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WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA LOOK LIKE IF LEADERS REFUSE TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

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During the years of President Jacob Zuma's leadership, the country experienced many great governance challenges which played out in the courts and the public domain. The Public Protector at the time -- Ms. Thuli Madonsela -- appeared to be winning the battle against corruption, notwithstanding the great odds that she was facing. One may also recall how little support was found in the National Prosecuting Authority, with Adv. Shaun Abrahams at its helm and the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) with very little to offer in the battle so desperately needed to beat this scourge which both then and today erodes the moral fibre of our society, including the economic engine that is expected to sustain the country.

"Leaders inspire accountability through their ability to accept responsibility before they place blame."

Courtney Lynch

Founding Partner Lead Star, N.Y. Times Bestselling Author

With President Zuma being forced to step down, there was renewed hope found in President Cyril Ramaphosa's appointment; his "new dawn" promises thrilled both the worn-out citizens, including the business sector and many investors. It appeared that the worst of times was in the rear-view mirror, and for a period of time conditions in South Africa seemed to improve. However, our optimism appears to have been short-lived with many promises to hold people accountable for their actions being broken or simply ignored.

Sadly, with President Ramaphosa now in the position for almost three years, many South Africans believe that the conditions in South Africa have in fact deteriorated. Questions are being asked about the internal leadership battles within the ruling party, deep rooted and widespread corruption particularly in the public sector, poor policy decision making by government, abysmal governance and poor economic growth.

Given the extent of SA's dire circumstances, where the global rating agencies have downgraded the country's sovereign rating well into "junk status" -- and the IMF themselves increasingly more concerned about South Africa's growing debt ratios to our GDP -- it is hardly surprising that many anxious citizens and investors have turned their attention and focus to other destinations that offer better conditions which are more conducive to safer living and diverse working and investment opportunities. Whilst there are countless references to the shocking crime and declining business statistics that continue to plague South Africa, which is referenced by many market commentators

including the Auditor-General each year, surely the simple truth must be exposed where the relevant people are held to account?

After billions of Rands have been wasted on dysfunctional state-owned companies in South Africa, how is it possible that the respective leaders – including their boards of directors – have not yet been brought to book? When their actions, both individually and or collectively, have proven to be reckless, why have these people not been prosecuted and declared delinquent?

In almost every case, organisations without a governance framework, for example SAA, SABC, Eskom, Denel, SA Post Office, Transnet and PRASA, have any consistent form of determining who exactly is to be held accountable when matters go astray. This is very convenient and whilst the status quo continues, three dead certain consequences are inevitable:

- boards of directors, including their executive management will continue getting away with poor leadership, unacceptable business behaviour and sub-standard organisational performance;
- SA taxpayers, who are already a dwindling base of tax revenue, will be expected to continue to subsidise the malaise of poor leadership within the government business structures, and
- failed governance will inevitably lead to dysfunction which can take on many forms, including the ultimate 'death' of an organisation.

It is without any doubt that South Africa's future survival and sustainably depends upon exemplary leadership, ethical people, robust governance frameworks and a stakeholder community that demands accountability of people in leadership positions or those charged with governance.

Anything short of this will not end well!

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