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### **President's failure to protect public resources has damaged government's credibility**

The Public Protector's findings on Nkandla have severely damaged the credibility of the government and key custodians of public resources. Even though Advocate Thuli Madonsela's report exonerates President Jacob Zuma from having deliberately misled Parliament regarding the upgrade to his private residence, it reveals damning evidence of the disregard for public money by the President and key government departments.

"The massive increase in the costs of the upgrade from R27-million to in excess of R200-million, coupled with the President's failure to take steps to prevent or even query clearly escalating costs reveal that he placed personal and family interests above those of the public," said Corruption Watch executive director David Lewis.

Corruption Watch supports Madonsela's call for President Zuma to repay taxpayers' money used for the upgrade of his private residence that she has found to be unrelated to any cognisable security consideration. Public officials who authorised the massive spend and flouted procurement laws should be prosecuted, publicly named and removed from public office.

Corruption Watch views President Zuma's failure to fully co-operate with the office of the Public Protector as an attack on the body constitutionally mandated to investigate improper conduct in state affairs, report on such conduct, and take remedial action.

Lewis commented: "This lack of regard by no less than the President for the office of the Public Protector has opened the door for illegitimate attacks and intimidation by supporters of the President. This threatens to undermine a key corruption-fighting institution tasked with upholding transparency and accountability in government. We are however confident that the South African public will have seen through this self-serving and destructive attack on accountability."

Lewis added: "The public standing and reputation of key institutions are damaged by persistent acts of grand corruption. In this instance all of those institutions drawn into the Nkandla cover up will suffer. Regrettably this includes the offices of each of the cabinet ministers of the entire security cluster. This erosion of trust in key public offices is the hidden and most devastating cost of corruption."

**For more information:**

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