



National Head Office
Khotso House
62 Marshall Street
Johannesburg
Gauteng Province
South Africa
Tel. +27 (0) 11 241 7800
Fax +27 (0) 11 836 0984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Religious Leaders on Vote of no Confidence

As concerned religious leaders:

We call on all members of Parliament to rise above party politics and use their vote to uphold the best interests of the constituencies they are called to serve. May this opportunity to turn the tide on questionable leadership practices not be squandered on political filibustering; but rather be viewed as another chance to end the rampant corruption encapsulated by the much lamented state of capture we find ourselves in.

The fact that five draft resolutions about motions of no confidence have been tabled before the National Assembly, of which three were unsuccessfully voted on, since President Zuma took office, is glaring evidence of the eroded confidence in his immoral leadership. We appeal to the majority party in parliament to take the lead in corrective action through their votes.

In solidarity with civil society groups, we call on all people of faith to join organised marches and symbols of protest for the end of the Zuma Presidency which we view as necessary for national renewal, rebuilding of trust in our institutions and the tackling of the myriad of challenges plaguing the country. We urgently call for Parliament to be more decisive in supporting the “no confidence vote” in President Zuma and his cabinet on 8 August 2017. The religious leaders are of the view that the current government has lost all moral legitimacy to lead South Africa: a country that finds itself in a political and socio-economic quagmire.

We also call for all faith communities to join hands in a nation-wide call to prayer to persuade our legislators to vote with their consciences and take decisions that will benefit the whole country and not the narrow political interests of a self-serving, cynical elite.

We call on all places of worship to set aside time in their worship this weekend - Friday, Saturday and Sunday, to pray that all parliamentary activities next week will lead to a new, life giving trajectory.

The religious leaders of our various faith traditions met last year in April, following the Constitutional Court judgement that faulted the conduct of the President of the Republic for failure to uphold his constitutional responsibility in regard to the Public Protector’s findings and remedial action on the Nkandla saga. At that time we cited a number of moral issues that persuaded us that we needed to advise President Zuma to use the ConCourt judgement as a moment for him to step aside. This was before the gargantuan Guptagate that has now embroiled and mired the governmental environment, with even greater loss of trust and confidence in the decision processes of the Office of the President: Is an appointment of any person, to any position innocent of possible undeclared, underhanded benefits that will await revealing by extra-governmental researchers and investigators?

- Eskom, Transnet, Denel, SABC
- The December 2015 Nene replacement with the Minister Van Rooyen with Gupta related advisors in tow.

- The Finance Minister offer by the Guptas at Saxonwold should have triggered an investigation of the possible serious crime of attempting to subvert good governance and to hijack the constitutionally ring fenced National Treasury in the Dept. of Finance. Where are the security and justice institutions? The Hawks, the National Prosecuting Agency, etc.?
- We are not here considering any possible wrongdoing with regards to the SASSA fiasco;
- We are not going into the Free State Gupta farm virtually donated to the Guptas under Premier Magashule and then MEC Zwane.
- We are not looking at the Waterkloof Airforce Base landing of the Gupta wedding party which turns out to have been paid for with tax payers money, courtesy of the current Minerals Minister Zwane, also of Eskom facilitated Gupta coal deals.
- We are not talking about the Brian Molefe and Anorj Singh musical chairs between Transnet and Eskom; nor the Molefe back door escapades between Eskom and Parliament and back to Eskom and out! This governmental environment displays a gross deficiency of moral literacy.
- The incontrovertible evidence of the Gupta interference, if not actual strategic determination of key decisions and their apparent all-access card to the facilities and instruments of government - solely because they are the President's declared personal friends, and business partners of his son, collecting extremely lucrative assets and facilitated transactions with government entities through the good offices of hand picked officials and Cabinet Ministers, boggles the mind!

We ask the question, why are these things not visible to the nation's intelligence services? Or is it as strange a matter as the case where the Minister of Intelligence did not know that his own family was involved in the dark drug world?

The daily release from the incredible cache of emails with allegations that some of those mentioned in the emails, have authenticated as real, speak for themselves over the depth of the confidence-sapping malignancy in government; all of which is directly related to the President, his friends and son's business partners, and his Ministers and administration. The latest, with Minister Lynn Brown and her ring of associates, the PA, the DG, and the alleged intimate partner, resulting in the PA being asked to resign, is simply amazing! In any other democracy, with all these revelations, resignations would have long been forthcoming, not only from the fingered Ministers, but also from the President whose web of relationships has had government officials and Ministers tied up in impossible nefarious knots.

The Unburdening Panel Report of the South African Council of Churches advised of the SACC observation of trends of inappropriate control of State systems through a power-elite that is pivoted around the President of the Republic, helping itself through facilitated mechanisms, to State assets and resources. We ask the question whether under these circumstances, we can honestly answer in the affirmative with the necessary confidence, whether President Zuma's administration can meet the requirements of Chapter 3 of the Constitution, that all organs of State "must":

- (b) Secure the well-being of the people of the Republic;
- (c) Provide effective, **transparent, accountable and coherent** government for

the Republic as a whole;

(d) Be loyal to the Constitution, the Republic and its people.

We are not convinced; basic ethics should not be a matter of political maneuvering and horse trading.

In delivering the judgement of the Constitutional Court in the matter before the Court on whether there should be a secret ballot for the coming “No Confidence” vote on the President, CJ Mogoeng Mogoeng said that the no confidence vote is “inextricably connected to the foundational values of accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the people. It is a mechanism at the disposal of the National Assembly to resort to, ... for the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of its constitutional obligation to hold the Executive accountable and oversee the performance of its constitutional duties.

The CJ continued: “The President, Deputy President, Minister's and their Deputies are enjoined by the supreme law of the land to be ‘accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and performance of their functions.’ Not only are they responsible for the proper exercise of the powers and carrying out of the functions assigned to the Executive but they are also required to act in line with the Constitution”.

With respect to these considerations, a motion of no confidence is now before the Parliament that is constitutionally tasked to elect a President. Such a motion, if passed by a majority of MPs, will require the President and his Cabinet to resign, the same who should have resigned long before today, if they were taking responsibility for the mis-governance under their watch. The day they resign, the Speaker assumes the role of President until, within 30 days, Parliament elects a new president who will constitute a new cabinet.

The public cry for a positive vote on this matter arises primarily because, unlike in any other vote in the Assembly, where the majority party is predictably going to vote for its policies, this is a vote by members on the efficacy and morality of government, where the majority party's own record in government would be remedied. Therefore, the fear that members of the majority party would be sanctioned for voting with their consciences, suggests that the members' duty to the nation must be subordinated to the ill considered interests of a party.

In this regard, the ConCourt reminded us that:

“If the will of political parties were to always prevail, the Constitution would probably have required political parties to determine which way they want to vote on issues and through their Chief Whips signify support or opposition by submitting the list of Members who would be present when voting takes place. But, because it is individual Members who really have to vote, provisions are couched in the language that recognises the possibility of majorities supporting the removal of the President and the Speaker. Conceptually, those majorities



could only be possible if Members of the (majority) party are also at liberty to vote in a way that does not always have to be predetermined by their parties.”

We are all morally accountable for our deeds. There comes a time for each of us to decide whether we shall live within the lie or break out and live within the truth! That is indeed a matter of a healthy conscience. May God, in God’s grace, endow all the MPs with adequate doses of that!

Now is the time for national interests to take precedence! Now is the time to change the trajectory of our country for the common good! Now is the time to arrest impunity and set the stage for open, transparent and accountable government that will honestly direct resources to the most needy of our society. This is our call!

