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PROTECT PIEMPS

ANDRE de Ruyter is being forced to report his allegations of corruption at Eskom to the authorities. But his bodyguard has been taken away.

This after the man was very nearly killed when his coffee was laced with cyanide. Clearly his life is in danger.

By reporting the matter to the authorities, thereby triggering an official investigation, there will be even greater motivation by those who fear being fingered, to silence him.

We have seen this murderous reaction before during the digging that was being done by the Zondo Commission.

We have come to the point where exposing corruption in South Africa is a career-limiting call at best, and a life-threatening move at worst.

In fact, whistleblowers are now almost always treated with suspicious disdain by a chorus of powerful people determined to cast doubts over their character or question their motives.

We saw it when Patricia de Lille lifted the lid on the arms deal shenanigans.

And we saw it more recently with the R1-billion SA Tourism sponsorship of English Premier League football team Tottenham Hotspur.

In all these cases, there was something to answer for, but it started out with furious denials, counter-accusations and in the case of SA Tourism, even a forensic hunt for the actual whistleblower.

How does any of this inspire the principled few in government to do the right thing?

Security

Clearly they don't get protected. In fact, efforts may be made to weaken their security detail, which sends a very clear message to those in power, who are considering doing the right thing and spilling the beans.

Their jobs may be threatened, or their characters assassinated.

Instead of hearing De Ruyter and engaging him about the accusations – especially since he had already made them to the president's team before – he was instructed to vacate his position with immediate effect.

He is a resourceful man who can land on his financial feet, so the impact is somewhat mitigated.

But what about ordinary government workers who may be privy to corrupt activities by their superiors?

The majority of them would not be able to survive such an onslaught of incredulity.

Although we have laws that protect whistleblowers, why risk your job and your reputation by reporting suspicious graft, when the bar of believability is so high?

There is a clear presumption of ulterior motives by the accuser, instead of a presumption of guilt on the part of

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the suspect, which would be fair in a time when corruption is so rampant.

In other words, we should err on the side of believing them.

So what if it proves false.

Prosecuting a few false accusations would act as a very quick deterrent for deliberate malice, leaving only conscientious citizens eager to help extract the rot from our public service.

But many will quite simply stay silent, fearing for their lives, as assassinations like that of Gauteng Health Department whistleblower Babita Deokoran have become a very real possibility.

What irks me even more is

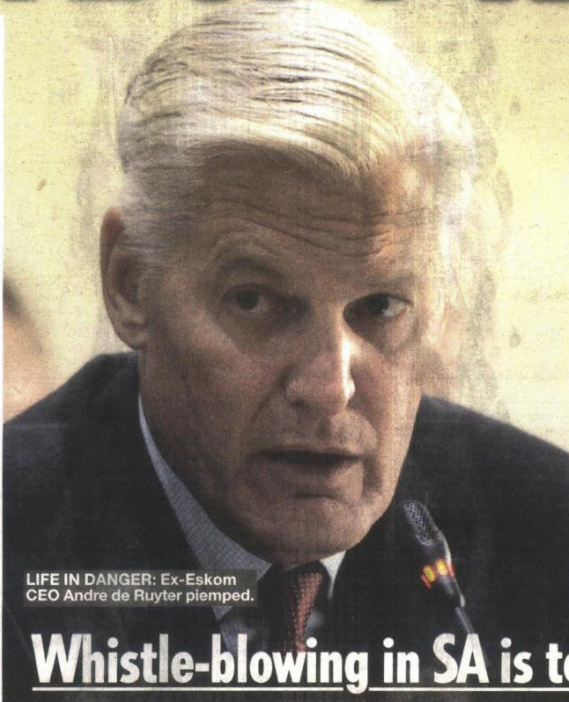
that the president is fully aware of this.

He himself mentioned how a certain Eskom manager's fearful family is forced to live with around-the-clock security, while the man himself goes to work protected by bodyguards and a bulletproof vest.

This is someone working for the betterment of our society, but who is forced to do it under threat of personal harm.

How are we tolerating this as a society? How is it a story that's being told, rather than a serious problem that's being eradicated?

Eskom is very clearly a crime scene that needs to be cordoned off and access controlled.



LIFE IN DANGER: Ex-Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter piemped.



LIFTED THE LID: Patricia de Lille on SA's arms deal.

Whistle-blowing in SA is too life-threatening

Everyone directly or indirectly associated with it, should be treated as a suspect.

While those independent investigations take place, let's act on the declaration of a State of Disaster.

The power utility is a national keypoint, so let's mobilise our military to protect it and every nut and bolt that goes into making it operational; just like they would do if a natural disaster had to hit.

Let our soldiers guard the facilities, transport the coal and defend the infrastructure with deadly force, while the civilians manage the switches and push the paper.

They do it as peacekeepers in other parts of the continent, so let them keep the peace at home, by keeping the lights on.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA

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