



21 August 2017

Hon Mr. Masango MP  
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation  
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Dear Mr. Masango

**REQUEST FOR AN URGENT COMMITTEE MEETING: MINISTER NKOANA-MASHABANE TO BE SUMMONED**

I hereby request that an urgent meeting be held and that the DIRCO Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane be summoned to Parliament to provide an update on the decision to grant diplomatic immunity to Grace Mugabe, as well as the circumstances which justified this decision.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 it was reported that Grace Mugabe was in South Africa to seek medical attention for an ankle injury, as can be seen in an article attached hereto as Annexure "A". It is therefore clear that this was Grace Mugabe's the reason for her visit to South Africa. However, on 14 August it came to light that Grace Mugabe allegedly assaulted a South African Citizen, Ms. Gabrielle Engels on Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of August. It is alleged that Grace Mugabe had beaten 20-year old Ms. Engels with and extension cord, as set out in Annexure "B". Furthermore, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August Dirco spokesperson, Clayson Monyela said that Ms Mugabe would not be receiving diplomatic immunity and he was quoted saying: *"Firstly, for it to apply, she needs to be here on official business. It won't apply if she's here on holiday of for something else."* He further stated: *"Secondly, as a First Lady, she's not part of government or a government official. It doesn't apply just because she's the wife of a President"*, as reflected in Annexure "C" attached hereto.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August the South African Police Service released a statement, attached hereto as Annexure "D", wherein they confirmed that on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, the 20 year old woman registered a case of assault with the intent to do grievous bodily harm and requested that SAPS be allowed to conduct a thorough investigation and to follow due process. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August

the Ministry of Police released an update on the matter of the alleged assault, attached hereto as Annexure “E”. In this statement it was revealed that *“The suspect (Grace Mugabe) lawyers and her government representatives made verbal representations to SAPS investigators that the suspect wished to invoke diplomatic immunity cover and thus she elected to change her mind about the warning statement”*. It is further stated that *“Subsequently, the Government of Zimbabwe has dispatched a diplomatic note verbale to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation invoking said Diplomatic Immunity cover.”* It is clear from this statement that Grace Mugabe only applied for diplomatic immunity after assault allegations had been made against her. The statement also suddenly makes mention of her itinerary during her stay in South Africa, after it was clear that she came to South Africa to seek medical treatment. It is noteworthy that at this stage Grace Mugabe’s name had not been published in a Government Gazette and that she was not granted diplomatic immunity prior to the alleged assault.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August it was reported that Police Minister, Fikile Mbalula said that police have put out a “red alert” at South African borders for Zimbabwean first lady Grace Mugabe, in case she attempted to leave the country as seen in a news article attached hereto as Annexure “F”. The Police Minister stated: *“We, in terms of South African Police, already put tabs in the borders in relation to her leaving the county, so there is no question about that,”* he further states *“So tabs have been put, a red alert has been put, so she is not somebody who has been running away”*.

Finally, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 the Department of International Relations and Cooperation published a Minister’s Minute in the Government Gazette (attached hereto as Annexure “G”) wherein Grace Mugabe is given Diplomatic Immunity in terms of section 7(2) *Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act*. Subsequently, a statement was released by DIRCO, attached hereto as Annexure “H”, setting out reasons for the decision made by the Minister. We are of the belief that these reasons are highly irregular, given the fact that Grace Mugabe had allegedly assaulted a South African citizen prior to her being granted diplomatic immunity.

We cannot allow South Africa to be seen as a playground for international criminals, or allow foreign national to assault South African citizens, without having consequences for their actions. The rights of South Africans should not be trampled on in order to maintain inter-governmental relations between countries.

Due to the circumstances under which Diplomatic Immunity was granted the situation is very concerning and should be treated as a matter of utmost importance, especially when the rights of South Africans are compromised in order to grant persons Diplomatic Immunity. We trust that the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation will also view this matter in a serious light and will proceed to address our request with the urgency it warrants.

Yours sincerely

**Stevens Mokgalapa MP**

DA Shadow Minister of International Relations and Cooperation