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AFRICA/SOUTH AFRICA - The Bishops say they want explanations for the apparent misuse of State property for a private wedding

Johannesburg (Agenzia Fides) - "The government owes South Africans a thorough, and quick, explanation for the apparent misuse of state property and personnel by those associated with the Gupta family wedding," says a note of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. The South African Bishops intervene to ask for transparency on the issue of the Gupta wedding, entrepreneurs of Indian origin who have extensive interests in South Africa in the mining, aviation, media and high technology field, which saw the mobilization of facilities and staff of the State.

In their statement, the Bishops recall in particular "the deployment of the police flying squad and other elements of the security forces, the use of an air-force base by a privately-chartered jet, and the fact that the customs and excise authorities were kept in the dark, all point to some extremely irregular decision-making at a very high level."

The South African press reported the landing at the airport military Waterkloof, near Pretoria, of a private plane carrying the wedding guests from India. The wedding procession was then escorted by the police to Sun City, the "Las Vegas of South Africa."

"It is of particular concern according to newspapers that some 60 police officers were involved in escorting guests and equipment to Sun City," the Bishops said.

"The South African Police Services should busy itself with combating crime, for which there is a crying need, not with providing a private security service at taxpayers' expense."

"This whole episode merely reinforces the perception that people who are well-connected politically do not have to observe the same rules as ordinary citizens".

"We cannot afford to gain the reputation of being a country where it is 'who you know' that counts, and where wealth can buy privileged treatment from the authorities," said the Bishops. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/05/2013)

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