

# Not all in ANC side with Zuma

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Independent Newspapers Thabo Makgoba

Cape Town - The ANC appears to have closed ranks around President Jacob Zuma over the Nkandla security upgrades saga, but not after some tough debates over some ministers' conduct during this weekend's ANC national executive committee (NEC) meeting.

It is understood a plan has emerged to deal with the fall-out over Public Protector Thuli Madonsela's report outlining "systematic" governance failures in the R215 million, taxpayer-funded security upgrades at the president's rural homestead.

However, final details are understood to have remained outstanding as the president was given more time to apply his mind.

Madonsela gave Zuma 14 days, or until April 8, to submit his comments alongside the public protector's report to Parliament.

The public protector has not tabled the report herself, leaving the door open to the ANC parliamentary caucus arguing that the national legislature could not get involved as there was nothing before MPs to discuss.

The ANC will this afternoon give a briefing on the outcomes of its NEC meeting, held in Cape Town.



Kgalema Motlanthe Independent Newspapers

Aside from the Nkandla matter, also discussed were the state of the party and the elections.

With 37 days to go to the May 7 elections, the ANC remains under pressure over the impact of the Nkandla saga, not just from an opposition DA determined to turn it into an election campaign around calls for Zuma's impeachment, but also from senior and long-standing ANC members.

It is understood NEC discussions focused on Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa and, according to the Sunday Independent, Public Service and Administration Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, who was defence minister at the time, although the public protector made no findings implicating her or her successor, mentioning neither minister.

Sisulu's office confirmed written Nkandla-related communications to the Sunday Independent, but on Sunday declined to comment on the letter's content, or ANC NEC matters.

However, Madonsela found the lack of political leadership by Mthethwa and the three public works ministers in office since 2009 amounted to improper conduct and maladministration, and said the Police Minister had failed to apply his mind when he declared Nkandla a national key point.

It appears that unlike Mthethwa, Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi was not a subject of NEC discussions.

In December, Nxesi publicly accepted "full responsibility for the (Nkandla) project" when the government declassified its own top secret report, which said the president did not know about the expenditure; that no state funds were used on his private residences; and that officials and service providers were to blame for cost escalations arising from violations of procurement regulations.

While Madonsela found Zuma had not misled Parliament, his behaviour was "inconsistent" with his office and against the constitutional obligation to spend state funds prudently.

The report said Zuma should repay at least some of the costs for the "non-security" features like the swimming pool, cattle kraal and culvert, chicken run and visitors' centre, after costs were determined with the assistance of National Treasury.

The public outcry continues over the Nkandla security spending, which ballooned from R27m to the current R215m, but could carry a final bill of R246m, amid calls for the full implementation of the public protector's findings.

On Thursday religious leaders, including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Cape Town Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, called on the president not to ignore the public protector's findings.

Similar calls have come from senior ANC members, most recently Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, who was on the campaign trail in the Western Cape at the weekend.

In reference to the public protector and government reports, he said recommendations should be acted on.

However, Motlanthe and others, like National Planning Minister Trevor Manuel and ANC members like Marion Sparg, who wrote a passionate letter calling on Zuma to show leadership and resign, are not ANC NEC members and did not participate in the weekend's discussions.

In contrast, ANC NEC member Pallo Jordan, on the eve of the meeting, said he found it "shocking that not one minister raised the matter with Zuma, or drew his attention to the potential damage to his and the government's reputation", and that while the president was not found to have acted corruptly, he "cannot evade moral responsibility for what occurred".

In the ANC's initial reaction to the public protector report, its secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said those guilty of violations, including Zuma, must be pursued, and that the state must recover costs following probes.

The ANC last week approached the courts over a DA SMS which said Zuma "stole" taxpayers' money for his home, arguing this was a misrepresentation and breach of the Electoral Act and code of conduct.

The government which, in its initial reaction, continued to refer to the swimming pool as the fire pool, said the Special Investigating Unit probe, which was at an advanced stage, would lead to cases being referred to the prosecuting authorities, and military boards of inquiry were already under way to determine whether disciplinary steps should be taken.

<http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/not-all-in-anc-side-with-zuma-1.1668447#.VCFA9xacxfg>