



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**DATE:** 28 January 2014

**RE: CHURCH LEADER URGES ACTION ON NEW 'GENDER BILL' THREAT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Cape Town church leader and FOR SA spokesperson, Andrew Selley, is calling on Christian leaders in South Africa to make a united stand to stop the interference of government in the Church, and to protect the autonomy of freedom of belief and freedom of speech, which are seriously threatened with the proposed Government Bill on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality.

"While we commend this bill and are unequivocally pro women and their equality in the market place and all areas of society, there is no exception in the Bill to address the freedom of individuals and religious communities," says Selley.

"If passed, this new law could put church leaders in jail for up to five years for teaching Scriptures like Ephesians 5:23, or teaching that the husband is the head of the family", says Selley.

"This Bill is yet again an attempt at creating a very dangerous precedent for government's interference and control of religious institutions, as well as of family life in South Africa," he added.

"Whatever your theological position, believers of all walks of life and differing convictions will be deprived of their freedom of association speech and belief."

"If passed the Bill will allow the State to interfere in the internal workings of religious institutions and eventually dictate how religious institutions interpret and teach portions of Scripture, especially with regards to the governance of religious institutions and the functioning of the family unit," says Selley.

In a letter to Christian leaders Selley points out that Parliament has invited the public to email comments on the Bill for consideration in public hearings on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 January. "We not only have the opportunity to take note of this Bill, but to propose recommendations for the Bill to be changed from its current form. FOR SA will be there".

Selley says, "Our hope is that by standing together we can propose an amendment to the Bill where government will acknowledge the autonomy of the Church and uphold freedom of religious expression, allowing each church to believe, teach, and govern itself without breaking the law or fear of imprisonment."

Comments or recommendations for the amendment of the Bill can be sent to [speakup.za@gmail.com](mailto:speakup.za@gmail.com).

**ENDS**

Issued on behalf of FOR SA By Pauline Sayers

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**Notes to Editors:**

- FOR SA is a Christian organisation founded in 2013. It is a newly formed non-profit non-government organization currently being registered and formalized by a group of concerned Christians in Cape Town. FOR SA act to protect the autonomy of the Church in South Africa and are a voice for freedom of religious expression to government. The organizations mission is to protect the free expression of all religious groups in South Africa.
- FOR SA's vision is to rally support amongst Christian leaders, religious leaders, as well as concerned members of the public, to create a loud enough voice to be heard and to make a positive impact at government level.
- FOR SA is an acronym for Freedom of Religion South Africa.