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African National Congress

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AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS PRESS RELEASE

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A RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY CERTAIN LOCAL MEDIA ORGANISATIONS AGAINST THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS ANC(SA)

In view of the unfolding derogatory reports carried by some local mass media organisations, the ANC mission in Zambia sincerely wishes to express our movement's complete dismay and disbelief that these newspapers, particularly the TIMES of ZAMBIA could resort into such perpetual malicious campaign when reporting on ANC.

I want to disclose that the movement has made a careful and thorough study of all the stories published by the Times of Zambia in an attempt to establish their implication. As a result we have realised that the campaign effected by TIMES contains ingredients of malice which according to the law of the press can put the credibility of the paper at stake.

The movement feel so much bitter over the repeatedly and unfaithful innuendos carried by Times of Zambia. Our immediate response was prompted by the latest in series of issues published by the paper dated 10-12-91 in which the ANC featured in Times opinion column, this time linked to the unfortunate accident in which Vice-President Mr. Levy Mwanawasa sustained serious injuries.

The linkage of this accident and that of 1984 in Tanzania in which the former Prime Minister Mr. Edward Sokoine was killed, is an outrageous development.

We therefore regard the opinion column remarks as the highest degree of defamation and worst distortion of press freedom. If the comment was not derogatory, why did the paper level such accusations against the ANC in previous issues? We also cannot understand the intentions behind all these concerted allegations.

These stories are serious seditious and could only provoke unnecessary hatred between Zambian people and our people. I particularly want to clear the sky of such outrageous and inflammatory allegations on the issue of a "special army" which the paper suggest ANC has kind of knowledge.

I hereby want to put it pretty clear that the movement can never be involved in any activity that could jeopardise its relations with the people of this country. The ANC warehouse in Lusaka in which Mr. KATUTA SILIYASI died in an unfortunate circumstances, was not used for any purpose other than keeping our property.

I therefore want to put it quite clear that the armed security personnel was deployed in the warehouse to protect our property after we had previously lost a substantive amount of material including a number of computers. This took place in different offices when thieves broke into at night. Some of them were said to had been heavily armed.

The paper further made a serious innuendo over the issue of AK47's which as it says are strictly only for the army. In the same issue Times poses another question as to the services of ZCCM being extended to the ANC. It must be pretty clear to anyone puzzled by this that the movement had never asked for ZCCM services. As some of these issues seem to be causing puzzlement to Times especially on the aspect of protection of our warehouse the ANC still require security for its property.

After an agreement was reached this year between the government of Zambia and the African National Congress on August 1 1991, two security men were to maintain a round the clock security patrol around the warehouse, therefore we did not dictate who should guard the warehouse as the paper asked the question of 'since when we had required services of ZCCM.

The movement construe the remark about AK47's and the Mulungushi Investment's secretly trained army as yet another attempt to destroy the image of the African National Congress not only in Zambia but elsewhere.

More strikingly is the fact that the paper did not bother even to come to us and get the substantial information over these issues. It only jumped into the jotter and wrote these stories which they have neither source or balanced

As it is known that the bulk of our cadres had been repatriated and the few who did not repatriate were either attending academic studies or fulfilling other tasks. It is therefore flabbergasting to learn suggestions that the warehouse could have probably been utilised for another purpose.

The paper remarked that the latter should be a starting point into an issue that should not be taken lightly, is a serious label which cast some doubts on how much the editor understand the repercussions of the label suit.

This trend of events as portrayed by the newspaper could only be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to stir up anti-ANC hysteria from the people of Zambia. Perhaps it could be that the paper thought all these accusations were constituting press freedom, failing to note that the freedom does not mean defaming others.

The ANC wonders if the editor-in-chief of the paper had ever tried to look into the seriousness of these allegations and critically evaluate every aspect of possible malice. If none of these had been considered, it will simply mean the editor do not properly understand the professional ethics of journalism.

Concerning other previous issues, it should be understood that it is our responsibility to do all we can to facilitate warm relations between the people of Zambia and members of our movement. As much as the ANC would do everything it can, however it would be difficult to assure those women married to our cadres any kind of solution to their problems. This is due to the fact that those families who develop problems should try to resolve them first and all what the ANC can do is to assist where it is necessary and possible.

Whilst the ANC can intervene in certain cases, it cannot absolutely handle every problem pertaining marriages.

