

# **Constitution of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF)**

*As adopted at Johannesburg, 1 December 2007*

Zabalaza

1 December 2007

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**The ZACF defines Anarchism as:**

“...society organised without authority, meaning by authority the power to impose one’s own will ... authority not only is not necessary for social organisation but, far from benefiting it, lives on it parasitically, hampers its development, and uses its advantages for the special benefit of a particular class which exploits and oppresses the others”.

Errico Malatesta

*L’Agitazione* June 4, 1897

**And Communism as:**

“Common possession of the necessaries for production imply[ing] the common enjoyment of the fruits of the common production; and we consider that an equitable organisation of society can only arise when every wage-system is abandoned, and when everybody, contributing for the common well-being to the full extent of [their] capacities, shall enjoy also from the common stock of society to the fullest possible extent of [their] needs.”

Piotr Kropotkin

*Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles*, 1887

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the working class, produce the world’s wealth. We ought to enjoy the benefits.

We want to abolish the system of capitalism that places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers self-management and socialism. We do not mean the lie called ‘socialism’ practised in Russia, China, and other police states — the system in those countries was/is no more than another form of capitalism — state capitalism.

We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society that will be run in a truly democratic way by working people, through federations of community and workplace committees. We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up — not the top down.

All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be co-ordinated, organised and planned by the federation of elected and recallable workplace and community committees, not for profit but to meet our needs. The guiding principle will be “from each according to ability, to each according to need”.

We are opposed to all coercive authority; we believe that the only limit on the freedom of the individual is that their freedom does not interfere with the freedom of others.

We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power “on behalf of the working class”. Instead, we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.

We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it cannot be made to serve our interests. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority.

We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.

We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many countries because it serves our interests – not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.

In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of our class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of a free and equal (anarchist) society.

## **1) NAME:**

The name of the organisation is the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF), “zabalaza” being a proud indigenous word meaning “struggle” in Zulu and Xhosa. The short name of the ZACF is Zabalaza. The ZACF works towards the fulfilment of its aims and principles throughout the Southern African region.

## **2) SYMBOL:**

The symbol of the ZACF is a silhouette of Africa divided diagonally into the anarchist black and red, with a black star in the red half over southern Africa and a raised fist straining against its chains, encircled by the name ZABALAZA ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FRONT.

## **3) PRINCIPLES:**

The ZACF is united on revolutionary anarchist principles. This means:

- a. internally: the ZACF functions according to the principles of direct democracy, recallable, mandated and rotatable delegates, real, functional equality among members, and horizontal federalism among all its members;
- b. externally: the ZACF has a commitment to workers’ self-management, direct action, and to libertarian revolutionary anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-authoritarianism, anti-sexism, anti-racism, internationalism and anti-statism. The ZACF supports the struggles of the progressive and radical social movements that articulate the interests and demands of the workers, the poor and the peasantry, (“the popular classes”), including the trade unions. Our involvement with these movements is non-sectarian and we recognise that they frequently do not share the same principles as ourselves, but we fight within them to win them over to our principles. In terms of the Latin American anarchist movement, this is the ZACF’s role as a “specific anarchist organisation” and is what anarchist-communists call organisational dualism and social insertion;
- c. globally: the ZACF is inspired by the proud fighting tradition of over a century of mass anarchist militancy, within Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australasia, North America and Europe. The ZACF is inspired by the libertarian federal tradition of the First International,

by the autonomous councils of the Parisian and Macedonian Communes and of the original Russian Soviets, by the mass-based anarcho-syndicalist tradition of the International Workers' Association, and by the anarchist revolutionary tradition of the Mexican, Russian, Ukrainian, Manchurian, Spanish and Cuban Revolutions. These traditions continue today in the International Libertarian Solidarity network and in the anarchist-influenced global mass anti-capitalist struggles of the new millennium;

- d. regionally: the ZACF is inspired by the anarchist tradition of the Socialist Club, founded in South Africa by Henry Glasse in 1900, and of the Revolutionary League founded in Mozambique by Jose Estevam in the early 1900s, of the International Socialist League, founded in South Africa in 1915, of the Industrial Socialist League, founded in 1918, and of the anti-parliamentary Communist Party of South Africa, founded in 1920 (not to be confused with the reformist CPSA – Communist International, founded the following year by socialists and Marxists and forerunner of today's SACP). The ZACF also recalls the revolutionary syndicalist tradition of the Industrial Workers of the World's South African section, founded in 1910, of the anarcho-syndicalist union currents in Mozambique in the 1920s which were allied to the General Confederation of Labour in Portugal, of the Industrial Workers of Africa and associated unions founded in South Africa between 1917 and 1919 by militants of all "races" such as Thomas William "Bill" Thibedi, Bernard Sigamoney, Henry Kraai, S.P. Bunting and Andrew Dunbar. The ZACF stands proudly in the fighting tradition of the rank-and-file workers' groups, people's civics, street committees, and community defence groups of the popular struggle in the 1970s and 1980s against apartheid.

