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Ramaphosa accused of targeting 'politically weak' as Tolashe is sacked

Critics claim the president's decision diverts attention from serious allegations against himself and other ministers

THAMI MAGUBANE
thami.magubane@inl.co.za

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has been accused of acting against those seen as "politically weak" while ignoring real crimes" following his decision to fire the Minister of Social Development, Sisi Tolashe.

The MK Party stated that the firing was an "obvious ploy" by the president to distract and make it appear he was acting against wrongdoing while he ignores real wrongdoing, including allegations against himself.

In a statement released by the presidency, Ramaphosa confirmed yesterday that Tolashe was dismissed in terms of Section 91(2) of the Constitution, which gives the president the authority to appoint and remove ministers.

Ramaphosa's decision to dismiss Tolashe follows mounting pressure from political parties calling for her sacking over allegations linked to two luxury vehicles reportedly intended for the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL).

The MK Party stated that the president should have acted against himself in light of the numerous allegations against him, as well as against Police Minister Senzo Mchunu. Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndhlela said: "This is just a ploy to target those who are politically weak. The president has fired the minister of higher education, dismissed the deputy minister of transport and industry, and now the minister of social development."

"If he can act so swiftly, he should have acted against Mchunu, who has classified documents that should not have been classified. He is acting against someone who is politically weak."

"He should have acted against himself because he also broke the law by trading while in office. He might claim that the Phala Phala farm had a manager and that he was not aware of what was happening, but the truth is he had control of the trust that owned the farm, so he knew what was happening in its bank accounts," he said.

The president has been under pressure to act against the minister. According to reports, DA leader Geordin Hill-Lewis wrote to Ramaphosa on April 30, demanding that the president fire Tolashe.

DA national spokesperson Jan de Villiers previously stated that the charges include allegedly lying to Parliament — a potential offence of fraud and a violation under Section 27 of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act — as well as fraudulent vehicle registration under the National Road Traffic Act and possible theft.

ActionSA MP Dereleen James also filed criminal charges against Tolashe,

accusing her of misleading Parliament about the source and use of the vehicles allegedly donated to the ANCWL. James additionally lodged complaints with the Public Protector and Parliament's Ethics Committee, alleging breaches of the Executive Members' Ethics Act and the Code of Conduct.

However, political analyst Professor Musa Xulu said the minister's actions had compelled the president to act. He noted that the difference between the two cases is that the president may have looked at Tolashe's explanation for why she registered the cars in the names of her children.

She claimed she wanted to hide them from the ANCWL register because the League or the ANC mother body has many creditors. The fact that she did not declare this in Parliament may have been seen as a valid reason for her dismissal.

"With the case of Minister Senzo Mchunu, there has not been tangible evidence brought forward by anyone to either the Madlanga Commission or the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee that would warrant his dismissal."

"There is a lot of hearsay evidence. In reality, by seeking to disband the PKTT and ordering the investigation of the Matlala tender, Mchunu may have unintentionally opened a can of worms about the underhand operations of the SAPS."

Political analyst Siyabonga Ntombela said it seems like the president has double standards. He said the matter against Minister Mchunu was so severe that a commission of inquiry was necessary.

On the issue of Tolashe, he said her actions was even against the party that would warrant his dismissal.

"The president needed something to distract the people because all eyes were on his resignation or impeachment. He cannot afford to let go of power not knowing what could become of him when he is no longer president. So, he will hold on until he runs out of options," he said.

Tolashe is accused of receiving SUVs allegedly donated by Chinese representatives in late 2023 for the ANCWL. They were allegedly registered in the names of Tolashe's children. Additional allegations against Tolashe involve the extension of her department director-general's contract and the appointment of 22-year-old Lesedi Mabiletja as acting chief of staff.

Mabiletja is the niece of Tolashe's special adviser, Ngwako Kgatla.

Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities Sindiswe Chikunga has been appointed acting Minister of Social Development until a permanent replacement is named.

unpredictable environment."

"We deal with it as it comes, and as it goes. We have, up to so far, maintained our communication with the White House, and the various facets of the American society, because the American society is multilayered - Congress, ThinkTanks, academia, business sector, and so forth," Lamola said.

"We look at it as a multifaceted society that we need to continue to work with, and strengthen the relations of people-to-people."

He added that the ministry was surprised that the highest number of tourists to South Africa last year came from the US.

"It shows that the strengthening of people-to-people relations is also a very key component of our engagement with the US and also with the cities."

On the matter of the G20 Summit and the uncertainty surrounding South Africa's attendance, Lamola said that it is not



MILESTONE

ENTREPRENEUR, television personality, and arts advocate Lenore Goss-Matjie (right) embraces her daughter, Meah Matjie, during a proud and memorable celebration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Westville campus in Durban, where Meah graduated as a medical doctor on Wednesday. Meah received her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) degree during the graduation ceremony, attended by family and friends. | RAJESH JANTIAL

STAND OFF

EFF, MK Party walk out of Parliament to protest over Ramaphosa motion

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA
mayibongwe.maqhina@inl.co.za

THE parties organised under the Progressive Alliance banner, including the MK Party and EFF, yesterday walked out of the sitting of the National Assembly when Speaker Thoko Didiza refused their request to debate the motion of no confidence against President Cyril Ramaphosa.

