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**The Ex-Political Prisoners Association (EPPA) as a national association, was founded in Cape Town in 1995. It was launched on Robben Island by the President of the Republic of South Africa Nelson Mandela. The association is a non-profit, non-partisan structure that represents the diverse ideological and political viewpoints of all previous anti- apartheid formations. It represents men and women who qualify as members through having served prison terms on Robben Island and other Apartheid dungeons. It has a national office and offices in all 9 South African provinces.**

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27/09/21

EPPA PRESENTATION TO PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE OF ARTS , SPORTS AND CULTURE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document present a conceptual framework from the recent EPPA/RIM workshop in Cape Town on 16/17/ April/21 the ex-political prisoners pilgrimage to Robben Island Museum as mandated by the meeting between EPPA and ACCORD on the 08/01/21. The document is anchored on the importance of EPP’S AS THE COMMUNITY OF EPERIENCE. They constitute a key stake holder in RIM affairs in that it is either experience that constitute the meaning of the notion of the triumph of the human spirit against the forces of darkness. As such the narrative and the statement of significance of RIM is extremely limited without the telling of the experience of EPP’S to the world as a collective and as individuals

It should be remembered that XPP’S some of whom still live today are the mark of the epoch in SA history associated with Robben Island begin declared the Apartheid Maximum prison in 1959 to its declaration as a museum in 1990. The release of political prisoners on 10 June should have received monumentalisation as that left the shores of Robben Island should be known. In symbolic terms, the release of and the passage of the political prisoners from Robben Island is no different from the return of Lord Rama to Ajodhya (India) which marked the beginning Ram Rhadya Golden Era in 300 BC, the defeat of the forces of darkness by light, which is still celebrated as part of Diwali by the Hindu community up to this day as the festival of light. The Sabbath and the eating of the unleavened bread is held as the MEMORIALISATION of that moment to this day.

The ships that carried the released prisoners should be preserved as no less than an arch of the Israelites. It is regrettable that the manner in which the release of political prisoners in SA is a moment that is threatened to be wiped away from the annals of history by the it is handled by the DAC, RIM in particular. Initial attempts in this regard were manifested by the role of XPP’S in the governance of RIM. Ahmed Kathrada served as Chairman of the Council of RIM, supported by other XPP’S in the council.. Mr Paul Langa(an EPP in his own right) was appointed the CEO of RIM at persuasion of Nelson Mandela, a number of EPP’S played a significant role in senior management and operations, heritage in particular. With time the EPP’S were side-lined, marginalised and the technocracy took an upper hand in running RIM. Mr Paul Langa tenure as a CEO was terminated without grace. The XPP’S who worked at RIM staged a number of strikes to register their concerns about their marginalisation, there was no assessment and evaluation as to whether the healing of the EPP’S took place as was originally planned. Most ex-political prisoners were preoccupied with their life pursuits while others fell in the margins of the new society, concerning themselves about Robben Island was less important than basic day to day survival. This document raises a number of issues a problem statement about the evolution of RIM and EPP’S community stake holder from incarceration to a democratic state.

One of the key issues was the Mandelarisation of RIM. The unfortunate part of the Mandelarisation of RIM is its overshadowing the experiences of other political prisoners, particularly the unsung heroes of Robben Island. South Africa and the world are not told the stories of EPP’S, how their families coped with incarceration, and how they went to about healing themselves from the burden of incarceration, a cleansing Ceremony for those who died in prison has not been done. This document suggest a solution framework to address the issues, with the pilgrimage being one the apparatus of reproducing the legacy of EPP as a category of the national heritage, which has not received justice in the heritage development and practice of RIM in particular and SA in general. Arts, Sports and Culture Minister highlighted that a situational analysis, demographics of EPPA and a logistical plan for the following project. A Memorialisation and memorial wall, Reunion of former political prisoners should be a priority.

 MANDELARISATION OF RIM

With time the notion of the triumph of the human spirit was seen in terms of ‘Primus inter pares’ (first among the equal) Mandela as Parousia, the emergent messiah of the liberation struggle. The narrative of RIM was more and more told in terms of the experience of a single person, Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela. The experience of other political prisoners was marginalised in a literal sense. The situation was exacerbated by the establishment of other Mandela centred organisations that preserved the legacy of Nelson Mandela, the Nelson Mandela Museum at Mvezo, Qunu and Bhunga Building at Mthahta, and the Nelson Mandela foundation, and the Nelson Mandela home at Orlando West turned into a museum. This meant that people had many alternatives to consume Madiba’s legacy. Robben Island was just one of many outlets which provided experience on Madiba Legacy. The Nelson Mandela day on July 18, a day observed by the world is not the preserve of RIM. Therefore it means that RIM needs to come with anew different property role to play in identifying the unique differentiating of RIM in the future

