

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
6 APRIL 2017**

SOUTH AFRICA – BE HEARD: SACC

JOHANNESBURG: The South African Council of Churches (SACC), following its National Executive Council (NEC) meeting of Wednesday 5 April 2017 has revisited its statement of almost a year ago to the day, on April 8 2016, made with all national religious formations, where it called for introspection on the part of the President of South Africa to 'do the right thing', saying that "It is better for the processes to be initiated or negotiated to relieve the President of his responsibilities, and allow for the healing of the nation". This call remains as in-season today as it did a year ago, and the spirit of the statement is in-fact intensified by the various challenges of the last week when the removal of a minister who stands in his way is conducted in a way that guarantees the most negative impacts on the livelihoods of ordinary South Africans not protected by State cushions.

The President and some in government seem to be afflicted with an objectionable outbreak of numbness, insensitivity and imperviousness to what impacts the lives of poor families and the marginalised of our country. Police Minister Mbalula's bellicose jingoism of fire for fire and invoking the Marikana tragedy manifests this governmental insensitivity to the pain of society.

The various mandates and rights of government to govern the country should not normally be in question; however the Church questions unreservedly, the capacity of the government to demonstrate any moral consideration of the people in effecting the decisions it is constitutionally required to make, pointing out numerous contradictions in the intentions behind certain government and Presidential decisions.

In 2015, we witnessed the incredulous 'fire-pool' demonstration at the President's private residence. Later that year, the Church spoke out at the attempt to hoodwink the South African public through the 'redeployment' of Nhlamhla Nene to a post at the BRICS Bank that has yet to materialise. The Nation endured two years of the President's obdurate refusal to accede to the Public Protector's remedial instructions and pay for his private Nkandla benefits, only for him to tell the Constitutional Court that he'd always wanted to pay. And while on the one hand last week we were told of an 'Intelligence Report' exposing a gross conspiracy and a very much treasonable plot on the part of Pravin Gordhan; yet on the other hand we are today expected to believe that there were irreconcilable differences of opinion between Gordhan and President Zuma that motivated his dismissal. The 'smoke and mirrors' approach to the justification of decision making processes insults the intelligence of the people and the snowball effect of the too-numerous-to-mention examples of these instances has served as the catalyst for the unification of the people of South Africa against this leadership.

Where those elected into positions of leadership disregard and undermine their responsibility towards the protection of the interests of the people, those people can choose to exercise their collective moral



conscience, and this has found full expression in their choice to host numerous activities lead both by the Church and civil society.

We would encourage all our member churches and all people of goodwill and various faiths to find the most suitable way to enable their people to feel heard and participate in the actions of their choice around the country – be it a day of lament and prayer in the many places of worship; or through the public show of solidarity where other South Africans are gathered to register their voice. With peaceful intentions, let all South Africans exercise their right to speak and be heard, without fear of intimidation and violence.

As we enter the coming week - the week of the suffering of Christ unto death, we encourage all Christians to mount their pain, anguish and their very tangible fears for South Africa, on the cross of the crucified Christ on Good Friday, believing in faith that the national cry for change has been heard, and that the resurrection of our nation will yet manifest, even as our savior, Jesus Christ is risen.

Beyond this, the SACC National Church Leaders Forum will convene on April 20 to further reflect on the broader state of the nation, and strengthen the message of hope in its pastoral role to the people, in order to move us closer to the South Africa We Pray For.

ENDS