MK Party chief whip Mmabatho Nthabiseng Mokoena-Zondi rose on a point of order minutes after Didiza announced that the sitting was to consider the scheduled oral question to Ramaphosa.

Mokoena-Zondi made the request on behalf of the Progressive Alliance-aligned parties after she wrote a letter to Didiza earlier in the day. She said it could not be business as usual when Ramaphosa continued to live under a shadow and faced the impeachment process.

"We can't continue to legitimise his presidency," in response, Didiza said she had received the letter.

"I don't think it is for this House," she said. "You know that can't happen today. I have not responded to the letter because I am applying my mind on it. Today, we have questions for the president," said Didiza.

EFF chief whip Nontando Noluntu-shungu sought to invoke the emotions of black people who had sacrificed for the liberation of the country.

"We request in this House. We can't sit here and listen to someone who does not respect the Constitution," Noluntu-shungu said.

As more points of orders were made, Didiza said it was up to her to preside over

the sitting.

"The notices and orders of the day are discussed and agreed in the Programme Committee and the Chief Whips Forum. The issue of the motion written to me has to be considered and I will respond to it accordingly, but you can't insist, as we sit here, that we suspend the orders and discuss the motion," she added.

ATM MP Vuyiso Zungula asked Didiza to take the country into her confidence on the Constitutional Court judgment, which set aside the vote of the National Assembly, taken in December 2022, when it declined to refer the report of the Independent Panel to an Impeachment Committee.

The apex court declared two weeks ago that the 1291 parliamentary rule, which deals with the removal of the president, was inconsistent with the Constitution and provided a read-in provision pending an amendment.

It also ordered that the Independent Panel report be referred to the Impeachment Committee established in terms of the National Assembly Rules.

The Independent Panel, chaired by retired Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo, found there was prima facie evidence that Ramaphosa violated the Constitution and other laws in the Phala Phala matter.

Responding to Zungula, Didiza said the judgment was about Parliament and its processes.

"People should not jump the gun in terms of processes. You sit in the Chief Whip's Forum and know the steps the Speaker has taken in following the judgment and its implementation," she said.

On Wednesday, Didiza announced

the establishment of a 31-member of the Impeachment Committee to give effect to the Section 89 process on the removal of the president.

She also referred the invalidated parliamentary rule on the removal of the president to the Subcommittee on the rules for processing and subsequent consideration by the Rules Committee before it is ratified by the National Assembly.

"That matter does not arise now," Didiza said in her ruling.

Instead of the majority party chief whip Mdmumise Ntuli stating their stance on the matter, ANC MP Tshilidzi Bethuel Munyai spoke instead. Munyai said the Constitutional Court has not made a negative finding against Ramaphosa.

"The court has found issues relating to the rules and processes of Parliament, not his Excellency," said Munyai amid heckling from the opposition benches.

Didiza, then refused to take further points of orders, restating that she will not suspend the order of sequence of the proceedings.

"Today is about questions to the President and that is where we end," she said and urged those unhappy with her ruling to follow the necessary procedures.

She issued a stern warning of eviction to MK Party MP Visvin Reddy, who continued to speak without being recognised: "You protect a constitutional delinquent," Reddy said.

"You can't waste the time of this House," said Didiza.

"I have made a ruling. As the Speaker of this House I have a duty to make sure this runs smooth."

COLLABORATION

Private hospitals urged to help fix SA's healthcare crisis

SIPHESIHLE BUTHELEZI
siphesihle.buthelezi@inl.co.za

THE private healthcare sector cannot afford to isolate itself from the growing crisis in public healthcare, Busamed Gateway Hospital CEO Thabiso Buku said yesterday.

Buku called for stronger collaboration between private hospitals and the state as pressure mounts on the country's healthcare system ahead of National Health Insurance (NHI) reforms.

Speaking during a joint media briefing hosted by the South African Medical Association (SAMA) and Busamed ahead of the upcoming SAMA Health Summit, Buku said healthcare providers had a responsibility that extended beyond profits and private patients.

"We can't sit back and say we are only looking after less than 10 million of the population," Buku said.

"Our challenge is to provide healthcare to the people of this country broadly and generally."

Buku said the country continued to face "huge inequality" in healthcare provision between the private and public sectors, with millions depending on an underfunded and overstretched state healthcare system.

"We have a large populace in our country that is served through the public sector, which has its own challenges, underfunded, burdened and facing inefficiencies," he said.

"But critically, there are many people who are unable to access quality healthcare because of the pressure the public sector has to deal with."

He said private healthcare groups needed to actively pursue partnerships with the public sector to expand access to healthcare services and improve patient outcomes.

"As the private sector, we don't sit back," Buku said.

"We need to look at how we collaborate and partner with the public sector because our challenge is to provide healthcare to the people of this country."