On the issue of houses and rentals allegedly having been not paid by cadres who left for home, the Weekly Post had missed factual points. It is the responsibility of the ANC to meet all payment costs of its houses not the general membership as the Weekly Post dated 08-14 /11 /91 alleges.

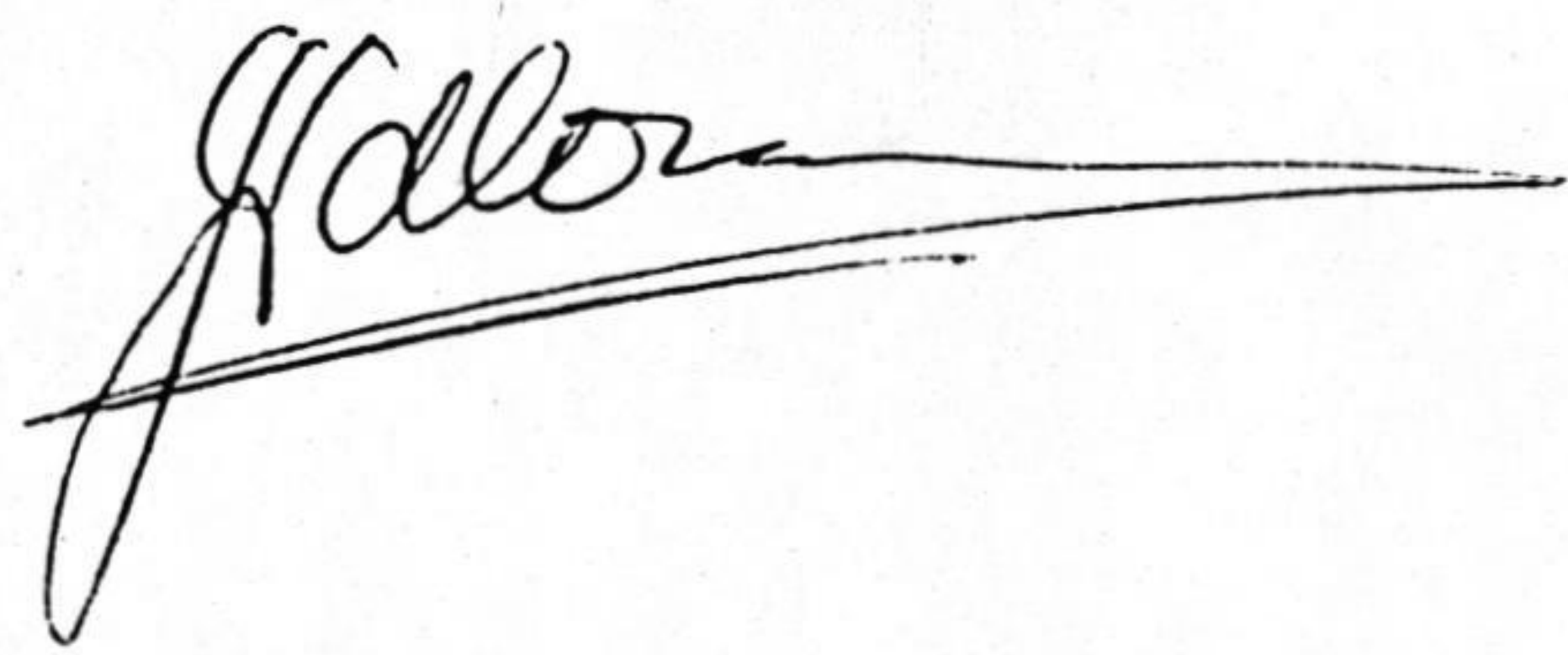
It is absolutely untrue that we had not paid rents. The crux of the matter is that certain measures had to be taken since we started the process of repatriation which led to some delays in paying rents, but that is still being solved.

It cannot be the movement's responsibility to bear the brunt of illicit car dealings between the locals and some of its members. Those who are interested are cautioned not to indulge in such backdoor purchasing of any of our property instead they should come through right channels.

For the Weekly Post newspaper I urge the editor to be accurate and avoid rumours as well as disinformation when reporting. The ANC door is open for any reporter to come and verify any issue.

At this juncture I would like to pass a word of caution to the mass media organisations to desist from this unprofessional way of reporting. I also want to urge other print and electronic media not to follow this trend.

This statement is issued by the Chief Representative of the African National Congress ANC(SA), JAPHET M. NDLOVU, in Lusaka.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Ndlovu', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.