



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

**Date: 27 November 2025**

### **Defend Our Democracy is deeply concerned about the arrest of Pretoria High Court Judge Portia Dipuo Phahlane over allegations of corruption and money laundering.**

Defend Our Democracy expresses its deep and grave concern regarding the arrest of Judge Portia Dipuo Phahlane on allegations of corruption and money laundering following an investigation by the Directorate for Priority Crimes Investigation (DPCI). The charges are rooted in suspicions that Judge Phahlane accepted bribes worth millions of rand in a long-running International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) leadership dispute. Allegedly, the bribes were in exchange for delivering a favourable judgment in a sensitive church succession matter before her court.

This development marks a profoundly dark and unsettling day for our constitutional democracy. For a sitting judge to appear before a court not as an impartial arbiter of justice but as an accused person is unprecedented and deeply distressing. This case is believed to be the first in which a sitting South African judge has been criminally charged for alleged wrongdoing in a matter she was adjudicating. The seriousness of the allegations levelled against Judge Phahlane cannot be overstated, and their mere existence threatens to erode public confidence in the judiciary. It is for this reason that growing calls for the Judicial Service Commission to consider an immediate suspension must be taken seriously and handled with the utmost transparency and urgency.

At the same time, the work of the DPCI deserves commendation. Their efforts to expose alleged misconduct of this magnitude demonstrate a commendable commitment to rooting out corruption wherever it may reside, including within the highest echelons of the justice system. The judiciary—tasked with safeguarding the Constitution, protecting fundamental rights, and acting as the final bulwark against abuse of power—must remain beyond reproach. Any credible threat to its integrity must be confronted head-on.

Defend Our Democracy will continue to closely monitor the proceedings before the Pretoria Serious Commercial Crimes Court, where Judge Phahlane was granted R50 000 bail. We trust that the allegations will be fully ventilated, that all evidence will be rigorously tested, and that the judicial process will unfold with the fairness, independence, and transparency that South Africans deserve.

For media interviews, contact:

Andries Sibanyoni

Communication Officer

Mobile: 071 0376138

---