

State capture report dominates online conversations

According to Meltwater, global media intelligence provider, the state capture report, released on 2 November by former public protector, Thuli Madonsela, has gained significant traction online.



Over the past week, Meltwater has been tracking mentions of the state of capture across social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, message boards, blogs and forums, while editorial coverage is being monitored across more than 270,000 media sources worldwide. The online discourse showed that the report, indicating Madonsela's findings on the relationship between President Jacob Zuma and the Gupta family, caused weary cynicism as well as fresh outrage, and sometimes with a dose of typical SA humour.

The report resulted from investigations by the Office of the Public Protector after several complaints about the Gupta family influence on the state. Zuma has close links to the Guptas, and they have an established business relationship with his son, Duduzane Zuma. Madonsela's findings include several violations of the Executive Ethics Code by Jacob Zuma as well as significant other improprieties that have, in her view, prejudiced the South African people. She also highlighted allegations of corruption between Eskom, its chief executive Brian Molefe and the Gupta family. Deputy Minister Mcebisi Jonas has alleged in the report that he was offered R600,000 by the Gupta family to accept the position of Finance Minister. The report includes a call for an independent inquiry to probe the claims of state capture.

"The Public Protector's state capture report has triggered what could quite possibly be the most shared and spoken about topic in South Africa media this year," says Meltwater managing director Matthew Barclay. "Following hot on the heels of the #FeesMustFall movement, we are witnessing first-hand how social media is becoming a prominent driver for change across all ages and races."

"Since the report broke on Wednesday, we've tracked well over 150,000 global social media mentions referencing the report, President Zuma, Brian Molefe, Eskom, Thuli Madonsela or the Guptas. Even more impressive was the rate at which the report was shared across the country online, empowering people with information they may otherwise have struggled to come across."

According to Meltwater, the extensive international online editorial coverage of the event, and the sentiment thereof, should be of concern. From 2-7 November, over 3,000 relevant online editorial articles were published in the United States alone - approximately 45% of which were decidedly negative in tone and posture. While the full impact of the state capture report remains to be seen, the online backlash witnessed in both local and international mainstream and social media suggests the Public Protector's conclusions are not soon to be dismissed.

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