

Sacked former deputy quits Parliament, vows fightback
15 June 2005
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CAPE TOWN — Former deputy president Jacob Zuma yesterday resigned his seat in Parliament, hardly an hour after he was sacked from the cabinet.

His departure from Parliament saves him and the African National Congress (ANC) from a deeply embarrassing position of investigations by the National Assembly's ethics committee on whether he lied about the money he received from his convicted financial adviser, Schabir Shaik.

Judge Hilary Squires found in his judgment two weeks ago that the funds given to Zuma by Shaik were gifts, not loans, and he recommended that Parliament investigate potential perjury.

Although he was dismissed from government, Zuma was still entitled to retain his parliamentary seat as it was an elected position. He is still the deputy president of the ANC.

Addressing the media soon after the announcement of the dismissal by President Thabo Mbeki, Zuma said he had offered his resignation to Parliament, and it had been accepted.

Zuma insisted that he had been treated unfairly for five years, and had been tried and found guilty in the media. He said his conscience was clear, and he had not committed any crime against the state "or the people of SA".

Squires also found that Zuma had a generally corrupt relationship with Shaik, leading to the possibilities that the National Prosecuting Authority might charge Zuma.

Zuma said, however, he saw nothing stopping him from succeeding Mbeki in the party and country.

He said his resignation from Parliament was not an admission of guilt, but in the interest of the nation.

"Nothing precludes the ANC from deploying me to any position, president, deputy president or secretary general, whatever," he said.

"I believe he (Mbeki) has taken this decision not because he believes I am guilty of any crime, but because of considerations relating to the constraints within which government operates." He said those "authorised to take decisions should act within a reasonable period with regard to the conclusion of this matter.

"I need to be given an opportunity to tell my side of the story, and bring finality to these accusations and speculations," he said.