

EDITORS/REPORTERS

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**MEDIA STATEMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE LAUNCH OF THE SECTION 22
COMMITTEE FOR THE CHRISTIAN SECTOR**

A significant milestone for the Christian faith community was witnessed on 02 October 2025 when members of a Section 22 committee were announced at Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, officially conferring an immense responsibility into their hands.

The handover that happened on this day symbolized a collective commitment to fostering integrity, respect, and accountability within religious communities, thereby paving the way for a more ethical and responsible future.

Pursuant to its mandate, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities established this committee in an effort to contribute to finding solutions that will significantly safeguard the spiritual and emotional well-being of congregants. Additionally, the committee's establishment is also intended to reaffirm principles that promote and advance the respect for human dignity of all people, and to bring an end to instances of abuse that have been reported to the Commission and in the media.

The road travelled to this point has not been without challenges, notably from disinformation campaigns falsely claiming that the CRL Commission advocates for state regulation of religion. On the contrary, the issue of concern has been and continues to be about the conduct or behaviour of certain religious leaders, who place their church members in harm's way. The Commission firmly asserts that freedom of religion is sacrosanct and an inviolable constitutional right that must never be compromised by any individual.

In 2015 and 2016, the CRL Rights Commission conducted an investigation into the "Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of the People's Belief Systems." This inquiry unveiled a series of appalling incidents that shocked the nation and ignited widespread outrage within communities. Among the disturbing occurrences were individuals being sprayed with insecticide (Doom), made to ingest grass, and consumed petrol, as well as others seen chewing on snakes. Alarming, there were also serious allegations of sexual assault against young girls perpetrated by certain religious leaders, alongside harrowing cases where individuals were made to lie down and vehicles driven on them.

The findings of this investigation were subsequently presented to the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), which held discussions with a diverse array of religious leaders, resulting in a set of significant recommendations in 2018. The Committee noted the reported abuses in the religious sector and thus recommends the following:

- A charter for self-regulation
- Code of conduct for the sector, which should be recognised by legislation.

In response to these recommendations from the CoGTA Portfolio Committee regarding Self-regulation in the Christian sector, the Commission invoked Section 22 of the CRL Rights Commission Act to establish a Section 22 Committee, which has thus far been constituted and comprises Christian religious leaders from various umbrella organisations, including, inter alia, mainline, independent, charismatic, and pentecostal churches.

Among its members is: Council of African Independent Churches (CAIC), Ebuhleni Nazareth Baptist Church, Gauteng Nazareth Baptist Church, Ginyezinye Nazareth Baptist Church, Moral Regeneration Movement, Rhema Bible Church, South African Council of Churches, St Engenas Zion Christian Church, The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, The Great Commission, Thembezinhle Nazareth Baptist Church, Zion Christian Church

For that reason, its mandate is to facilitate broad consultations and conduct dialogues within twelve months that would result in mechanisms and strategies to identify and

address challenges in the sector, halt the harmful practices of some religious leaders within their congregations exhibited by certain religious leaders, thereby ensuring an effective implementation of the Portfolio Committee's recommendations regarding self-regulation of the Christian sector.

The CRL Rights Commissioners will not be part of this committee, except for the staff members who will provide administrative support.

For any further enquiries, contact

Mpiyakhe Mkholo - 082 527 3859 or Mpiyakhem@crlcommission.org.za;

Beverley Mukhavhuli – 066 282 6067 or BeverleyM@crlcommission.org.za

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