We locate ourselves firmly within the left-wing revolutionary socialist tradition and are implacably opposed to the parties and organisations of capital and the state, whether left-wing, liberal, centrist, conservative or right-wing. Instead of the authoritarian, multi-class, elite vanguardist "National Democratic Revolution" of the African National Congress / South African Communist Party, the South West African People's Organisation, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front, and Mozambique Liberation Front, the ZACF stands for a Social Revolution against the parasitic class, by a front of oppressed classes across all borders.

- e. operationally: the ZACF is based on:

- Theoretical Unity: strict homogeneity in the overall positions held by the ZACF, changed in the light of ongoing analysis of the struggle, thereby eliminating the danger of fixed positions and increasing the effectiveness of action.
- Tactical unity or the collective method of action: the ZACF seeks tactical unity through militant implementation of the overall policy in campaigns and projects decided at Congress.
- Collective responsibility: in respect of external expression, each member is answerable for the ZACF's line. The ZACF is also answerable for and claims responsibility for the positions and actions adopted by each of its members, provided that these have been mandated by the ZACF.
- Federalism: the ZACF is only the expression of its collective membership – its militants being the driving force behind the whole organisation. The ZACF unites the mil-

itants around the principles of common principles, mutual aid and unity-in-struggle. However, the militants may not adopt positions that go against the ZACF's line.

- These being the core principles of the “Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists” drawn up in 1927 by Nestor Makhno, Piotr Arshinov, Ida Mett and other anarchist guerrilla veterans of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine. We are inspired by the “Platform” yet do not accept it uncritically.

As well as:

- Comradely ethic: within the ZACF, the members practice the ethical conception of libertarian communism. Comradely relations – based on trust, esteem and respect – link its militants as a body. As well as “ongoing fraternal monitoring of each by all” (Mikhail Bakunin) to guard against possible authoritarian tendencies developing.

#### **4) STRUCTURE:**

The ZACF is a horizontal unitary organisation of anarchist-communist militants, federated together in common revolutionary anarchist cause and joining together in common campaigns. The ZACF is more than simply a collection of militants, however: it is a united front of all its militants, fighting a common struggle and united by common ideals.

Their revolutionary activities are determined by the militants themselves, but in consultation with the rest of the ZACF to ensure they complement the ZACF's principles and objectives. Each individual militant retains their autonomy of action, so long as it is not deemed by a 2/3 majority of the ZACF to be in contradiction of the ZACF's aims or anarchist principles. That the ZACF decide at its annual Congresses on joint projects and that it maintain constant contact with all members to ensure efficient co-ordination of all aims.

##### **a) Congress:**

The ZACF will hold a Congress at least once a year, which will set the entire ZACF strategy for the forthcoming year. Congress is the supreme decision-making structure of the ZACF. The decision-making process of Congress is as follows:

1. The quorum for Congress is 50% of the entire membership of the ZACF, including at least two mandated secretaries;
2. A member may delegate another member to cast a proxy vote on their behalf in relation to a specific issue on the agenda. Such proxies must be submitted in writing to the Regional Secretary before Congress.
3. Congress may authorise non-members who are sympathetic to the ZACF to attend all or some of its sessions, and may grant them speaking rights but not voting rights;
4. All Working Groups and secretaries are to submit either written or verbal reports on all aspects of their projects and activities to Congress;
5. Decision-making must as far as possible be by consensus, failing which, by majority vote, a majority being 51% of all members present.

6. Amendments to the Constitution, or a decision by the ZACF that a member's work is not in accord with the principles of the ZACF, shall require the support of 2/3 of the members present. All proposals for constitutional amendments must be circulated in the Internal Bulletin at least one month prior to the Congress that is to decide on them. Proxy votes on constitutional amendments must be verified by the absent member in writing to the Regional Secretary before Congress.
7. A 51% majority of the ZACF can call an Emergency Congress within a month if deemed necessary. The quorum for an Emergency Congress is 51% of the membership of the ZACF; but no Emergency Congress shall make any amendment to the Constitution.
8. The full minutes of the proceedings of each Congress will be published and disseminated internally within a month of Congress.
9. Congress elects as office-bearers a Regional Secretary and an International Secretary. It may create and fill other positions as it sees fit. Both secretaries, plus any other secretaries elected by Congress are subject to recall at any time by a poll of the entire membership of the ZACF called by any member. In the event of the office-bearers recalling a secretary, it shall appoint a replacement, subject to approval by the membership of the ZACF within one month. In the event of the membership recalling a secretary, the members shall elect a replacement within one month.
10. Congress can create Working Groups to work on specific tasks relating to the ZACF. Working Groups may develop draft policies to present to Congress but may not alter or delete any existing policy without the agreement of Congress. Any interested member may join any Working Group. Each Working Group shall deliver a report to Congress and shall circulate reports of its activities internally between Congresses.
11. Congress shall determine membership dues, having due regard to the financial circumstances of members.

