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WHO IS GETTING RICHER AND WHO IS GETTING POORER?

By Theuns Eloff: Executive Director, FW de Klerk Foundation

Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) has just released the most recent employment statistics. The unemployment rate now stands at a 14-year high of 27.7%. If those who have stopped looking for work are included, the rate is a staggering 36.4%!

This tragic and disconcerting news is being drowned out by the “bigger” stories of state capture, leaked Gupta emails and other corruption and mismanagement in state-owned enterprises like Eskom and SAA. These stories have one golden thread running through them: mega enrichment of a few by any corrupt means necessary, using public funds and usurping state power for individual gain.

The unemployment statistics shout that the majority of South Africans are getting poorer and poorer. The state capture stories shout that a few are getting richer and richer. And many will connect the dots - that those who are getting richer, are the direct cause of those who are getting poorer. It is common knowledge that in the political and economic uncertainty spawned by state capture, the economy has dwindled and employment was the first casualty. It is common knowledge that the irrational firing of Gordhan and Jonas contributed in a major way to the fiscal downgrades that are eating into our wealth as a nation like hungry insects.

One cannot fault the business community alone for not wanting to invest and grow and employ in such a toxic climate. The ones who are getting richer and richer by corruption and state capture will have to take responsibility for the nation getting poorer and poorer. And from the luxury of Nkandla, the Number One at the helm of it all, who should stand up for the poor and the homeless and the unemployed, is planning a second home in Dubai.