

MIXED REACTIONS TO RESIGNATION OF COVID-19 ADVISER PROFESSOR SALIM ABDOOL KARIM

Good riddance, Dr Death – EFF

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THE RESIGNATION of government's chief adviser on Covid-19, Professor Salim Abdool Karim, has elicited mixed reactions, with the EFF labelling him "Dr Death" while other stakeholders believe it would be a great loss to the country.

In a scathing media statement yesterday, the EFF said it welcomed "the long overdue resignation of the incompetent and overrated Dr Death", referring to Karim, who was the co-chairperson of Covid-19's ministerial advisory committee with Professor Marian Jacobs.

Jacobs will take over the reins, bringing in her previous experience

as an emeritus professor of paediatrics and child health and dean of the faculty of health sciences at the University of Cape Town for seven years.

The EFF faulted Karim for making "horribly incorrect predictions" about the pandemic, saying his advice "has been centred on protecting the interests of capital over and above the protection of human life".

"Karim has been at the forefront of poor decisions made by the government to prematurely ease lockdown regulations, only to tighten regulations once there has been an exhibition of increased infections of death," the EFF said.

The world-renowned scientist was further accused of lacking "foresight" as a scientist and "operating solely on



PROFESSOR Salim Abdool Karim.

his misguided opinion, misleading the national government and the nation".

"His most dangerous advice was when South Africa reached the peak of the first wave of the virus and Karim endangered entire communities by

advising schools to be reopened. It took the uproar of the EFF, school governing bodies, principals, trade unions and civil society for this foolish advice to be ignored," the EFF said.

Karim's resignation comes days after he advised the government to look into adjusting the country's alert level 1 to alert level 2 before the upcoming Easter holidays as a precautionary measure.

The South African Medical Association, however, begged to differ with the EFF's views, saying Karim was "a great negotiator" and that the country would miss such a brilliant mind in a fight against the prevailing pandemic.

Its national chairperson, Dr Angelique Coetzee, said she spoke to Karim on Wednesday and he assured her

"that there is no bad blood between him and the Ministry of Health about vaccines".

"The reason why he is stepping down is that he is a researcher, and this is what he has done all these years.

"A lot of work that he has been doing (as co-chair of the committee) interfered with his daily work at Caprisa, of looking at the HIV vaccines," Coetzee said.

She said Karim also availed himself to be called by the association whenever it needs his assistance.

In a resignation letter to Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize on February 24, Karim expressed gratitude for having served initially as the chairperson of the ministerial advisory committee on Covid-19.