**b) The office-bearers (OB):**

The office-bearers of the ZACF constitute a committee that meets at least once a month between Congresses. Its task is the day-to-day running of the ZACF and the co-ordination of all its militants, campaigns and projects. It has no executive authority to alter or exceed the mandates conferred on it by Congress. OB meetings are open to all members. Any decision of the OB can be overturned by Congress or an immediate poll of members which adheres to the same quorum and voting rules as Congress. An agenda will be circulated prior to all OB meetings.

The OB comprises the following:

1. The Regional Secretary whose duties are: to be the first spokesperson for the organisation domestically; to establish and maintain contact with similar individuals and organisations regionally in southern Africa, and to send them publications and news of our activities; to keep a record of all regional correspondence; to co-ordinate the production of any internal bulletins; and to report to Congress.

2. The International Secretary whose duties are: to be the first spokesperson for the organisation abroad; to establish and maintain contact with similar individuals and organisations in the rest of Africa and further abroad, and to send them our publications and news of our activities; to keep a record of all international correspondence; to organise the writing of articles when requested by contacts abroad; and to report to Congress.
3. Any other secretary or secretaries elected by Congress.

## **5) ZACF MEMBERSHIP:**

- a. Membership of the ZACF is restricted to reliable, convinced anarchist-communist militants who agree to abide by its principles and constitution, work and argue for its policies in their public activity, and pay such dues as shall be determined by the Congress.
- b. Members are responsible to their fellow militants, and to Congress for their activities.
- c. Working Groups may suspend the membership of any militant, all members to be immediately informed of such suspension. If the Working Group does not subsequently lift the suspension, the member concerned may appeal directly to the OB to call an immediate poll of all members or to the next Congress, which will decide whether that person is to retain membership.

Some specific grounds for suspension are:

1. spying for the oppressors and the exploiters;
  2. failure to be active to the extent agreed by the member without a very good explanation;
  3. opposing the ZACF, its aims and principles, or the working class struggle;
  4. acting in any way contrary to the ZACF's aims and principles, including standing for election to any state or government office;
  5. accepting a position within a corporation where the member has the power to hire or fire; or
  6. non-payment of dues without a very good explanation.
- d. Membership is by invitation only, and by consensus of all members. Membership is on an individual basis only.
  - e. All ZACF members are required to be active both in ZACF's work and actions in the progressive and radical social movements to the extent personally possible, as well as active within their trade union where this is viable. Every member of the ZACF undertakes to be active to the extent of their abilities, with due regard to their other commitments, including work and domestic commitments.
  - f. Members of the ZACF shall establish Red and Black Forums (RBFs) for purposes of theoretical training, revolutionary propaganda and action in struggle. These Forums shall invite non-members of the ZACF who have some degree of sympathy with the aims and principles of the ZACF. Any individual participant in an RBF who shows full theoretical and



practical commitment to the ZACF's aims and principles may be considered for membership of the ZACF. Such membership shall be offered to an individual militant after they have proven themselves ideologically and by their actions to the satisfaction of the ZACF membership.

- g. Members may also establish Working Groups based on their personal areas of interest – in addition to any Working Groups created by Congress – provided such Working Groups' creation are agreed to by the ZACF's membership.
- h. Membership is not open to employers at any level or to management functionaries of any tier of government.

## **6) PUBLICATIONS:**

The official publications of the ZACF, to which all members are encouraged to contribute to (in the case of the journal) and distribute, are:

- a. "Zabalaza: a Journal of Southern African Revolutionary Anarchism", currently issued twice a year. "Zabalaza" (meaning Struggle) is the theoretical journal of the ZACF and shall contain ideological and analytical articles of benefit to the anarchist-communist movement's understanding of the struggle. Its articles will be distributed abroad, both on the Internet and by mail. It promotes the official line of the ZACF, in other words, the majority's line as determined by Congress;
- b. The "Zabalaza" website at [www.zabalaza.net/](http://www.zabalaza.net/) . The website is not merely the mouthpiece of the ZACF, but acts as a general Internet portal to anarchist news, analysis and views relating to the African continent specifically and to the global South more broadly. It also hosts Zabalaza Books' collection of pamphlets and other materials, and provides links to other online anarchist-communist resources; and
- c. Any other publications as may be authorised by Congress, or as may be approved by the OB.

The ZACF will work towards translating this Constitution and its publications into the commonly spoken languages of all its members.

## **7) MINORITY FACTION RIGHTS:**

- a. The ZACF's official strategy, policy and line-of-march, is that agreed at Congress.
- b. Minority factions have the right to have their views debated and published internally, but are expected to follow the majority ZACF strategies and tactics in their public activities.

## **8) EXTERNAL RELATIONS:**

The ZACF will maintain a regular exchange of information, analysis, news and views with the global anarchist community. It will form bilateral and multilateral relations with anarchist-communist, Platformist, especificista and other anarchist and libertarian socialist organisations with a view to strengthening global autonomous networking by the oppressed popular classes. Congress is empowered to determine the international and regional affiliations of the ZACF.

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