

'Militant atheist groups using SAHRC to attack church'



Atheist groups are campaigning to limit the church's freedom to preach Biblical truth. (PHOTO: [Sacred Outfitter](#))

Militant South African atheist groups that are supported by international anti-church groups are using the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to attack the Church, said Andrew Selley, Senior Pastor of Joshua Generation Church (JGC).

JGC has been under investigation by the SAHRC for the past month following a complaint by an unnamed party about the church's Biblical teaching on corporal punishment.

"We have not had a chance to meet with our complainant yet, but we have found out that they are members of a number of 'atheist groups', with a deep seated hatred of the church (with a particular hatred of Joshgen)," said Selley.

"One of the Facebook groups they are very active on openly states that they are working to end religion in the world, and a number of atheist groups worldwide have pledged support of them. The wife of the complainant has openly stated on a group that they are 'using Human Rights commissions' to attack the

church. Our feeling is now that this [the attack on JGC via the SAHRC] will be a long, ugly fight (short of a miracle) as there is a clear agenda, and international anti church support behind the complainants.”

Submitted legal response

Selley confirmed that the church’s lawyer submitted their legal response to the SAHRC Senior Attorney, Tammy Carter, on Tuesday (September 17), the deadline specified by the commission.

“Amazingly he [the JGC lawyer] had an opportunity to pray for her [Carter] and she was deeply moved,” said Selley.

At a recent meeting between Carter and JGC representatives, the church offered to help the State by providing community training and support to prevent abuse and violence against children. At the meeting Carter explained that the legal process arising from the complaint against the church would have to continue unless the complainant dropped the matter. A meeting between the complainant and JGC was proposed.

Selley said that at a meeting of lawyers, attorneys and Christian leaders in Pretoria last week there was consensus that religious freedom is under major onslaught in South Africa with a number of new SAHRC cases being opened against churches by various anti-church groups. The meeting was the third convened by the group since June amidst concerns about increasing attacks on the church’s beliefs and freedoms.

“We were concerned to find GLBT correspondence going out to groups across SA planning multiple legal attacks upon churches, promising to take up the cause of those offended by churches/ Christians – with promises of legal and financial backing from overseas. Our concern is that over the next few months there will be multiple court cases opened up against the SA church from these lobby groups.

Need for united stand

“The feeling amongst us was that we need to stand united and work together to turn the tide.”

He said that the group of Christian lawyers and church leaders have formed a new Christian legal entity [Institute for Public Justice] that will work to defend the church in SA. The group will educate the church about the religious freedom threats it faces and about how to respond to various threats and attacks.

“The group also hopes to work to create new jurisprudence in SA that will benefit the church and will begin to fight in the legal courts of SA to defend the church. Another major drive out of our time together will be to get as many churches as possible in SA to sign the “Freedom Charter” [[Charter for Religious Rights and Freedoms](#)], a document that has been drawn that we believe will help churches defend themselves and the freedom of religion in SA. We encourage all leaders to get a copy of the “Freedom Charter” and sign it into their official documents.”

Selley urged the church in SA to rally together to defend their religious freedom. He said JGC has managed to get the support of Christian leaders representing more than 8.6 million Christians in SA. He urged Christian leaders who haven't done so yet to send messages of support to redflag@joshgen.org.za.

“We are trying to build a database of the church in SA so that we can work together, informing the whole church about what is happening and where we need to rally to defend our religious freedom,” he said.

Referring to a “damaging” article “with a strong bias against us [JGC]” in the Sunday Times of September 15, Selley expressed concern that the report may have damaged his church's credibility and the cause of the need for Christian unity in the face of mounting attacks by enemies of the church.

Media bias

“In spite of the information we made available, the [Sunday Times] article carried multiple inaccuracies, misrepresenting what we said about our parenting manual and making us sound almost cultish. The article also stated that it was our (misrepresented) specific teaching on spanking that was the issue, rather than what the HRC letter stated – that any form of spanking is considered abuse by the SAHRC.

“We don’t want the SA church to be confused by this – the issue at hand is the doctrine of spanking, not our specific teaching on this (according to our correspondence we have received thus far). More importantly we must not forget that we have united as Christians to stop the State defining what the Bible teaches and trying to demand the church follows its beliefs in right and wrong, rather than God’s- clearly stated in the Bible. It is imperative that we stand united & rally the wider body in this moment.”

The Sunday Times article reports that the complaint to the SAHRC against JGC was made by Adriaan and Hannah Mostert.

The article quotes Adriaan Mostert as saying: “The complaint is about the [JGC parenting manual] teaching guide that tells new parents it’s OK, under a circumstance, to hit a child with a rod, which inflicts pain and hurt.”

Hannah Mostert is quoted by the Sunday Times as saying she was “shocked and disconcerted” by the manual , which she says states that besides being used to discipline children, a rod could be used as a training tool, and that spanking “must cause some pain” otherwise it was useless.

In a letter to Christian leaders after the SAHRC investigation began, Selley shares some extracts from the manual that discuss the context for corporal punishment, urging balance, love, calmness and the avoidance of harshness.