

TO: EDITORS/REPORTERS

15 DECEMBER 2025

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CRL RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE
APPLICANTS IN THE KWA SIZABANTU MATTER**

The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (“CRL Rights Commission”) and the Applicants in the Kwa Sizabantu matter issue this joint statement following constructive engagements held on 10 December 2025 at the offices of the CRL Rights Commission in Johannesburg.

In 2023, the CRL Rights Commission released its Report on the Investigation into the Alleged Violation of Religious Rights of Members of the KwaSizabantu Mission/Church. The Applicants subsequently brought review proceedings challenging the Report, culminating in a petition before the Supreme Court of Appeal.

In the interest of resolving the dispute amicably, promoting healing, and preventing further protracted litigation, both parties agreed to enter into constructive dialogue. These discussions took place in a respectful and candid atmosphere, allowing the Applicants to express serious concerns about aspects of the investigative process, the handling of testimony, and the way in which their lived experiences were reflected.

The CRL Rights Commission acknowledged the courage of the Applicants in coming forward and recognised that the emotional, psychological, and spiritual weight of their testimonies required a more survivor-centred and trauma-sensitive engagement. The CRL also affirmed its commitment to strengthening internal systems, communication practices, and its broader approach to investigations involving vulnerable individuals.

After extensive engagement, the following was agreed:

1. The CRL Rights Commission will, without prejudice, withdraw the published Kwa Sizabantu Report. This decision is made in recognition of the need for further dialogue, deeper engagement, and a more inclusive process that fully honours the experiences of those who came forward. The withdrawal is undertaken to promote fairness, transparency, and healing.

2. This step reinforces the CRL's constitutional mandate in terms of Section 5 of the CRL Rights Commission Act, which empowers the Commission to:

- promote respect for religious, cultural, and linguistic rights,
- investigate and resolve matters relating to such rights, and
- facilitate processes that promote healing, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

3. The Applicants will withdraw their appeal and waive any claim for damages arising from the review proceedings.

4. This agreement constitutes the settlement of the dispute and brings the litigation to a close.

5. Both parties have agreed to work toward a renewed, survivor-centred engagement framework, which may include:

- additional submissions,
- a Victim Dialogue Platform,
- trauma-informed consultations, and
- consideration of supplementary or renewed hearings within the Commission's statutory mandate.

Why This Decision Was Important

The CRL Rights Commission recognises that resolving disputes of this nature requires a careful balance between institutional responsibility, survivor dignity, and constitutional obligations. Withdrawing the Report is solely to promote fairness, transparency, healing, and allow the CRL Rights Commission to:

- ensure that no community or individual feels unheard or misunderstood.
- reaffirm its legitimacy and independence.
- prevent future misinterpretations of survivors' experiences.
- protect the integrity of its constitutional role.
- avoid polarisation within religious communities; and
- advance reconciliation and healing in a deeply sensitive matter.

This decision strengthens rather than weakens the CRL's commitment to justice and human dignity.

Closing

Both the CRL Rights Commission and the Applicants acknowledge the goodwill, mutual respect, and constructive engagement that enabled this outcome. The parties view this agreement as an important step toward healing, fairness, and the protection of rights within religious spaces.

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