



Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk

Rig alle korrespondensie i.v.m. hierdie skrywe aan die Gemeenskaplike Kerkkantoor vir aandag van:

Ds. JL Schütte

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17 November 2021

OMSENDERBRIEF 16/2021

ONDERSTEUNING AAN FREEDOM OF RELIGION SOUTH AFRICA

Aan alle kerkrade

Geagte broeders

Die bedreiging van godsdienstvryheid in Suid-Afrika, wat reeds tydens Sinode 2017 onder gemeentes se aandag gebring is, het gedurende 2020-2021 'n nuwe wending geneem met die ramptoestand en gepaardgaande regulasies en inperkings wat tydens die grendelstaat toegepas is. In verskeie omsendbriewe (5/2020; 6/2020; 12/2020; 13/2020; 14/2020) is kerkrade ingelig van die proses waarby die Sentrale Kerkekommissie betrokke was in 'n poging om die regering verantwoordelik te hou. Soos berig, het ons met Freedom of Religion South Africa (FORSA) kragte saamgesnoer.

As kampvegters vir godsdienstvryheid het FORSA die afgelope jaar op baie meer aspekte as net die regulasies en inperkings gefokus. Die uitdagings word ook gaandeweg al hoe groter met al hoe meer beoogde wetgewing wat ons godsdienstvryheid bedreig. So was daar die afgelope jaar wysigings voorgestel aan die Huwelikswet, Gelykheidswet, Haatspraakwet en nog vele meer. Rakende al hierdie sake kon ons met FORSA hande vat met voorbeelde van individuele en groepsvoorleggings wat beskikbaar gestel is. Een van die aksies was om aansoek te doen vir 'n dringende hofbevel oor die ongrondwetlike toepassing van inperkings op kerke, terwyl ander sektore van die samelewing nie aan dieselfde inperkings onderwerp is nie. Kort voor die aanhoor van die dringende aansoek het die regering die regulasies verander en die saak se dringendheid het verval. Ter wille van die voorkoming van toekomstige regeringsvergrype is daar besluit om wel met die saak voort te gaan en ander partye, soos AfriForum, het ook sake begin wat nou almal saam aangehoor sal word.

Hierdie saak is op die rol vir die Johannesburgse Hooggeregshof van 22-24 November 2021. Graag vra ons almal se voorbidding daarvoor. Ons neem ook die vrymoedigheid om te vra dat

kerkrade en individue dit asseblief moet oorweeg om in hulle begrotings voorsiening te maak vir konstante bydraes aan FORSA indien dit enigsins moontlik is. Net hierdie komende hofsaak se koste is reeds astronomies. FORSA ontvang tans maar ongeveer R100 000 se donasies per maand, terwyl nog dubbel soveel nodig is om op 'n lewensvatbare wyse met hierdie grootse taak te kan volhou.

Ons is daarvan oortuig dat FORSA se bydrae tot die stryd om ons godsdiensvryheid in die komende jare van onskatbare belang gaan wees. Daarom wil ons u graag aanmoedig om 'n maandelikse bedrag per lidmaat te bewillig soos wat dit vir u kerkraad moontlik is.

Verder wil ons u ook aanmoedig om gebruik te maak van die dokumente en platforms wat beskikbaar gestel word om ons profetiese getuienis teenoor die owerheid getrou na te kom. Ons gaan al hoe meer standpunt moet inneem vir die handhawing van ons geloofsoortuigings in 'n sekulêre omgewing van vyandigheid.

Ons heg 'n inligtingstuk van FORSA by hierdie omsendbrief aan, sodat u kan sien watter ondersteuning nodig is en ook 'n oorsig kan kry van die sake wat die afgelope jaar reaksie geverg het. U sal al die nodige inligting op die meegaande dokumente kry.

Vriendelike groete



Ds. JL Schütte

Direkteur van Kerkadministrasie

November, 2021

Re: Appeal for support to protect vital religious freedom rights

Dear Pastor,

For the past eight years, Freedom of Religion South Africa (known as FOR SA) has been working to protect and promote religious freedom rights in South Africa. We believe we can say – without fear of contradiction – that there would be significantly less religious freedom today without our numerous and consistent interventions.