 THE MARGINALISATION OF THE NAMIBIAN SECTION OF RIM

During the requiem lecture of the late Herman Toivo ya Toivo, it was mentioned that he complained to Madiba about the marginalisation of the narrative and the section of the Namibians at RIM. Anybody who once visited Robben Island cab bear witness to this truth. The EPPA has connections with the Namibian ex-political prisoners. A discussion should be facilitated on how the Namibians want their chapter in Robben Island memorialised. This will require the two sovereigns South Africa and Namibia to include the arrangements as parts of the cultural exchange bilateral. The Portfolio Committee can facilitate the above arrangement of a workshop.

THE REDUCTION OF RIM TO A TOURIST ATTRACTION

While RIM has managed to remain a World heritage site as a result of the history of incarceration, it has evolved more and more to a tourist attraction. Its profile and status has been reduced as the premium national symbol of the ‘Liberation Struggle’, seen from the perspective of the XPP’S and the ordinary people of SA.

The EPP’S AS THE INTERLOCUTORS OF THE SIGNIFICANS OF RIM

The critical role of XPP’S in maintaining the statement of significant for RIM was identified very early in transforming Robben Island as prison to a museum. After Robben has dealt with corruption investigations, setting up new management structures in heritage and governance, the ex-political political prisoners would be the primary interlocutors of the story of Robben Island. In identifying the interlocutory role of the EPPA, it was identified that this role would also have a therapeutic effect on the EXPP’S.. In ensuring the success of the interlocutory role three developments took place.

1. The EPP’S would play a role on the governance of RIM
2. An annual pilgrimage to RIM
3. Memorial wall to be erected on the Island
4. Robben Island leadership development institute
5. Intellectual property
6. Implementation of the Auditor General recommendations
7. Implementation of the Morar and Macrobbets investigation reports
8. Implementation of the EPPA/RIM Workshop recommendations
9. To what extent does the state of democracy today align to the expectations of XPP’S as a constituency?
10. To what extent does Robben Island still represent the sentiments of the people who made it significant, XPP’S.?
11. As the attrition grows how the XPP’S do want to deal with the preservation and the continuity of their legacy into the deep future. What is the role of the families and the children in preserving the legacy of the xpp’s.
12. What is the political economy of the preservation of the legacy of XPP’S?
13. How to address the issues raisedse in the problem statement?

