



1 September 2016

Press statement: Minister Pravin Gordhan Vs The Hawks: Let the common good prevail

Diakonia Council of Churches joins millions of concerned South Africans in voicing its concern over the turmoil caused by the public spat between the Hawks and Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan.

We believe that this can only impact negatively on the national economy which was on the path to recovery. We know for sure that the economy recently escaped a ratings downgrade to junk status chiefly due to the Minister's hard work. This is the time when we are all supposed to rally behind the Minister in putting our economy back on the right path.

This spat has left many wondering who will stand to benefit from it. It makes us wonder if it is not intended to intimidate and humiliate the person of Minister Gordhan. We know him as a person of integrity, one of the very few public officials who have the common good at heart.

While we believe that nobody is above the law, we however believe that what is happening amounts to unjustified persecution of the Minister.

In February, the Hawks sent out a litany of questions to the Minister which he duly answered. In May, the Hawks said they were not investigating the Minister over the alleged 'rogue unit' at SARS. We now question if the August 22 somersault of asking the Minister to attend at the Hawks' offices to make a warning statement is motivated by a genuine desire to achieve justice, or by some other clandestine motive.

Legal experts have weighed in on the impasse insisting that the accusations against the Minister have no basis in law. Economists have warned that the most certain casualty of this spat will only be the economy. South Africa can ill afford such unwarranted disturbance of the economy. Already the markets are responding negatively to this spat.

We therefore call on President Jacob Zuma as the captain of the ship to show decisive leadership and find a way to engage the Hawks in order to bring this saga to an end. It is the economy and the future of the country that are at stake.

Revd Ian Booth,
Chairperson