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President Zuma a key hurdle to fighting corruption

President Zuma's response to Parliament regarding the R200m upgrade is yet another demonstration of his disturbingly low commitment to fighting corruption in South Africa.

"While we don't think that history is made by individuals, President Zuma's personal conduct has clearly become a major obstacle to fighting corruption," said David Lewis, executive director of Corruption Watch.

"As long as President Zuma remains the president of the ANC and the leader of the government, the credibility of these vital institutions in fighting corruption will always be questionable," added Lewis.

The incessant disregard of the office of the public protector as a chapter nine institution is a flagrant attack on the country's democracy. It undermines the most basic principle of the Constitution by positioning highly placed individuals such as President Zuma above the law, allowing them to act with impunity to advance their own interests.

The key recommendation brought forward by the public protector's *Secure in Comfort* report was that President Zuma asks the National Treasury and the SAPS to determine a reasonable cost of the non-security features – including the kraal, chicken run, pool and visitors' centre – and that he pays back a reasonable percentage of the taxpayers' money.

On the contrary, President Zuma designated the minister of police to decide whether or not he is liable for non-security costs acquired during the upgrades. The public protector's report revealed that the same ministry improperly declared President

President Zuma's residence a National Key Point and subsequently failed to apply "better executive leadership".

The government's efforts to fighting corruption are likely to be futile and ineffective for as long as it continues to disregard the findings of a crucial anti-corruption body such as the public protector and to immunise powerful citizens from the provisions of the Constitution and the law.

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