

# Nkandla report to be 'buried'

**SPENDING: To be discussed behind closed doors**

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THE ANC in Parliament has been accused of defending President Jacob Zuma at the expense of transparency and executive accountability by referring the report on spending at his homestead, Nkandla, to a closed committee.

In a letter to Lindiwe Mazibuko, the Democratic Alliance's leader in Parliament, Speaker of the National Assembly Max Sisulu stated that on the advice of a legal opinion he had decided to refer the Nkandla report to the joint standing committee on intelligence, instead of the relevant committees of public works and defence and military veterans.

The joint standing committee on intelligence deals with highly sensitive national matters and all members are bound to confidentiality. This means the Nkandla report will be scrutinised behind closed doors and away from the public eye.

Opposition parties in Parliament were up in arms yesterday with

Mazibuko charging that the report "will essentially bury the information in the report".

She said the party would write to Sisulu to ask him to make public the legal opinion obtained and to reconsider his decision. Failing that, the process would be considered "fundamentally flawed and a back-door mechanism to hide the contents of this report from South Africans in order to protect President Jacob Zuma from being held accountable," said Mazibuko.

The DA wants the report to be referred to the relevant National Assembly committees of public works, defence and police.

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**Snip**

But ANC MP and chairman of the National Assembly committee on public works Manana Mabuza dismissed this, saying she was "happy" with Sisulu's decision as the Nkandla report was an "intelligence and security matter" and not a public works one. "This is a security issue and cannot be discussed by people who have not been vetted. This is not a public works matter. I am not accountable to the DA. I account to the ANC and we won't be discussing the issue," said Mabuza.

constitutional conundrum. "This is more about protecting Jacob Zuma than acting in the best interest of the country. This is an all-out cover-up," she said.

Parliament did not respond to queries. But Sisulu, in his letter, said his decision followed a request by Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi for "identification of an appropriate mechanism to consider the report owing to confidentiality of its contents, including that it deals with matters that pertain to a national key point".

Once Nxesi submits the report to the legislature, it will be referred to the committee who will advise the National Assembly which aspects of the report it was not empowered to deal with in terms of a statute which would be referred to the appropriate committees, said Sisulu.

Chairman of the joint standing committee on intelligence Cecil Burgess was not available to comment.

Congress of the People MP Juli Killian said the report warranted public scrutiny because it detailed the spending of public funds. Killian said there was insufficient reasons for the report to be referred to an intelligence committee because parliamentary rules provided for ordinary committees to request the Speaker for permission to discuss aspects of the report in camera.

Killian questioned Sisulu's fitness to hold office saying his decision suggested that he was "blindly loyal" to the ANC at the expense of the legislature. "The Speaker is opening himself up to harsh criticism, if this is how he is positioning himself as a barrier to executive authority. As head of Parliament his function is to ensure proper scrutiny (but) by having bowed down like this, he has placed himself and Parliament in a