

Dear Mr President, the Hon. Jacob Zuma,

We, the undersigned, are servants of Christ, pastors of churches and in most cases, leaders who form an umbrella body of 43 movements and denominations in the Western Cape, namely the Consultation of Christian Churches.

The leaders who make up our group come from a broad spectrum of South African society, in all its gender, cultural, ethnic and party-political diversity. We have neither political nor racial motivations in what we would like to say, but a genuine desire to provide empathetic pastoral counsel both to yourself as well as those who make up your leadership circle in government, at this critical time. Being that you too have been ordained as a Pastor in a denomination, we count it our privilege as brothers in the Lord to address you in manner befitting not only our president, but also a fellow pastor who has, as the Bible says: "been overtaken in a fault". Paul instructs, in situations like this, that "you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently."

Our desire is therefore to put forth the Biblical goal of restoration in situations like this. However, restoration, especially when the person concerned is a leader, is not simply achieved by a "forgive-&-forget" approach. Instead, it is achieved through a process involving fully facing the fault, proper repentance, counselling, character correction and restitution. We would like therefore, in the spirit of humility and God's love for you as a person, to come alongside you in that process.

We are aware through recent events and public discourse, the Christian Churches have engaged with others in civil society and aligned themselves, and by association, ourselves, with calls for your resignation. While we realise that some of the words chosen and conclusions reached have been judgmental and hurtful, we appeal for you to hear us without prejudice, as we desire to add Godly Wisdom to our prayers in the fulfilment of God's mandate to us. This mandate is to pray for those who lead us; to be spiritual guardians of the wellbeing of Christians and the common good of all people in our country. Our responsibility toward government is to pray for and speak the truth to its members according to God's Word. We humbly acknowledge in due recognition that both we and you are in positions of trust, that we are all dependent on God who raises up leaders and sets them aside; and to whom we all have to give an account for how we have led. In that spirit, we would like to state the following:

1. Mr. President You have been found by the highest court in the land to be in breach of your responsibility to uphold and apply the constitution of South Africa in the conduct of your life and leadership;
2. Your "apology" to the nation was seemingly unremorseful; avoided responsibility for the above-mentioned breaches; and did not go beyond a very superficial acknowledgment of "lessons learned". A leader is required to show greater self-awareness and humility;
3. In November 2015, reports of your having denied responsibility for the excesses of Nkandla, and having vowed that you "would not pay back the money", surfaced. This is in contrast to your recent statement that you have always intended to pay back the money. These apparent serious contradictions, if true, would have a major impact on public trust, and we understand why so many of the public are outraged. A leader needs to be worthy of trust and respect;
4. One of the worst outcomes of the breaches of due process in this matter has been the public denigration of the character and the office of the Public Protector. She has deserved a public apology. It is alarming that such an apology has to date not been offered. A leader needs to be more gracious than this when proved wrong, especially to a person whom he has appointed, and one who has shown such integrity throughout this episode;

5. As mentioned above, the intimidatory tactics exhibited by your closest allies in government, including the public criticism towards Chief Justice Mogoeng; and the even more vitriolic criticism of the Churches' right to speak to this issue, reveal a singular lack of understanding and regard for both, as well as for the citizens of our country whose desire is for ethical leadership. The role of those same persons, and others, who spoke in your "defence" in the parliamentary debate on the call for your impeachment, displayed the same lack of understanding of the manner in which a constitutional democracy ought to function.

In summary, we find ourselves unable to agree with the way you and your inner circle plan to proceed. We believe South Africa is not only facing a constitutional crisis, but also a moral and leadership crisis. To deal half-heartedly with a serious problem of this nature is irresponsible in the extreme, and is at the heart of why the majority of our people, civil society and the Church in particular, has lost confidence in your leadership, not to say your character. If a leader, pastor or any other office-bearer in one of our churches had revealed a similar character flaw, we would advise that he or she step down, at least until a process of restoration, as described above, could be completed.

We must therefore align ourselves with what other church bodies, civic organizations and leaders from every party-political background are requesting, namely that you do the honourable thing, and step down from the Presidency. Going forward, we would encourage you to seek counsel and proper rehabilitation in the ways of ethical leadership of a nation. Mr President, we stand ready to offer you that care and counsel, with the understanding that it will be in the context of your doing what we believe is the right thing at this moment in our Nation's history.

Rev. Barry Isaacs  
General Secretary For the Executive of  
CONSULTATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES