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To all media houses: For Immediate Release

COPE SADDENED BY REPORTS OF FOUR MORE DEAD SOLDIERS IN DRC, CALLS FOR PRESIDENT TO ADDRESS THE NATION

The Congress of the People is deeply saddened by the tragic news of four more SANDF soldiers losing their lives amidst ongoing and intense fighting in the DRC. This brings the total number of fallen soldiers to 13. We pray that these numbers do not escalate.

Although President Cyril Ramaphosa has called for a ceasefire in response to the escalating conflict in the DRC, we believe that more decisive action is required from him, especially given his role as Commander in Chief of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

The tragic loss of soldiers in the line of duty demands not only a call for peace but also a clear and comprehensive strategy to protect the lives of our military personnel.

How many more soldiers should die on the battlefield before Ramaphosa comes out of hiding to show sympathy and empathy with the families, friends, and the broader community by addressing a traumatised nation?

He should also clarify the actual reasons for our troops' presence there. The official pretence of "peacekeeping" under UN and SADC deployment has been exposed as a lie and deceit.

Widespread reports of our soldiers being outgunned, outnumbered and ill-equipped are doing the rounds. In the glaring absence of formal and credible information from the Commander in Chief, these will gain traction and be believed to be factual.

We strongly condemn this callous and lackadaisical attitude and call on the Joint Defence Committee of Parliament and other relevant authorities to urgently demand accountability and transparency from the SANDF and its Commander in Chief.

COPE extends its deepest condolences to the families, friends and communities of our fallen soldiers. Our prayers and thoughts are with them in these difficult times.

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