persecution," he said.

"That said, while business and the GNU coalition partners broadly support Meyer, certain Afrikaner circles have already voiced concerns that he will not represent their interests in the US. We can anticipate a counter-narrative framing Meyer's appointment as an attempt to whitewash alleged genocide against white Afrikaners—a claim that, while unsubstantiated, may gain traction in specific quarters and influence a very uninformed Trump administration."

Strategically, Maposa said, Meyer's negotiating credentials are well-suited to manage current turbulence between Pretoria and Washington.

"His primary utility will be to bring both parties back to the table, a basic but essential element absent for over a year in high-intensity foreign policy engagement. Nevertheless, Meyer's capabilities are not the core issue: South Africa's broader foreign policy agenda is.

"Regardless of who serves as ambassador, Washington will press Pretoria on domestic policies such as BEE, its continued support for Palestine to Israel's detriment, and its growing ties with US adversaries like Iran and Russia. These are fundamental ideological and policy questions—whether South Africa will pursue genuine non-alignment or double down on its current foreign policy trajectory. Ultimately, that choice will determine whether bilateral relations improve or deteriorate further," he said.

Wits Professor Mcebisi Ndletyana added: "Ramaphosa needs someone with a lot of credibility, especially to dispel all the lies that the President of the United States is spreading. Donald Trump knows he is spreading lies; he is not being misled. He believes in using misinformation.

"In this case, success would be restoring diplomatic relations between South Africa and the United States and reopening that channel."

During the early 1990s negotiations, Meyer was the National Party's chief negotiator and worked closely with Ramaphosa, ultimately leading to the country's first democratic elections in 1994. Meyer formally joined the ANC in 2006.

The Presidency said Meyer will assume his duties in Washington once standard diplomatic procedures with US authorities have been finalised.



Cyril Ramaphosa



THE political future of Julius Malema hangs in the balance as the State seeks up to 15 years imprisonment. The EFF leader faces sentencing at the Magistrate's Court in KuGompo City following his conviction on five counts under the Firearms Control Act for discharging a semi-automatic rifle during a 2018 rally in Mdantsane. The outcome could determine whether he retains his parliamentary seat, as the State pushes for a substantial custodial sentence.

NATION

## Malema awaits sentence as State seeks 15-year jail term

BRANDON NEL and SINENHLANHLA MASILELA

EFF leader Julius Malema will learn his fate in the Magistrate's Court in KuGompo City today as the State pushes for a prison term of up to 15 years. Magistrate Twanet Olivier heard final arguments from the defence and the State before postponing the matter to today for judgment.

Prosecutor Adv Joel Cesar told the court the State is seeking a prison term of up to 15 years for Malema, who was convicted in October 2025 on five counts under the Firearms Control Act. Alternatively, he asked for a sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, with three years suspended, along with fines on the remaining counts.

The charges stem from a 2018 incident at an EFF rally in Mdantsane, where Malema fired a semi-automatic firearm into the air. Co-accused Adriaan Snyman was acquitted. The court previously heard that Snyman handed the firearm to Malema during the event.

If Malema is sentenced to more than

12 months in prison without the option of a fine, he will lose his seat in Parliament. Thousands of EFF supporters gathered outside the court from early yesterday, many having camped overnight after a vigil. Police set up a heavy security presence around the building.

Advocate Laurance Hodes told the court that all five charges arose from a single incident lasting less than two minutes. "To impose a custodial sentence for a single, brief incident of this nature would be disproportionate and inappropriate," he said. He outlined Malema's personal circumstances, saying he is now 45, was 37 at the time of the incident, has no previous convictions and has "led a blameless life".

There have been no similar incidents since 2018, he said. Hodes told the court that Malema received the rifle from someone likely linked to security services, describing it as a licensed weapon. He said Snyman handed the firearm to Malema, who borrowed it for the event, held it for less than a minute while firing, and returned it immediately. Malema

did not obtain the weapon illegally and had no intention of using it for any other purpose, he said.

Hodes also cited other cases where people discharged firearms in public but did not receive prison sentences. In one case, a man fired a Glock pistol under a table in a restaurant with about 220 people present, causing damage but no injuries, and received a three-year suspended sentence. In another, he said, two intoxicated police officers fired shots in a public area and received partially suspended sentences with fines.

Hodes argued that the State was inconsistent, describing Malema as an ordinary person who should be treated equally before the law, while also relying on his status as a political leader to argue for a harsher sentence.

Cesar, however, told the court the firearm used was an assault rifle, not a handgun, with more powerful ammunition that could have caused fatal consequences. He referred to video footage of the incident as a "silent witness".

Cesar argued that Malema placed

more than 20,000 people at risk during the rally in Mdantsane, one of the most densely populated areas in the country. He said the video showed people running, with several individuals in the line of fire, and stressed that Malema fired more than one shot. He argued that Malema, as a public representative, had set a dangerous example.

Meanwhile, Snyman is suing the State for R20 million in damages after being acquitted of charges brought against him. Speaking to the SABC, Snyman's spokesperson, Kirsten McLeod, said it was clear the State had dropped the charges because there was no evidence against him. She added that they were still awaiting a response from the NPA and SAPS regarding a written demand for payment of more than R20 million.

"This is a result of a malicious prosecution claim. The 30-day period we gave the NPA and SAPS to respond has now expired. We will be instituting legal action shortly, and if they fail to respond, we will apply for default judgment," she said.

NATION

## 'Witness kidnapping plot' halts Cape businessman's bail bid

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THE highly-anticipated bail judgment for Cape businessman Shaun Roos was halted yesterday after the court heard that the accused allegedly attempted to have a witness kidnapped.

Roos, 56, returned to the Cape Town Magistrate's Court facing a Schedule 5 charge of corruption after he allegedly bribed City Manager Lungelo Mbandazayo with R4 million to reinstate tenders for his road surfacing company, Triple C and Maintenance. The company had several tenders with the City; however, it was later found that alleged tender fraud was at play, which led to a joint investigation by the City's Ethics

and Forensics Department and SAPS. Roos was arrested on March 3 during an undercover operation carried out at Watercrest Mall in Somerset West, with Mbandazayo acting as an agent.

Yesterday's appearance was set down to hear arguments and judgment. But the State told the court that they have an affidavit from a witness claiming that Roos attempted to have them harmed.

The State said: "The affidavit was presented to the State on Wednesday morning, which was made by a witness, after which SAPS got the information directly from the witness that there were certain threats made on their life.

"It involves, once again, the interference with the witness and causing them harm. This affidavit has a direct impact



Shaun Roos

on the question of bail, and we ask that we are given an opportunity to reopen our case to represent this evidence."

The State said that the alleged threats were made on March 27 and April 7, and that they have recordings.

"It appears the accused has once again allegedly made contact with alleged prison gang members in order to follow

and to kidnap the witness, which is said in the affidavit," the State said.

Defence attorney, William Booth said the State was pulling a "11<sup>th</sup> hour stop" to his client's bail application.

The court heard, however, that the magistrate needed all the information in the affidavit to make a proper decision. The case was postponed to April 21.



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THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE, BUT FIRST IT WILL MAKE YOU MISERABLE.  
| JAMES A. GARFIELD