

African people disillusioned with leadership - Moeletsi Mbeki

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24 Jun 2011

"African people - like me - are completely disillusioned with the performance of their leaders because of what they have done and what they are doing, and for me these people should not be called leaders, but rather the elite," Moeletsi Mbeki, brother of former South African president Thabo Mbeki and chairman of the SA Institute of International Affairs, said, speaking at the CNN-MultiChoice media forum currently taking place in Bryanston, Johannesburg, today, Friday, 24 June 2011.



Mbeki, who predicted that SA will one day experience the Tunisian-style revolution in 2020, said many African leaders want to stay in power by, among others, rigging elections, harassing and sometimes killing journalists and enacting abusive and secretive laws - such as the Protection of Information Bill.

African leaders as "villains"

"They are also controlling the state and enriching themselves by diverting public resources into their own private consumption.

"These people are not leaders, but the elite," Mbeki said, hailing what he called the golden age of leadership that fought against colonialism and oppression.

Mbeki described African leaders as "villains", the group he said includes, among others, the Kagames, the Gbagbos and the Meles Zenawi, the Ben Alis and the Mubaraks of this world. "I never thought that after the liberation of our country, the ANC would become such a massive centre of corruption in SA, look at the arms procurement saga!"

The SA government is trying to shut the media up, by putting up laws that can pave the way to journalists being sentenced to up to 25 years. "And these are the people that are leading the continent, he noted.

The forum, which is being attended by all the nominees of the 2011 CNN-MultiChoice African Journalist of the Year Awards, also heard that due to this poor performance, many African people are catching the villains and trying to raise their living standards on their own and entrench their living standards.

African people, the real leaders

"For me, the real leaders are the African people, and that is the most important turning point in this continent," he said, adding that South Africans were euphoric 17 years ago about the future, but now a huge doubt lingers on people's minds.

"We have to ensure that the media is independent and economically viable because their role is very much critical for the development of the continent, as it facilitates the debate," he said, adding that if the media is financially weak, it will succumb to the government's big money and become the state's mouthpiece.

Mbeki, who is also a private business entrepreneur and director of several companies, stressed that the real drivers of development are the social structures and its political dynamics of a country.

According to Mbeki, SA is since 1994 being run by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie who is diverting resources into their private consumption, and have turned the country into the world's largest welfare state, as more than 15 million South Africans now survive on social grants.

China, not a good model for Africa

"Look at Nigeria, only 3% of its GDP comes from manufacturing and there are more Nigerian engineers in the US than there are in the whole of Nigeria. Why? Blame it on the leadership for failing to develop the economy."

"Manufacturing in SA, like in many African countries such as Zimbabwe, has been declining all these years, and we now see the de-industrialisation of the continent that created high levels of unemployment," he said, reiterating that China is not a good model for Africa.

"And when the leaders mismanage their countries, the people rise and catch the villains and design their own destiny. And the government responds by violence and oppression," he said, citing the Andries Tatane case study, whereby eight SA cops recently beat and shot the protester to death.

The 2011 CNN Multichoice African Journalist Awards gala will take place on 25 June 2011 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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