



STATEMENT: UBIC condemns multiple governance failings revealed in allegations against Minister Tolashe, calls for her resignation

1 May 2026

This Workers' Day, yet another cost of living shock looms, and poor and working communities are menaced by hunger and fuel shortages. But the person who is tasked with protecting them from dire economic hardship is instead busy fending off serious allegations of having enriched herself and her inner circle at the public's expense.

Minister of Social Development Nokuzola Sisisi Tolashe faces several allegations including regarding improper hiring and contracting practices within the Department of Social Development, a failure to declare two SUVs gifted to the ANCWL and subsequently registered in her children's names, a R3 million trip to New York by her department, and the use of public funds to pay a worker in her private residence, with part of their salary diverted to her daughter. At the time of preparing this statement, we have also become aware of leaked audio in which the Minister tells colleagues (with their apparent agreement) that she intends not to answer questions related to the allegations from the Social Development Portfolio Committee. This would be a blatant evasion of accountability.

Although official processes are still unfolding in response to the various reported scandals involving Minister Tolashe, the allegations are at best an unacceptable distraction from the urgent and serious work of ending poverty in our country—diverting time, resources and attention away from serving communities. For example, the Department of Social Development is supposed to be leading the policy on basic income support and the future of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, but there have been multiple delays in finalising the policy for public input.

Our members collectively advocate for the right of people in South Africa to an adequate and comprehensive social protection floor. In line with this mission, we are compelled to call on President Ramaphosa to urgently rectify the governance crisis within the Department of Social Development, stemming from Minister Tolashe's leadership.

Given the nature and magnitude of allegations facing her, it is not tenable or appropriate for Minister Tolashe to continue in the role of Minister of Social Development at this time. UBIC calls for her resignation, failing which we call on President Ramaphosa to remove her from the social



development portfolio, pending a thorough and transparent investigation into the allegations by the relevant authorities, and legal accountability where appropriate.

The allegations are particularly egregious given the dire poverty faced by those the Minister is mandated to serve. Amongst other things, they include violations of principles of fair remuneration and responsible stewardship of institutional assets. Such conduct is unacceptable in any public office, but *especially* so in the social development portfolio, which has a direct duty to the millions of people living in South Africa who cannot afford essentials.

Various institutions, including the ANC, the GNU, Cabinet, Parliament and DSD must thoroughly grapple with the failings which have led to this juncture—to yet another apparent abuse of public trust, office and finances.

Ultimately, the buck stops with the President. During his tenure as Deputy President, he failed to take action to address the Net1 scandal, in which millions of social grant beneficiaries were exploited and defrauded by DSD contractors. As DSD is now embroiled in another scandal, President Ramaphosa must show leadership by removing Minister Tolashe and ensuring due process and accountability.

Vulnerable communities, including seniors, persons with disabilities, children, caregivers and those facing hunger, deserve a Minister of Social Development that is wholly dedicated to upholding their rights and advancing their interests.

For media enquiries, please contact:

- Given Sigauqwe (IEJ) | 073 988 2870
- Antony Mafume (Black Sash) | 068 592 3801

UBIC is comprised of the following organisations:

- Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC)
- Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) – Africa UBI Observatory
- Black Sash
- Children’s Institute, UCT
- Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
- Environmental Monitoring Group
- Global Reformed Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE)
- Healthy Living Alliance (HEALA)
- Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ)



- National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU)
- #PayTheGrants
- South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU)
- The Family Caregiving Programme, UCT
- Women on Farms Project
- Youth Capital