

## **COSATU finds Archbishop Desmond Tutu's tirade against Jacob Zuma despicable**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions considers itself a great ally of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. We have admired his heroic stand against the brutality of the apartheid regime. We hailed his stance when government led by President Thabo Mbeki denied critical challenges facing our democracy, such as the HIV and AIDS epidemic, poverty and unemployment. We defended him when he, together with us, became the subject of ridicule and labelling by those who defended the politics of denialism. We like him; he is a great South African.

We are however extremely concerned that Archbishop Tutu has allowed his passionate personal hatred of the ANC and its President Jacob Zuma to cloud his judgement. Our hard-fought-for constitution guarantees us our basic freedoms, including the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. It firmly entrenches the right of all to be equal before the eyes of the law. Many unionists and others perished fighting for these freedoms and rights. Frankly many of are still prepared to die in defence of basic freedoms.

Yet to Archbishop Tutu and most of the opposition parties, who obviously hope that they will gain political mileage from their political opponent facing corruption and other charges, these principles of the constitution must be suspended for opportunistic and narrow political reasons. They argue that comrade Jacob Zuma must be treated differently – not as a citizen who also has the same rights as all of us.

Archbishop Tutu and the opposition parties, the DA in particular, seek to pre-empt the decision of the NPA on the Jacob Zuma matter. This is desperate politicking! The NPA, in line with the legislation, invited and allowed Jacob Zuma to make representations on the charges he is facing.

Other South Africans before have made such representations to the NPA in relation to the charges they faced. The NPA listened to these representations and on the basis of the new information at their disposal decided to withdraw the charges or proceeded to seek conviction in the courts.

This is perfectly legal – we assume it happens all the time. Archbishop Tutu has not once raised an objection to this. Now he is regrettably joining the chorus of some of the opposition parties desperately politicking with the view to scoring narrow political points. In the process those who have positioned themselves as the great defenders of the rule of law and the Constitution are consistently and systematically flouting and undermining the rule of law and the Constitution.

The NPA is being pressured to follow one route only, one that will satisfy the political agenda of the opposition parties who are staring at defeat in the coming elections. Why would the NPA have allowed comrade Jacob Zuma to make representations if it would not objectively look at them?

Already, even before the NPA has taken a decision, Archbishop Tutu is crying foul and alleging that political settlements are being advanced. This is a serious allegation against the NPA, an important institution of our democracy. The archbishop does not have a shred of evidence that a political solution is being cooked.

For Archbishop Tutu, a man of cloth, because of his hatred of a man, that man must now,

irrespective of the outcome of the current processes of representation, go to Court to say “Here I am; please put me on trial”, even though there may be no prosecutors to prosecute the case. If Jacob Zuma does this he would satisfy those who have already found him guilty of corruption.

To Archbishop Tutu, Zuma is guilty and now he must go to court to clear his name. This is not the way that follows the dictates of the Constitution, which says a person is presumed innocent, and places the onus on those who believe on the contrary to go to Court and present evidence to an independent Judge. COSATU believes that this is a tragedy unfolding.

COSATU has kept its cool throughout the tirades of Archbishop Tutu, out of the respect we have for him. We are now forced to break our silence, in defence of the rights of another fellow South African.

We do not share his ultra pessimism and dismissive attitude of the views of the majority. It is a fact, even if we do not like it, that comrade Jacob Zuma won a free and fair election in Polokwane to become a President of the ANC.

It is also going to be perfectly within our democracy that the ANC will win the elections on 22 April 2009 and will nominate comrade Jacob Zuma to be President of the Republic of South Africa. This is so because the majority, who are still desperately poor and unemployed, have pinned their hopes on the ANC to address their issues of poverty. To us that is the issue that is more important than any other considerations – our poverty and marginalisation in the economy.

At the start of the efforts to get South Africans to exercise their hard-won right to vote and shape their own destiny, Archbishop Tutu positioned himself on the opposite side. He shamefully declared that he was not going to vote, thus attempting to use his standing in our society to mobilise citizens to follow his extremely dangerous example.

COSATU, whilst sharply disagreeing with him, kept its cool and refused to publicly criticize him. The archbishop’s strategy to collapse our democracy failed. It is now history that a record 23 million South African defied his ill advice and registered. We know that he subsequently changed his mind on this and followed the majority, which we welcomed.

Everyone knows that because of his personal hatred of the ANC and its leadership he will join the small queue of those who will vote for either the white or black DA. We have no problem with Archbishop Tutu exercising his rights. He must know however that he is increasingly not a uniter of the nation. Increasingly every time he opens his mouth his former arch-enemies and detractors rejoice, to the disbelief and shock of the overwhelming majority in our society.