PRESS STATEMENT
UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
Issued on behalf of the General Synod and the General Synod Executive
4 October 2026 | Maseru, Lesotho

URCSA calls on regional governments and its leaders to confront corruption, end violence and uphold the dignity of every person

The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), following its ninth General Synod in Maseru, calls on the people of South Africa, Namibia and Lesotho, their leaders and government, political parties, business leaders, faith communities and civil society to confront corruption, violence and exclusion with urgency and integrity.

Our countries' future depends on our willingness to protect human life, uphold justice and ensure that public institutions serve the people. No society can flourish while communities live in fear, women and children are killed, public resources are stolen and people facing poverty are denied meaningful opportunities.

As a Church, we speak from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Confession of Belhar, whose commitments to unity, reconciliation and justice call us to stand alongside people who suffer injustice. We address all our people, across religious, political and cultural differences, in the conviction that human dignity and the common good are our shared responsibility.

Corruption is a betrayal of the people

URCSA condemns corruption in government, business and all institutions, including religious institutions. Corruption diverts resources from healthcare, education, housing, infrastructure and employment. It deepens poverty, undermines public trust and allows private interests to prevail over the needs of communities.

We call on political and business leaders to end the protection of wrongdoing through patronage, party loyalty or financial influence. Those entrusted with public resources must account for their conduct. Allegations must be investigated independently, whistle-blowers protected, and those responsible held accountable through fair and effective legal processes. Stolen resources must be recovered wherever possible.

Our people deserves ethical leadership whose integrity is visible in decisions, appointments, expenditure and service delivery. The Church accepts that this demand applies equally to its own leadership and stewardship.

End the killing of women and children and the violence devastating our communities

URCSA condemns unequivocally mass killings, murder, gender-based violence, femicide, rape, child abuse and the killing of women and children. Every life lost represents a person whose dignity, relationships and future cannot be reduced to a statistic.

We reject the normalisation of violence in homes, communities and public life. No grievance, political cause, cultural practice or religious belief justifies murder or abuse. Women and children must be able to live safely in their homes, schools, places of worship and communities.

We call for effective prevention, timely protection, proper investigation of cases, survivor-centred services and accountability for perpetrators. Police and justice institutions must be equipped to fulfil their responsibilities with competence, care and integrity. Attacks on police officers and other people serving communities must be condemned, investigated and effectively dealt with.

Men and boys have a particular responsibility to challenge misogyny, coercion and the attitudes that sustain violence. Religious leaders must never use spiritual authority to silence survivors or pressure them to remain in danger, while forgiveness should not be invoked to obstruct justice.

Stand with Palestinians and protect civilians everywhere

URCSA expresses profound concern for the plight of Palestinians, particularly civilians in Gaza, and stands in solidarity with people enduring displacement, deprivation, the destruction of their communities and the loss of loved ones.

We condemn mass killings and attacks on civilians, including the killing of women and children. We reject collective punishment, forced displacement and the deprivation of food, water, healthcare and humanitarian assistance. Palestinian lives, dignity, freedom and aspirations must be recognised fully.

We call for an immediate end to violence, the protection of civilians, unimpeded humanitarian access, the release of hostages and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. A just and lasting peace must address Palestinian rights and self-determination, alongside the rights and security of Israelis. Justice cannot be achieved by making the lives of one people expendable.

We call on Southern Africa's leaders and the international community to pursue consistent diplomatic and humanitarian action that protects life and advances a just peace. URCSA rejects antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism. Jewish and Muslim communities must be able to live and worship without fear. Criticism of a government must never become hatred towards a people or religion. Equally, opposition to religious hatred must never be used to silence legitimate advocacy for Palestinian rights.

Reject racism, xenophobia and Afrophobia

Our diversity must be a source of shared strength. URCSA rejects racism, tribalism, xenophobia and Afrophobia, including the targeting of fellow Africans because of nationality, language or perceived foreignness.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers must not be blamed for unemployment, crime or failures of governance. Public debate about migration must be truthful, humane and grounded in evidence while all leaders have a responsibility to prevent inflammatory rhetoric, incitement and scapegoating.
We call on communities to protect those facing intimidation and on authorities to respond effectively to discriminatory violence. Human dignity belongs to every person.

Make economic justice a national priority
Unemployment, inequality and poverty demand sustained cooperation across government, business, labour, educational institutions and communities. Young people need credible pathways into education, skills development and dignified work. Families need reliable services, food security and safe living conditions.

We call for economic decisions that place human well-being, fair opportunity and environmental responsibility at their centre. The burdens of economic hardship must not fall continually on those with the least power and resources.

A shared responsibility for Southern Africa's future
URCSA calls on leaders to act with integrity, on institutions to fulfil their responsibilities and on every community to resist hatred and violence. Faith communities must contribute through practical care, honest public witness and accountability within their own structures. We must ensure that women, children, queer people, migrants and all who face exclusion encounter dignity and protection in its own life.

Our appeal is for every country in Southern Africa to be a home in which public office is a trust, differences are addressed without violence, and every person can live with safety, dignity and hope.

Reconciliation requires truth and justice. Peace requires the protection of human life. Hope requires action.

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