



23 February 2023

Press Statement

Attacks on de Ruyter Fail to Address Serious Allegations of Corruption

Defend our Democracy is concerned about responses to the allegations of corruption raised by former Eskom CEO, Andre de Ruyter, in his e.TV interview earlier this week.

It is troubling, that instead of dealing with the substance of de Ruyter's startling interview – in particular the damning allegations of ongoing corruption and capture in the energy sector – some South African politicians have instead attacked de Ruyter.

What could have been an opportunity for uncovering alleged corruption and capture instead became an opportunity to close political ranks in a bid to protect the governing party's image.

Through the Zondo Commission inquiry, the South African public has come to understand how toxic politics enables and entrenches corruption and capture. Therefore, hinting that de Ruyter should not have spoken out because his views waded into the political arena, ignores that the pervading political culture in South Africa cannot be separated from the crisis the country faces.

The governing party can no longer – as it has consistently done – try to separate and absolve itself of blame for the state of Eskom. It is after all a member of the governing party who serves as President of the country, and its members who serve as Ministers in charge of public enterprises and energy – all of whom have in some way been central to decision and policy-making in relation to Eskom.

Not too long ago, de Ruyter - who has now been called a 'failure' and incompetent - agreed to stay on in his position at Eskom into March 2023 - over and above his 30-day notice period after he resigned - for the sake of continuity at the power utility.

On Wednesday night, Eskom released a media statement indicating that the Board resolved to release de Ruyter from his position with immediate effect.

Whatever personal political views de Ruyter has expressed, this should not be allowed to cloud the case he makes about alleged corruption, criminal syndicates and mafias up to high levels of government which are in part responsible for the energy crisis and extreme levels of loadshedding the country is facing. The government and the governing party should focus on rooting out the corruption rather than on the diversion of Ruyter's personal political views. One would have expected those in Cabinet and Parliament to call for an investigation into the allegations at the very least.

As the President of the country commits to better protecting whistleblowers and public servants who call out corruption, capture, and political interference, the swift attack on de Ruyter sends a message to the contrary.



Defend our Democracy calls on de Ruyter to take the information on alleged corruption and suspected mafia networks to the Hawks. While his interview does make mention of sharing information with law enforcement agencies, it remains unclear if high-level political corruption was reported, as should have been done, irrespective of the actual or perceived incompetencies of the state in investigating and prosecuting corruption.

We also urge the former CEO to - where it does not hinder a potential investigation - make public any further information that he has. It is in the interests of the public, for instance, to know which Ministers he reportedly alerted about alleged corruption.

We call on President Cyril Ramaphosa to outline how the next CEO of Eskom and the Board of the power utility will be insulated from political attacks, and what will government be doing to ensure that the corruption allegations brought forward by de Ruyter are investigated. What action will be taken against Ministers who may have known about corruption or potential corruption at the power utility and who may not have done anything about it? Will there be political accountability?

As the public now faces an over 18% electricity tariff increase, and in light of ongoing Stage 6 loadshedding, we call on the government, and the governing party, to for once, put aside vitriolic politics and simply fix the mess that is to a large extent of their own making.

Issued by Defend our Democracy

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