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25 June 2008
Dr. Zweli Mkhize and Mr. Gwede Mantashe
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URGENT: BREACH OF AGREEMENT BY ANC WITH CIVIL SOCIETY RE: PEGGY NKONYENI

On 21 May 2008 TAC met with the ANC's leadership in KwaZulu-Natal including newly elected ANC provincial chairperson Dr. Zwele Mkhize as well as MEC for Health, Ms. Peggy Nkonyeni, who is now party treasurer for the province. At this discussion it was resolved that the Department of Health would convene a broad stakeholders meeting aimed at amicably resolving the dispute between the MEC and medical officers at Manguzi Hospital. MEC Nkonyeni undertook to convene this meeting within two weeks and that representatives from the Department, TAC, the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society and the Rural Doctors Association of South Africa would be invited. This meeting was never organised and attempts to follow-up with the MEC's office have been rebuffed. We consider this a breach of the agreement reached with the ANC at this meeting.

Instead of attempting to resolve the conflict, Ms Nkonyeni has acted to exacerbate it. We bring to your attention the following:

- Ms Nkonyeni has made further spurious accusations against Dr Blaylock.
- Her office has made public elements of Dr Blaylock's personal medical history in an attempt to discredit him. We believe this is in breach of the National Health Act and unethical.
- At the instigation of Ms Nkonyeni, the Kwazulu Natal Provincial Treasury has appointed Ubunye Consortium, a private company, to examine the private records of medical patients who went through the Kwazulu-Natal mother-to-child transmission prevention programme. The company has obtained the original medical records of patients. This too is unethical and in breach of the National Health Act. This is apparently to investigate whether any state funds were used to implement dual-therapy prevention of mother-to-child transmission before this became official policy.

We are deeply concerned about Ms Nkonyeni's continued misuse of public funds and resources to settle personal scores. We are furthermore appalled that the MEC's office would make reference to Dr. Blaylock's personal and private medical history in its attempt to discredit him. Ms. Nkonyeni's smear campaign against the doctors of Manguzi Hospital has undermined health care service delivery in the district, further exacerbated the province's already acute shortage of human resources for health, and jeopardised the future of Manguzi's exceptional prevention of mother to child transmission programme, potentially putting the lives of many women and infants at risk.

TAC is frustrated that the ANC has not abided by the decision taken at the above mentioned meeting. We call on the Premier of Kwazulu-Natal and the ANC to resolve this immediately.

We request an answer by no later than 18h00 26 June 2008 or we will have no option but to publicise this incident as well as consider our legal options.

Nonkosi Khumalo CHAIRPERSON

TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN