

Only whining as SA runs riot

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Everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions.

And everyone has the right to freedom of expression – within limits.

In the 2018 financial year, the South African Special Risks Insurance Association paid R663 million in claims.

The first two sentences are from the country's constitution, the third from an insurance company specialising in riot damage.

Somewhere, there's a problem.

It's not uncommon for a protest to descend into a riot as protesters or demonstrators, with an admitted axe to grind, usually over service delivery failures, explode into low-grade warfare.

Burning buildings, cars, houses, schools and libraries, or trashing bookshops, is no longer protest, yet we cite the idea of "demonstrations" in the hope it will somehow sanitise the anarchy scorching the fabric of society.

It's always easiest to shoot the messenger in South Africa than to consider there may actually be a point.

Riots – and what happened this week at the launch of author Pieter-Louis Myburgh's book, *Gangster State*, was nothing else but a riot – happen because of an utter failure of leadership to solve problems before they happen, or to fix them as soon as they arise.

There's always much tut-tutting afterwards and promises from government and politicians to do better, until the next one, when the same tired old responses are trotted out again.

According to Municipal IQ, 237 protests

were recorded last year across the country – the highest number yet.

And with South Africa in election mode, there are fears the country will experience another spike as people try to hold political parties accountable for their actions, or lack thereof.

The right to protest is limited; it must be peaceful.

Obviously, and it needs to be said, anger is what drives people to protest in the first place. However, it can be expressed peacefully.

The smashing of shop windows, throwing of rubbish, burning of tyres, or the tearing of books is often laid at the feet of "criminal elements" by whining union or political leaders in an effort to absolve themselves of blame.

For a few brief moments in 1994, we were a rainbow nation and then, collectively, we sat back, folded our arms and waited for the good times to roll. Of course, the good times only rolled on for a few.

The funding scandal of the musical *Sarafina 2* sounded the warning bells and then came the incredible, country-changing work by Mandy Rossouw on the wasted money on former president Jacob Zuma's homestead, Nkandla, which turned the rainbow nation's rainbow into little more than a stick for political parties to beat each other over the head with.

The abject failure by political leaders to reign in rabid followers has brought us to where we are today and the constitution is worth less than the blood it is written in if people feel they can take away the rights of others.

We can't allow these feckless idiots the unlimited power we've been giving them for decades to run our lives any more.

