



Press Statement

06 December 2025

Defend Our Democracy has learned with shock about the ambush and brutal assassination of Marius van der Merwe.

Marius van der Merwe, publicly known as “Witness D,” recently gave courageous testimony before the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference, and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System — widely referred to as the Madlanga Commission. In doing so, he shed light on the deeply troubling levels of criminality, malfeasance, and systemic corruption that continue to undermine our policing structures and compromise the integrity of the criminal justice system as a whole. His bravery gave South Africans a clearer understanding of the challenges we face, and the risks borne by those who choose truth over silence.

Tragically, on 5 December 2025, Marius was gunned down outside his home in Brakpan, a devastating act that has shaken the nation and drawn widespread grief, anger, and condemnation. His death is not only a personal and familial tragedy but also a painful reminder of the escalating pattern of violence, intimidation, and witness silencing that threatens the very foundation of justice in our country.

South Africa has witnessed far too many heartbreaking losses; Mpho Mafole, Frans Mathipa, Babita Deokaran, Zenzele Sithole, and now Marius van der Merwe. Each of them stood for integrity, accountability, and the public good. Their deaths reflect a growing crisis in which telling the truth has become a life-threatening act. This is a profound national wound, and one that cannot be ignored.

These continued attempts to terrorize and silence truth-tellers must be met not only with moral outrage but with urgent, decisive action. We must accelerate efforts to strengthen legal safeguards, comprehensive protection mechanisms, and robust support systems for those who step forward in service of justice. Their courage should be honoured with more than words, it must be defended through enforceable, tangible protections.

Those responsible for these heinous acts must be held fully accountable, with the justice system demonstrating zero tolerance for the intimidation or elimination of truth-tellers and public servants. Such crimes are not only attacks on individuals; they are assaults on our shared values, our collective safety, and the spirit of Ubuntu that defines us.

As we mourn the loss of a principled, brave, and deeply committed man, we are called to reaffirm our resolve in the fight against corruption. Let us stand even more firmly beside those who speak out, ensuring their sacrifices are not in vain and their contributions continue to guide us toward a more just society.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the wife, children, and entire family of Marius van der Merwe. May they find strength, comfort, and peace during this unimaginably difficult time. His courage will not be forgotten, and we carry his legacy forward with gratitude and determination.

-Defend Our Democracy



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