

24 March 2010

President Jacob Zuma  
The Presidency  
Private Bag X1000  
PRETORIA  
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Dear President Zuma

Many South Africans are deeply disturbed by the increasingly inflammatory tone of some facets of our national debate. They are particularly concerned by recent statements and actions of Mr Julius Malema and the ANCYL involving, *inter alia*,

- the singing of the words “shoot the boers, they are rapists”;
- threats to AfriForum Youth last week that if they continued with plans to demonstrate before the ANCYL offices the same would happen to them as happened to the IFP at Shell House;
- the trampling under foot by the ANCYL of the AfriForum Youth petition including the names of 1600 murdered farmers;
- references to Mr Malema’s media critics as “white boer journalists”; and
- the ANCYL’s declared intention of spying illegally on media critics to dissuade them from further critical reporting.

We are disappointed that the Secretary General of the ANC, Mr Gwede Mantashe, has defended the singing of the ‘kill the boer’ song and has dismissed concerns raised in this regard as ‘over-sensitivity’. Mr Mantashe’s remarks were made within days of the brutal murders of three more white farmers. My legal advisers have informed me that there is very little doubt that the words that were sung by Mr Malema constitute hate speech and contravene section 16 (2) of the Constitution and section 10 of the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000. Neither can there be any question of ‘over sensitivity’ in circumstances in which South African citizens, who often happen to be farmers, continue to be murdered with unacceptable regularity.

I am further deeply concerned that the activities and statements of the ANCYL are being exploited by right-wing extremists to further exacerbate inter-racial relations. All this is beginning to create a volatile atmosphere in which any additional intemperate statement or action might spark an unfortunate incident. This would be a tragedy that our country simply could not afford - particularly on the eve of the Soccer World Cup.

We welcome your criticism of ANCYL measures to spy on and intimidate their critics in the media. We have also taken note of your explanation that the ANCYL is an independent organisation that has the fullest right to raise issues in the national debate. However, as stated in the latest 'ANC Today' , although "organisationally, the Youth League is autonomous from the ANC" ..." in terms of character, ideology, vision and mission and so on, the Youth League just like the Women's and Veterans Leagues, are one with the ANC". We cannot understand why it is not possible for the leadership of the ANC to ensure that its Youth League abides by its declared policies of non racialism as well as by the Constitution and the law of the land.

The time has come for all South African leaders to insist that their followers should avoid any language or behavior that might threaten the preservation of inter-racial harmony, the promotion of national unity and a spirit of inter-communal cooperation. I would like to make a most serious and urgent appeal to you, Mr President, as the leader of our multicultural nation, to take the lead in moderating the tone of the national debate and in ensuring that it is conducted in a manner that promotes national unity and compliance with the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

I shall be releasing the text of this letter to the media because of the deep and widespread concern that has arisen over these developments.

Yours sincerely

**F W DE KLERK**