



**Message of solidarity and support following the attempted assassination of
Advocate Coreth Naude
29 August 2024**

Today, the Defend Our Democracy movement hosts a solidarity picket for Advocate Coreth Naude, a month from the time that had we learned of the brazen attempt on her life.

We are thankful that Advocate Naude survived the attempted assassination and pray that she gets back to full health soon. We appeal to law enforcement and the South African Revenue Services (SARS), whom she was investigating a R37 million case for, to do everything possible to ensure that Adv Naude and her family remain safe.

It has become an all too familiar occurrence for officials who carry out their duties with honesty and integrity to become targets of assassination in an attempt to silence them. This is the side-effect of a society within which state capture, corruption, misgovernance, violence and disregard for the rule of law often faces no consequence.

These recurring, brutal attacks do not only rob families of their loved ones, but also rob our country of dedicated citizens. Those who order these attacks, and those who pull the trigger must face the full might of the law!

A Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GI-TOC) report shockingly reveals that there were 131 targeted killings in South Africa in 2023. While some of these killings are linked to the taxi industry, or personal assassinations, at least 31 are recorded as being “political”.

In the first four months of 2024 alone, the report highlights that there have been 10 politically/administratively motivated assassinations. Over the past decade, the GI-TOC report has documented a staggering 108% increase in targeted killings in South Africa.

Three years ago on 23rd August, we witnessed the assassination of Gauteng Department of Health whistleblower, Babita Deokaran. She had flagged dubious purchases at the Tembisa hospital and reported it to her superiors. Little seems to have been done about it. Instead, Deokaran was killed in her driveway. The gunmen responsible for this have been convicted and sentenced but the paymaster remains free.

In March 2023, liquidator Cloete Murray was assassinated together with his son Thomas. Recent media reports suggest that Murray was working with Adv Naude on the tax inquiry she was investigating. The Murrays were also liquidators for several other high profile cases involving millions of Rands. Just yesterday, news emerged of their final morning carrying out their task as liquidators at three properties. The father and son headed out for coffee before being gunned down en route home.

More recently, we learned of the assassination of Zenzele Benedict Sithole, who was a forensic investigator. He was killed in July 2024, while driving in Booyens. Sithole was



investigating the alleged use of Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) guns in Cash-In-Transit heists. It is reported that he was close to solving this case before he was killed.

Sithole's story is similar to that of anti-gang unit investigator Lt. Col. Charl Kinnear, and the Hawks' Lt. Col. Frans Mathipa, who were also killed while conducting sensitive investigations that may have exposed not just criminal networks, but potential linkages with rotten elements in the state.

One of the Zondo Commission's recommendations was that legislation to protect whistleblowers be introduced or amended. The existing legislative provisions in the Companies Act, the Protected Disclosures Act, the Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act, the Protection Against Harassment Act and the Labour Relations Act have all sought to serve this purpose, but require strengthening, as whistleblowers, honest public servants, investigators, journalists and activists remain at risk.

The Defend Our Democracy movement however, believes that legislation alone is not enough. Action must be taken against networks of contract killers and their paymasters. Our criminal justice sector cannot just be take a reactive approach and say that they 'will investigate' every time someone is gunned down. The 'assassination industry' must be broken.

At its root, it requires tackling state capture, corruption, fraud and misgovernance at both a case-by-case, and systemic level. Furthermore, those at the forefront of this fight require societal support. It is in this vein that we have initiated this solidarity protest with SARS and other organisations.

We are grateful to the leadership and staff of SARS for joining us here today. Our appeal to you, is to ensure that the investigative work that Adv Naude was involved in continues. Our state institutions should not succumb to intimidation.

We implore law enforcement agencies to arrest those responsible for the attack on Adv Naude. We will be relentless in our demand for accountability and justice, not just for Adv Naude, but for the many others who have paid the ultimate price for standing up against corruption, fraud and state capture, and for the rule of law.

In closing, we pay tribute to the unwavering commitment of whistleblowers, honest public servants, investigators, activists and journalists in South Africa who have stood up for our democracy.

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