

Clerics warn Zuma

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INL SA Bishop Joe Seoka. Picture: Masi Losi

Michelle Jones

A GROUP of prominent religious leaders have warned President Jacob Zuma that if leaders did not act to stop the moral decay in the country, the church movement would mobilise civil society to “bring about a more healthy democracy”.

The group, including Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, of Church Leaders Consultation, said in a letter to Zuma that South Africans yearned for new leadership to restore hope amid growing unhappiness about leaders who had “lost their moral compass”.

“During apartheid, some church leaders wrote to political leaders, but they often failed to listen to these voices,” they said.

“Unfortunately, we find a similar trend today, but it is our duty to speak to you even when we think you might not be listening.

“At this moment we believe that our democracy can be significantly improved,” they wrote.



Reverend Moss Nthla ING

“If political leaders do not take seriously what we are saying, we will continue to strengthen and support the church’s role within the civil society movements, especially those working among the poorest of our people to bring about a more healthy democracy.”

The correspondence was sent to Zuma, with copies also sent to DA leader Helen Zille and political and economic leaders around South Africa, detailing the clerics’ concerns about the country.

The document and covering letter were signed by Makgoba, Bishop Joe Seoka of the SA Council of Churches, Reverend Moss Ntlha of the Evangelical Alliance of SA and Reverend Edwin Arrison of Kairos Southern Africa.

The appeal has been made ahead of the ANC’s elective conference in Mangaung.

It comes almost a year after Kairos Southern Africa urged the ANC to come together and take decisive action to eradicate corruption, factionalism, power struggles and neglect of the poor, among others.

In the latest appeal, hitting even harder this time around, the leaders said they would be open to discussing these issues “to share our conviction that we have begun to stray from the path of building a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa”.



Archbishop Thabo Makgoba. Picture: Sophia

Stander INLSA

A letter from the Presidency confirmed that the correspondence had been brought to Zuma’s attention.

The document, titled “The church speaks... for such a time as this” and sent with the letter, said South Africans were not looking for a “superficial change of one self-serving political leader for another, or one political party for another, but for a different kind of leadership that can restore hope to the poor”.

“They yearn for a change from an increasingly corrupt political, business and societal culture to one that is accountable to the people.”

South Africans wanted to live in a country with “life-affirming values that recognised that the people belonged to God”, and not to politicians or political parties, the document added.

“We know that even though the dream of a just, non-racial and prospering democracy is temporarily in eclipse – being throttled by the actions (or lack of it) of a generation of leaders who seems to have largely lost their moral compass – the people of South Africa are capable of rising to reclaim their future.”

Many of the church people prayed for Zille, the letter read, as she sought to assist in putting South Africa on a “more healthy footing”.



President Jacob Zuma. Picture: Sibusiso Ndlovu

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