

The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) celebrates and welcomes the High Court's decision to grant journalists access to former President Jacob Zuma's tax documents.

Judge Norman David order that the South African Revenue Services (SARS) hand over the tax returns of Zuma from 2010 to 2018 is a huge victory for the principles of transparency, access to information and accountability, which are so fundamental to democratic governance.

The Financial Mail and the investigative unit amaBhungane lodged this case two years ago, arguing that there was a clear public interest in disclosing these records under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Paia), considering the "serious and credible" evidence that Zuma wasn't tax-compliant during his years as president.

We believe that this is a triumph for South Africa's access to information laws, which are frequently ignored by politicians and state officials.

While not everyone may welcome the judgment, arguing that it will open the door for their taxes to be revealed publicly, this is not the case as it only applies in exceptional cases of strong public interest. In this case, there can be little doubt that good governance is well served by clarifying whether the former President was tax compliant.

In his book *The President's Keepers*, journalist Jacques Pauw wrote that Zuma had failed to submit tax records during his presidency and had earned (illegally) a second salary during the first few months in office. The public interest was evident and substantial.

Judge David has given parliament two years to remedy the defects in both the Tax Administration Act and Paia.

Access to information is critical for enabling citizens to exercise their voice, to effectively monitor and hold government to account. This judgement is a stepping stone to greater transparency and accountability and will contribute to good governance.

***About The Campaign For Freedom Of Expression

The Campaign For Free Expression (CFE) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and expanding the right to free expression for ALL, and enabling EVERYONE to exercise this right to the full, whether it by speaking out, by protesting, by revealing information, by blowing the whistle on wrong-doing, by arguing, debating, writing, painting, composing or just by shouting out an opinion.

More information about The Campaign For Freedom Of Expression is available at:

Website: <https://freeexpression.org.za/>

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