

Let us all exercise personal agency in these challenging and unprecedented times

Dear Colleagues and Students

Epidemiologists advise us of the power of individual behaviour in the context of a pandemic like COVID-19 in slowing or expediting the transmission and spread of the virus. The war against the coronavirus (COVID-19) will be won or lost depending on how each one of us, yes, 58.78 million of us, exercise our agency in reducing the transmission and the spread of the virus.

Over the past few days I have been deeply dismayed by the callous disregard of the health, wellbeing and safety of members of our community displayed by some who should know better. People who had travelled through countries and regions where the virus infection is high have happily turned up on our doorstep. This, notwithstanding the President's declaration of COVID-19 as a national disaster and issuing stringent travel restrictions and other measures to curb the spread of the virus. This reckless, irresponsible and selfish behaviour on the part of those who know that they are at high risk of transmitting the virus beggars belief.

I therefore implore all of us to consider it our civic duty to conduct ourselves in a manner that does not place people around us at the risk of contracting the virus. If you have recently been to a country or region of the world that is considered high-risk, do the most decent, honourable and appropriate thing: self-quarantine yourself for at least 14 days and follow the prescribed protocol. This will reduce the potential risk of passing the virus on to the next person.

It is worth reminding ourselves that we are currently operating under the National State of Disaster which was declared by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 15 March 2020. On 18 March 2020, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, gazetted Regulations, which have the force of law, to give effect to the State of Disaster. We are bound by all the Regulations contained in the Government Gazette No. 43107 of 18 March 2020.

The question should be less about the State's capacity or capability to enforce the stringent measures that have been put in place to reduce the rate of transmission and spread of the virus, but more about whether or not we care enough about

the next person that we will voluntarily take appropriate steps to safeguard their wellbeing. Are we patriotic enough, and do we care enough about those around us, that we can voluntarily observe all the measures that have been put in place to reduce the spread of the coronavirus?

Concluding his declaration of the national state of disaster in regard to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), President Cyril Ramaphosa had this to say:

"This epidemic will pass, but it is up to us to determine how long it will last, how damaging it will be and how long it will take the economy and country to recover. If we act together, act now and act decisively, I am sure we will overcome it. This is the most definitive 'Thuma Mina' moment for the country. I have great trust that our people will respond positively to this call to common action."

We will get through this national and global health crisis. Working together, we can and will, defeat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).