EPPA SENTIMENTS ON WHICH TO BUILD

1. REVIEW OF THE FUNERAL SCHEME & CODE OF CONDUCT.
2. RIM must contribute to the social transformation of the Island through the execution of the social responsibility projects in alignment with the existing ICMP an in consultation with EPPA.
3. The EPPA has been calling for a comprehensive plan for the past 10 years, a comprehensive funeral cover with known business entities such as Hollard, Metropolitan and Old mutual, B3 Funeral service, and other black funeral entities.
4. Rim to submit a database of living EPP’S to the above entities.
5. The HR and finance division to draft a policy framework to cover all EPP’S.
6. Funding must come from the ticket sales and the ferries contracted by RIM.
7. The current funeral policy is rejected hence it exclude EPPA.
8. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS REVIEW & RIM COMMERCIALISING.
9. Robben Island has a chequered history of maritime contacts, confinement and banishment, oppression and hard labour, torture , segregation and discrimination. It has also been a military post, World war 11 garrison, leprosarium and mental health facility, a prison for common law criminals and for political prisoners. Very few places in the world have such a long and layered history of human suffering, the fight for freedom of the mind and body, and of subsequent triumph.
10. Protection of the intellectual property of the following memorial sites, which was signed by reference groups that represented all phases of the struggle from the 60’s. 70’s, 80’s and the late 90’s. No commercialisation of RIM without consultation of EPP’S. a review of the property rights is therefore necessary on the following sites:
11. Quarries that provided stone for the buildings in Cape Town as well as on the Island, symbolising the hard labour of the past.( 1600 and 1960’s)
12. The earlier prison structures( 1650’s &1960’s)
13. The ‘KRAMAT’ symbolising the strong presence of Islam both on Robben Island as well as the Western Cape.
14. The graves of both the known and the unknown that today dot the landscape symbolising periods of discrimination and banishment as well as selfless service to the discriminated in the case of the graves of Priests who went to serve the sick.( 1600 & 1931)
15. The mental asylum facilities(1846 to 1921)
16. The churches that cared for the sick, the abandoned and the prisoners, and the school used to educate children of the warders.( 1841 to 1996)
17. Recorded memories, such as interviews( 1940’s to 2021)
18. Prison buildings that held both political and common law prisoners( 1950’s to 1996)
19. The village that was the home to the prison guards, representing the normal life as opposed to the prison and confinement areas.( 1960 to 1996)
20. Stone and lime quarries, Jetty 1, prison boats.(1962 to 1977)
21. Tracks that political prisoners walked( 1962 to 1991)
22. All sports and crafted and written artefacts and movable material evidence created by the prisoners and those about them( 1962 to 1991)
23. The garbage dumps that acted as places of smuggling of information to the political prisoners: ( 1960 to 1971)
24. The Gardens that prisoners use to create a ‘near normal” lives for themselves( 19 60 to 1991)
25. Appointment of the Artefacts conservator or conservation architect.
26. The Tunnels that political prisoners walked to the blue stone quarry.
27. Military batteries used by soldiers during the 1&2 world war.
28. PERMENENT EMPLOYMENT OF EPP’S IN ALL DEPARTMENTS.
29. To institute appropriate governance RIM HR should establish a regulatory framework, including relationships with government and other key stakeholders.
30. EPP’S have been side-lined in managerial positions in all RIM departments.
31. Employ a new conservation architect.
32. Develop and present exhibitions on the above sites and employ guides, information officers and more tour guides when all the sections are open to the public.
33. Aproposal has been put forward to have a SITE-BASED ADMINISTRATOR on the Island, acting as an administrative link between the Service Departments operating on the Island and the Chief Operating Officer, This when implemented, will improve the maintenance and care of the site and enhance the communication between the various departments using the museum.
34. The lack of clear staff development programmes in heritage, education, tours, communication and marketing will result in an untenable high turnover. However it appears that the financial resources being generated by the heritage site are more valued than the core business of the property.
35. Job creation opportunities must be created to curb invasive Alien vegetation which has some erosive effects on features, cemeteries and buildings.
36. REDUCTION OF TICKET PRICING FOR STUDENTS AND LOCALS.
37. Entrance fees to Robben Island are an important source of supplementary income, unfortunately the revenue sharing ratio with the ferry companies was structured in favour of the ferries with the site not getting what it deserves?
38. RIM must review and develop its transport policy and strategy, and consider cutting down the prices for locals, students and youth in particular.
39. RIM must be accessible to local communities as it holds a very special place in making of a free South Africa through the sacrifice of ex-political prisoners who graduated from the institution.
40. A public perception has been created on how much money it makes a day? RIM must be judged by maintaining its significance through proper research, conservation, education and public programming.
41. Our sacrifice and suffering was not for profit making for a small parasiticbourgeoisie who survive by our sweat and sufferings. By raising the ticket prices? Who are the beneficiaries? Ofcourse not political prisoners and not RIM?
42. ALL business entities doing business at RIM must adhere to their social responsibility programs, funding of transport tickets to epp’s when visiting the island?
43. A 30% SHAREHOLDING ON ALL BUSINESS CONTRACTS( MADIBA 1 IN PARTICULAR)
44. RIM procurement department must publish all its beneficiaries in the past 20 years?
45. How do ex-political prisoners benefit in business opportunities at RIM?
46. Why EPP’S not benefiting at Madiba 1? Why the name of Madiba is used to benefit white capital parasitic bourgeoisie? Madiba’s name is an intellectual property of RIM;Madiba’s name is a symbol of memory, a representation of of freedom and justice and a symbol of good governance. Not to serve the selfish interest of racist.
47. Implementation of the Military Veterans Act of 2011 in recognition of EPP’S tender applications, which has been deliberately overlooked in many years.
