

# SACC Statement on COVID Corruption

**Media**

**Statement**

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

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is extremely disgusted by the revelations of the shameless looting of funds, through alleged irregularities in Covid-19 procurement processes. It is shocking that tax payers' money which was dedicated for life saving measures related to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic that is crippling the whole country, was shamelessly taken advantage of by greedy individuals who like vultures and hyenas over dead bodies, saw the pandemic as an opportunity for a feeding frenzy, with no concern for the poor people. "They have sunk deep into corruption. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins" (Hosea 9:9).

The reports of corruption include the awarding of personal protective equipment contracts to people who have links in government, as well as those who serve or have previously been employed in the civil service. Recently a list of companies with questionable COVID contracts at the Gauteng Province has been bandied around. These allegations have been really disappointing to us and for South Africans at large. They include a company associated with the husband of Mrs Khusela Diko, the spokesperson of President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has taken leave of absence in the wake of allegations against her husband. All these allegations must be expeditiously and thoroughly investigated and dealt with effectively.

The SACC is very much alert to the reality that the rapid response we needed to employ in dealing with the crisis we face, has made us vulnerable from those who are unscrupulous and are committed to exploit our resources through fraudulent means. In the rush of the moment, corruption does take place and others will be seeking to gain by the increase of prices, taking advantage of the desperate needs of our people.

South Africa's deep corruption scourge and the poor track record of holding people to account, does not inspire confidence that any further funds intended

for mitigation of the dire socio-economic impact of COVID-19 will be used accordingly

**The National Church Leaders of the SACC, at this Tuesday's weekly COVID-Watch meeting, made the following requests:**

- President Cyril Ramaphosa and the government to do far more than condemn and promise action, but we need to see arrests and convictions of these criminals who have shown that they will not be deterred by a devastating global pandemic, or people going hungry and even dying.
- Our justice system to ready itself to arrest and prosecute those who believe this is the best time to steal and exploit the people.
- A civil society campaign that involves evidence collection and preservation must be undertaken as part of our collective response to the current crisis, as there may be waves of COVID corruption crimes across the country. In support of such a public campaign SACC will re-establish the Unburdening Process that we used against corruption in the past, and enable South Africans to report COVID corruption, and also for people to unburden themselves if they unavoidably got caught up in corruption facilitation in their jobs.
- The Minister of Justice to set up special courts to deal with serious COVID crimes in order to send a strong message on these matters for all time.
- The Government procurement systems to cut out the middle person procedures for COVID provisions as this can lead to inflation of prices, and allows for just anyone to enter the supply chain regardless of their lack of experience in a sector. The process of middle persons inadvertently opens the door for corrupt individuals.
- The naming and shaming of all those involved in this current corruption in all provinces, but also in other forms of fraudulent and corrupt acts.
- The SACC will follow up with Government and expects urgent attention to these revelations with no effort spared.

Those who engage in such calculated COVID theft, are behaving like opportunists that swoop to gobble up access to help, leaving the weak and sick, desperate for breath, and for protection from the deadly virus! These so called 'COVIDpreneurs' have shown that the evil culture of greed and corruption triumphs over honesty, ethics and good governance in our government, and this

needs to be uprooted. We make an appeal for those people who are involved, some of whom are our congregants, to refrain from these criminal acts of fraud and corruption, and be reminded that they are not stealing from government, but from the mouths of people of South Africa, and more especially the poor who continue to suffer at this time. "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

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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 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.