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Issued by the office of the SACC General Secretary, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana.

MR ZUMA'S DEFIANCE AT THE ZONDO COMMISSION POTENTIALLY DESTABILISES SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) expresses deep concern about the possible implications of the declared decision by former President Jacob Zuma to turn his back on the processes of the Zondo Commission. Mr. Zuma claims that the law has been applied differently for him in what he refers to as the “Zuma agenda”. South Africans have heard from witnesses at the Zondo Commission, and at the very least, they require a response from Mr. Zuma and his lawyers. It is about Mr. Zuma to give the evidence and not leave without a response. It has nothing to do with the person of Deputy Chief Justice Zondo. We still hope Mr Zuma will change his mind, for his sake and our sake, to use the opportunity afforded by the Commission to explain himself. Evidence from witnesses will leave a permanent perception of Mr Zuma’s involvement in corrupt activities against the State. His declaration of defiance against the Commission is disappointing and regrettable for the people of South Africa. We are deeply concerned about where this might go and the possible dent of our national reconciliation journey, as well as respect for the law.

Mr Zuma is an immediate past Head of State and Government, as well as the immediate past leader of the governing party. His actions have an immediate and significant import arising from his very recent and residual hold on emotional political power. That is why it is of serious significance that Mr Zuma has prefaced his declaration of defiance with a paragraph that tells of the “overwhelming number of messages of support from members of the African National Congress and the public at large”; “a groundswell of messages”.

Mr. Zuma, like all other South Africans, has his right to make his own decisions about how he deals with what he perceives as injustice. But to defy the Commission in this way is illegal and he knows it, and so do his lawyers.

Any South African acting like this would face serious consequences. Thus nobody should act in an illegal manner, and say, “If this stance is considered a violation of their law, then let their law take its course.”

As South African churches we are very concerned about the expression “their law”, in Mr. Zuma’s statement. This is the immediate past President of the Republic; the Executive Authority whose signature has for almost a decade, confirmed all our law in the Republic. In this regard alone, Mr. Zuma cannot be outside the law and make it “their law”; for nobody is above the law of the land. Nor can there be an alternative law tailor-made for any person. It is by this law, the highest of which is the Constitution, that he remains the honoured special citizen, and no ordinary South African. When he refers to South African law as “their law”, those with whom he is at odds, he in one phrase, polarises the country into an “us and them” — a destabilising approach that can easily lead to polarisation and conflict in South African communities.

We believe that there are other options that may be open to Mr Zuma, that the SACC would be willing to help explore with him as part of our appeal that, whatever route he takes, must not result in harmful results for South Africa and its millions of ordinary citizens. Every effort must be made to prevent a course of action that may cause people to die for the sake of one very important man. The country is gripped by the social and economic ravages of the Coronavirus, it must focus on a path of development and recovery, not internecine strife and rampant illegality.

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About SACC

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is an ecumenical association of affiliated Christian Churches, and blocks of churches such as The Evangelical Alliance, the International Federation of Christian Churches, and the Council of African Independent Churches, with a mandate to lead common Christian action that works for moral witness in South Africa. SACC does not exist for the propagation and the advancement of its doctrinal position, but is the place where our diverse interpretations of our faith come together in action for social justice. It therefore seeks to achieve a visible, just socio-economic and ecological impact, enabled through engaged churches-in-community for a reconciled South Africa and our sub-continent.