48. OPENING THE 7 SECTIONS TO THE PUBLIC
49. RIM is viewed as a place of pilgrimage for both international and local visitors, these includes religious groups such as Muslims, ex-political prisoners and the general public, the MSP is a political and symbolically rich place where leaders of a free South Africa were imprisoned, honed their political skills and leadership abilities.
50. All the seven sections have a different political interpretation with different leaders from different historical epochs.
51. A digital memorization on TV screens for visitors experience of different leaders in their respective sections, hospital and reception and censor office
52. Memorial walls erected in all sections with the names of all prisoners who serve in these sections, the Namibian section in particular.
53. Maintenance of all soccer, Tennis and rugby fields (recognition of EPPA FIFA award on sports presentation on the Island.
54. E section is not a storage facility?
55. Reviving all gardens and restoration of artefact’s sculptured by political prisoners, including music albums.
56. All artefacts’ to be audited and brought back to the Island from Mayibuye centre.
57. Job creation of tour guides and dependence of ex-political prisoners.
58. Communication system in the prison precinct is restored back.
59. All interviews recorded during the memorization project must be played digitally in all sections for public viewing.
60. Ex-political prisoners musical group be utilised in the sections to enhance visitor experience and also in a form of exhibition
61. Exhibitions of prisoners artefact’s and music and sculpture be displayed in all sections by ex-political prisoners
62. Implementation of the ICMP 2018 /2023 action plan through a process that has identified the political imprisonment landscape as a priority area, its presentation and interpretation a tourist destination, an educational resource, a pilgrimage a representation of many voices, a place of contestations and also a source of development and improvement of human rights
63. Continue research of the significance of the site
64. Update the site register database
65. Ensure the survival of the collections through the development of a proper storage facility and the employment of the conservator and curator
66. Assemble the tangible and intangible body of knowledge
67. Develop narratives to accompany new exhibitions to be placed at both the Sobukwe complex and the MSP.
68. Research activities that will be carried out on collections of Robben Island, MSP, the new interpretive routes, and the bluestone and limestone quarries.
69. Setting up offices of the Artefact conservator, conservation architect to carry out restoration works at Sebukwe house, bluestone Quarry, administration building and storage facility
70. Development of the interpretation plan and Visitor management plan.
71. Introducing audio-visual facilities for communication (headphones) dissemination or interpretation of history in the sections in a multilingual way and ensuring access to physically challenged individuals visiting the MSP.
72. Review the relationship between Mayibuye Archive RIM and the UWC.
73. Madiba’s donated vehicle be brought back on exhibition at Mandela gate
74. REMOVAL OF CHO AND COMMUNICATIONS HOD’S.
75. Bringing RIM into disrepute( The case is sub-judicare and under investigation)
76. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
77. Overlapping infrastructural and maintenance work between RIM and DPW?
78. Review of the built heritage and conservation unit?( maintenance of the site)
79. Is there a policy on deterioration of fragile heritage buildings?
80. What are the measures to control development or augmenting existing roads, water supply and sewage disposal?
81. Is any risk assessment on the damage and depreciation of built heritage and its setting arising from the fact that the site is in current usage as a residential settlement hence some buildings are used as offices, storage, conferencing food catering and retail outlets?
82. Alpha 1 and other buildings cannot be commercialised without EPPA interpretation about values and essence and the significance of the place.
83. Activities like brand product launching at Alpha 1 deck bear no relationship with the island heritage significance.
84. Commercial activities will only be allowed only if it fits within WHS vision and mission, and reflect its significance, history and integrity
85. Limited facilities or trained personnel to provide access for visitors with physical constrains, such as those with impaired speech, hearing, sight or mobility ?
86. Due to lack of alternatives, visitor groups of congest the narrow passage through B –Section with Mandela cell marking the climax of the tour?
87. The length and time that visitors spend on the Island because their experience seems to be determined by the timetable of the ferry shuttles?
88. EPPA recommends alternative tour options, such as walking Tours apart from current standard guided tour conducted in a bus to selected sites. ( Interpretation plan)
89. Decaying of the Golf course, Helipad, roads, buildings and the heritage boats. E.g. Susan Cruise and Diaz.
90. Need to upgrade visitor infrastructure to avoid congestion and littering pressure from large tours.
91. All RIM infrastructural development must get approval from SAHRA?
92. Is there any preventive conservation employed to preserve material decay on the infrastructure?
93. Review of the curator shop contracts
94. EPPA presentation of infrastructure development and conservation at RIM.
95. Robben Island Development leadership Institute or Academy( short Presentation)
96. IMPLIMENTATION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT
97. EPPA demand RIM to withdraw the challenge to the AG’S report and its findings
98. Recommendations of the report be implemented immediately.
99. Recognition of EPPA heritage annual or monthly programs of celebrations
100. Release of political prisoners( April 1991)
101. Release of Nelson Mandela from Prison.
102. RIM role in recognising passing of EPP’S.
103. Heritage Celebrations linking it with RIM heritage program in celebration of EPP’S heritage and legacy at RIM.
104. Liberation holidays
105. Recognition of liberation hero’s days and birthdays.
106. Activation of RIM website and communication department on the legacy projects of EPP’S
107. Activation of the RIM communication system presently decaying and rusting on the Island by telling EPP’S prison memories.

EPPA DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL

 (MPHO MASEMOLA)

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