However – and although FOR SA has been given a mandate to represent millions of people from the faith community in certain issues – very few donate to us on a consistent basis. Our current average monthly income is +/- R100,000, which is increasingly inadequate and ***makes FOR SA's on-going work of defending religious freedom unsustainable.***

FOR SA's appeal

At a time when many organisations and individuals are considering their 2022 budget, we would appeal to you to consider making (or continuing to make!) a regular donation to FOR SA. We are completely dependent upon voluntary gifts to continue our vital work.

As such, FOR SA is looking to add R200,000 per month to our existing income. This would allow us to properly remunerate our existing staff and to add additional members to key positions. This in turn will exponentially increase our capacity and effectiveness. It will also allow us to build up a "war chest" so that we will be able to cover the major costs of any necessary litigation.

Budgetary needs

Senior associate attorney:	R 50,000
Research attorney:	R 35,000
Communications officer:	R 25,000
Digital/IT specialist:	R 25,000
Litigation fees:	R 50,000
Travel/sundry expenses:	<u>R 15,000</u>
	R200,000

Donate to FOR SA

You can make a once-off or regular donation via direct bank transfer (EFT):

Account name: FOR SA

Bank: ABSA

Account #: 4062114352

Branch code: 632005

Alternatively, should your church/members be willing to contribute to this cause, please direct them to the DONATE button on the www.forsa.org.za website.

For faith & freedom!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Swain', with a stylized, cursive script.

MICHAEL SWAIN
Executive Director

BRIEF SUMMARY OF FOR SA's ACTIVITIES IN 2021

- Engaged with Government regarding the following:
 - Met with the President, COGTA Minister and Department on lockdown regulations affecting the religious sector.
 - Made written and verbal presentations on the proposed single Marriage Statute, and the draft Marriage Policy.
 - Lobbied and facilitated opposition to the PEPUDA Amendment Bill with over 150,000 submissions.
 - Obtained assurance from Department of Justice (Deputy Minister) to “look carefully” at the concerns raised regarding the PEPUDA Amendment Bill.
 - Wrote to the President regarding religious/conscientious concerns in the use of (historical) abortion-derived fetal cell lines in the development or production of certain COVID-19 vaccines.
 - Wrote to the Minister of Basic Education regarding permitting the use of schools for religious meetings.
 - Wrote to the Minister of Employment and Labour on the current exclusion of churches and other religious organisations from TERS benefits.
- Engaged with Parliament regarding the following:
 - Made written and verbal presentations to the COGTA Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on lockdown regulations affecting the religious sector.
 - *FOR SA's* definition of “spiritual abuse” has been successfully integrated into the Domestic Violence Bill.
 - Made written submissions and verbal presentations on the Expropriation Without Compensation Bill to protect property owned by religious organisations.
 - Informed and advised on proposed introduction of a “Conversion Therapy Bill” (Private Member’s Bill).
 - Made written and verbal presentations to the COGTA Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the Disaster Management Act Amendment Bill.
 - Made written submissions (and coordinated opposition) on threats to religious freedom in the “Hate Speech Bill”.
- Engaged in / with the following Court cases:
 - Filed (and are pursuing) legal action against the COGTA Minister for unfairly discriminating against the religious community in the lockdown regulations.
 - Intervened as *amicus curiae* in the *isipandla* case (autonomy of independent faith-based school challenged).
 - Intervened as *amicus curiae* in the Chetty case (freedom of religious speech challenged).
 - Advised on the implications of the ConCourt’s decision in the Qwelane case, and the new “hate speech” definition.
- Assisted the religious community with information on religious freedom issues:
 - Prepared and distributed updated FAQs at the different lockdown levels.

- Conducted over 200 radio, TV, online and print media interviews to highlight religious freedom issues and concerns, and prepared articles for publication in JOY!/Juig! magazines and various other publications.
- Prepared and distributed regular *FOR SA* Alerts and Newsletters to inform our constituency of religious freedom issues and concerns, and how to get involved.
- Conducted various online meetings with a forum of senior religious leaders from across the faith spectrum, to discuss religious freedom issues and concerns.
- Travelled throughout South Africa to meet with religious leaders and organisations, and to make multiple presentations on religious freedom issues.
- Presented (online) "*FOR SA* Roadshow".
- Staged "The Frontlines of the Fight for Faith and Freedom" webinars with Joy! Magazine.
- Coordinated a team of (external) legal specialists to prepare and present legal argument to defend religious freedom rights.
- Engaged with, and fostered relationships, with other (local and international) advocacy groups and organisations with an interest in religious freedom issues.