

Church leaders join anti-corruption march

Senior church leaders from a broad spectrum of South Africa's churches today called on Christians to join the March Against Corruption being organised by civil society groups for 30 September.

The leaders – including those from some of the largest Christian denominations – say their plea for members to join the march constitutes their first step in becoming more involved and vocal about justice for the poor in South Africa, and in ensuring that the country remains a viable state.

The March Against Corruption is being organised by civil society groups and will simultaneously take place at the Union Buildings in Pretoria and Parliament in Cape Town.

A list of the names of the leaders can be found at the bottom of this statement.

Rev. Moss Ntlha, one of the leaders and General Secretary of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, today said the march represents the people of South Africa taking responsibility for themselves and for what is going on in the country.

Not the first time

This is not the first time that senior clergy have taken issue with current affairs in South Africa. Twice in 2012 similarly constituted groups of leaders wrote strongly worded letters addressing the state of the nation - at the time of the ANC's centenary celebrations and after the Marikana massacre. These called for integrity in politics, social justice and an end to corruption.

“Twenty-five years ago we mobilised across the board to take responsibility for our country,” Ntlha said.

“Nowadays people have simply abandoned hope as they feel powerless to change anything. We believe ordinary citizens need to take responsibility again to make sure that corruption ends in every sphere of society. This includes churches, civil society, business and government and homes where men abuse their power against women and children. This is a comprehensive call.

“Every person who marches is doing an act of repentance, and is calling others to repent.”

The most trusted institution

According to the Reconciliation Barometer, published annually by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, South Africans last year indicated the highest confidence levels in religious institutions and the Public Protector, and the lowest in political parties and the police.

On top of this, national research has shown that 81% of the population specifically regard the church as the most trusted institution and at least 80% of the population claims to be Christian.

“We see this march as a time for Christians to take responsibility through confession, prayer, self-reflection, to turn towards justice and away from practicing corruption.”

Ntlha says the leaders are not pointing fingers. They are in fact taking responsibility for South Africans' corporate corruption as citizens of a 21 year old democracy who claim to be 80% Christian.

“We acknowledge that many of our members are corrupt. So we can't judge anybody. We have to engage in a self-critical way. For us the march signals a call to repentance.

“But secondly, if the church does not use the trust levels that it has to call for a different way of being South African, of respect for the constitution and basic responsibility, we may lose the opportunity to stop the country's downward slide. And from that we may never recover.”

Faith and action

The church leaders called all Christians and people of faith in South Africa to participate through demonstrations and prayer everywhere in the country on the day of the march, and leading up to that day.

“Beyond the march we would like to see the emergence of a responsible South Africa and we believe the march signals that possibility. We dream of a South Africa where citizens are not only accountable, but hold others accountable, whether they are in business or in government.

“We realize this will be work in progress.”

“I am calling on the Church that we all stand up and say we will go to prison again; we will die again if any person gets victimized because of color, or for any other reason that contradicts our commitments to justice.”

- Rev. Frank Chikane, 1980's

Notes to the editor:

Find the 2012 letter here:

www.beta.iol.co.za/news/top-clerics-pen-letter-to-zuma-1439546

Reconciliation Barometer:

www.ijr.org.za

The leaders who have issued this call include:

- **Archbishop Thabo Makgoba** - Anglican Church of Southern Africa,
- **Bishop Zipho Siwa** - Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and President of SACC
- **Rev. Moss Ntlha** – General Secretary The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa
- **Pastor Ray McCauley** – Rhema Ministries, President of IFCC and Co Chair of NRLF
- **Dr Frank Chikane** - International President of AFM International and Senior Vice President of SACC
- **Dr Mary Anne Plaitjies van Huffel** – Moderator of Uniting Reformed Church of SA
- **Prof. Nelus Niemandt** - Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church
- **Bishop Ndanganeni Phaswana** - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa
- **Archbishop Mshengu** - Ikhaya le Ziona
- **Bishop Lunga ka Siboto** - Ethiopian Episcopal Church
- **Rev. Angelo Scheepers** - General Secretary of the Baptist Union
- **Mr Michael Cassidy** - Founder of *Africa Enterprise* and the National Initiative for Reconciliation
- **Rev. Edwin Arrison** - General Secretary Kairos Southern Africa
- **Rev. Prof. Peter Storey**, former President of the SACC & Methodist Church
- **Rev. Andre Bartlett**, Chairperson of Gauteng Council of Churches
- **The Revd Canon Prof N Barney Pityana**, retired Rector of the College of the Transfiguration, Grahamstown and retired Principal and Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa,
- **Pastor Simon Lerefolo** - His People Church and Chairperson of Heartlines
- **Pastor Ed Ramsami**, Heronbridge Community Church and Chairperson of Youth for Christ
- **Pastor Jean Symons** – National Leader of Doxa Deo RSA
- **Dr Braam Hanekom**, Vice Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Synod,
- **Rev. Costa Mitchell**, National Director of the Association of Vineyard Churches of South Africa,
- **Rev. Barry Isaacs**, General Secretary of the Consultation of Christian Churches

Various other leaders are on board, and the sign-up process continues.

For more information or for interviews, call -

Rev Moss Ntlha - 0828098533

Past Simon Lerefolo - 0828229460

Rev Andre Bartlett - 0832745745