



**COMMENTS FROM RASTAFARI NATIONAL COUNCIL
THROUGH THE RASTAFARI GANJA COUNCIL, ON THE
AMENDED CANNABIS FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES BILL
BY RAS SANDILE**

INTRODUCTION



- As per our Rastafari National Consultative Conference on 23-24 April 2022 in Eastern Cape, where we resolved in the presence of 8 out of 9 represented provinces and 18 active Rastafari organisations, that the Rastafari National Council as the supreme body for Rastafari organisation and governance mandates the Rastafari Ganja Council to continue its work of collecting and facilitating cannabis bill submissions from all mansions and organisations of Rastafari.
- We have noted that the draft regulations are not aligned with the UN Recommendations on Cannabis Regulations, as well United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (**UNDROP**) which is an UNGA resolution on Human rights adopted by the United Nations in 2018, in regards to protecting and promoting religious and cultural rights as well preferential commercial benefits to previously marginalised communities who were previously prohibited and as a result prosecuted for partaking in commercial activities to sustain their livelihood, such communities should be the first to benefit from job creation within the cannabis industry.

2. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- No limitations on the cultivation, possession and supply of Cannabis or the imposition of prescribed quantities of cannabis, cannabis plants or cannabis plant cultivation material as part of religious and cultural exemption. Such limitations will defeat the very purpose of religious and cultural exemption.
- Expungement of criminal records related to the possession of cannabis and Moratorium on all arrests related to cannabis with Public declaration by the Government of SA to the Ras-Tafari community for the unlawful arrest on Ras-Tafari faith in Constitution of Democratic SA.
- Rastafari to be prioritized in the commercial benefits of Cannabis. Support Rastafari farmers and entrepreneurs to sustainably deal with the growing, trading and processing of cannabis for commercial benefits. Protection against big multinational capitalist individuals and companies conducting anti-competitive behaviours.
- The negative perception of Cannabis as contemplated in Bill where the perceived or potential harms of Cannabis are presented as “the harms of cannabis” or “the harms associated with recreational cannabis” and therefore the subsequent need for “harm reduction” and “demand reduction”, all of which are not based on proven facts. The last being in contradiction to the purpose of the Bill which is to “provide for commercial activities in respect of recreational cannabis”
- Recognition of Community-based Research and Innovation to prove the hypothesis of Ras-Tafari Indigenous Knowledge Systems and herbal mixtures with application of cannabis to prevent corona, heal asthma, manage mental disease anxiety disorders, and exit addiction to harmful opioids.
- The classes of offences amounting to 15 years of imprisonment as suggested in the Bill and as well as the unspecified fines which are likely to be beyond the means of the unemployed citizen are a great disadvantage to many Cannabis users many of which many still require public awareness campaigns on the implications of the Bill to their livelihoods since rural and cultural communities might not always be commercial oriented but exchange or sell cannabis in large quantities among themselves for survival. Prison time should only apply to adverse offences as contemplated in Class A offences.
- The recognition of the Rastafari National Council as the official Statutory Body for all things related to Cannabis for the Rastafari Nation in South Africa and the Rastafari Ganja Council as the primary economic development entity for Cannabis commercialization within the Rastafari Community, with a mandate to educate, regulate and protect the interest of the Rastafari Nation in consideration of the rights of the broader South African community in regards to perceived Cannabis harms and inclusive participation in the Cannabis economy.



3. CONCLUSION

- The issuing of an exemption to religious and cultural communities should not be viewed as end to our struggle since the recognition of Rastafari Rights cannot be administered through such an approach which is rather a means to an end and the first step to the Rastafari Community being given the freedom that is due to them under the Constitution.



THANK YOU

RASTAFARI NATIONAL COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

RASTAFARI GANJA COUNCIL