Buku said Busamed, one of the country's younger private hospital groups had embraced innovation, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and data-driven healthcare systems as part of efforts to improve efficiency and clinical care.

"The advantage of coming in later is that we can adopt innovation and technology much quicker than companies with legacy systems," he said.

He explained that technology and data analytics increasingly informed decisions around clinical outcomes, infrastructure investment and staffing.

"We are driven by data to give us a more scientific approach in arriving at better outcomes, whether it is for the patient or for the business," he said.

However, Buku stressed that healthcare innovation meant little if it failed to improve lives at community level.

"Whatever we do, if it doesn't make a difference to the community, it doesn't mean anything. The focus must always remain on the patient and the community."

His remarks formed part of a broader conversation about the future of healthcare in the country as the debate about the implementation of NHI continues. SAMA chairperson Dr Mvuyisi Mzukwa warned that the healthcare system remained under severe strain and was not ready for NHI implementation in its current state.

"Healthcare professionals across the country are working under extreme and difficult conditions to deliver care to millions of South Africans," Mzukwa said.

He pointed to persistent shortages of healthcare workers, deteriorating infrastructure, equipment shortages and operational inefficiencies, particularly in rural and under-served communities.

Mzukwa said uncertainty surrounding NHI implementation continued to create anxiety across the healthcare sector.

"Questions remain around implementation, funding, governance, the future role of the private sector, human resource capacity and the preparedness of the public healthcare system," he said.

He added that while healthcare reform was necessary, it needed to be approached "transparently, inclusively and pragmatically."

SAMA vice-chairperson Dr Zanele Bikitsha said public healthcare reform could not focus only on funding models while ignoring the condition of the healthcare system itself.

INSIGHTS

Lamola unpacks SA-US relationship, impact of Middle East conflict

THEOLIN TEMBO
theolin.tembo@inl.co.za

MINISTER of International Relations and Cooperation, Ronald Lamola, has said that the United States of America (US) does not have the power to exclude South Africa from the G20 Summit in December, given that it is a founding member.

Lamola was interviewed while in New Delhi, India, for the Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations, which is being hosted under India's BRICS Chairship on 14 and 15 May 2026.

The meeting has been convened under the theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability (BRICS)".

When asked how the country is handling its relationship with the President of the US President Donald Trump, the minister admitted that it has been "an

unpredictable environment."

"We deal with it as it comes, and as it goes. We have, up to so far, maintained our communication with the White House, and the various facets of the American society, because the American society is multilayered - Congress, ThinkTanks, academia, business sector, and so forth," Lamola said.

"We look at it as a multifaceted society that we need to continue to work with, and strengthen the relations of people-to-people."

He added that the ministry was surprised that the highest number of tourists to South Africa last year came from the US.

"It shows that the strengthening of people-to-people relations is also a very key component of our engagement with the US and also with the cities."

On the matter of the G20 Summit and the uncertainty surrounding South Africa's attendance, Lamola said that it is not

Trump's place to dictate whether South Africa can or cannot attend.

"He can't say that we can no longer be in the G20, because we are a founding member of the G20, and no one member of the G20 can decide that this country can no longer be a member of the G20."

"What he has done is not to invite South Africa to the G20 summit that will be hosted by the US, but we are a member of the G20. So, we really don't know what that summit will be, which does not have one of its founding members."

"It is important that the members of the G20 will have to discuss and characterise what that is... I don't know whether you can characterise it as a G20 if South Africa is not there."

Lamola clarified that it is a different situation compared to last year, given that the US was invited, but had chosen not to attend.

He said that other countries of the

G20, such as Brazil and Russia, are raising concerns about South Africa's exclusion.

When asked if the development of a BRICS currency was still being discussed, Lamola said: "The talks have been more on the use of local currencies on trade. It is a process that is still ongoing, and we will want to see that being developed, because those who are financial experts say it is cheaper to trade in local currency... So it's indeed something that BRICS has to continue to develop."

It was also reported in the media that Iranian authorities have increasingly singled out the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and have warned of stronger strikes against the country if the United States and Israel resume their attacks.

Speaking of how the tension between the two BRICS countries has impacted proceedings, Lamola said: "There are member states of BRICS who are directly impacted by the conflict, as you are aware,

the UAE and Iran, but we do think, and see, this as an opportune platform for us to foster that cooperation, to foster that dialogue for peaceful engagement, even on this conflict that affects directly our members."

"We see it as a huge platform of interactions, of exchange of ideas, and its resolution anchored on the UN Charter."

Speaking of the SA-India partnership, Lamola said that India is a big global player in terms of technology and agriculture, and it is among South Africa's biggest trading partners.

"They account for almost a fourth or fifth of our trade. We are India's number one trader in Africa, so it's a relationship of goodwill. The relationship between South Africa and India has grown from strength to strength, with South Africa being one of those countries where there's a huge Indian diaspora in the world," Lamola said.



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GIVE ME SIX HOURS TO CHOP DOWN A TREE AND I WILL SPEND THE FIRST FOUR SHARPENING THE AXE. | ABRAHAM LINCOLN