

## **SACC STATEMENT ON OMOTOSO RAPE TRIAL**

**October 18, 2018**

### **Media Release**

### **Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana**

The people of South Africa and the churches have watched with gripping horror and disbelief the trial proceedings of the so-called pastor, Mr Tim Omotoso, charged with rape and human trafficking. The manner in which the victim, young and courageous Cheryl Zondi, was brutalised in a cross examination that was reminiscent of the apartheid Security Branch interrogation, left many aghast and with serious questions about the conduct of the judicial system.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) condemns outright any of the despicable practices for which Mr Omotoso has been indicted. To name anyone who conducts such practices as a pastor is to grossly misrepresent what it means to be a pastor. The brutalisation of a rape victim in the manner we have witnessed urges us to call on the Judicial Authorities - the Department of Justice, the National Prosecuting Authority, and the Office of the Chief Justice, to give serious consideration to the creation of special courts for rape charges that will have a particular code and culture, that prevents the additional victimisation and brutal humiliation of victims. The SACC is making representations to the justice authorities in this regard.

Secondly, the SACC is exploring an appropriate way of establishing an “Unburdening” Process for both the religious and business sectors. On the former, to provide a facility for people and victims to tell their stories and be afforded appropriate ministries even ahead of possible court proceedings for which they would need to be emotionally prepared. Cheryl Zondo’s heroism is outstandingly remarkable, and very few would have survived that frightful Omotoso defense grilling. An intermediate “unburdening” process might encourage more victims to come forward.

The humanitarian NGO Rape Crisis has previously estimated that if all rape cases were reported, the number would more than 1300 cases per day in South Africa; adding in summation, that “the nature and extent of rape in South Africa, as well as the inadequate systems in place to respond to it, continue to pose a significant obstacle in the path towards achieving a just society in which citizens, and particularly women, can live with dignity and freedom from the fear of sexual violence.”

For this reason, the burning matter of gender based violence is in the current SACC initiated National Convention of South Africa Process to Reimagine, Redesign and Reorganise the South African life experience.



The Omotoso case, together with the Eastern Cape Ngcobo “Seven Angels” religious rogues who preyed on innocent people, brings into sharp focus the urgent need to root out criminality masquerading as religious practice.

This comes back to the pressing matter of concluding on the acceptable manner of regulating the church sector in ways acceptable to churches and to government for the protection of citizens, and the upholding of appropriate ethical and professional standards in the practice of Christian pastoral ministry in all traditions of Christian expression.

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*Issued by the office of the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana.*

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