

**To: President Cyril Ramaphosa**  
The Presidency  
Union Buildings

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Dear Mr President,

**URGENT CALL TO SIGN THE COPYRIGHT AMENDMENT BILL AND HELP REALISE THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

In 1978, a piece of copyright legislation came into law that would harm the lives of millions of South Africans who are blind and visually impaired. For 44 years, the Copyright Act was allowed to make criminals out of anyone who converted a book into a more accessible format, like Braille or large print, without the consent of the copyright holder. As a result, for these 44 years, persons who are blind or visually impaired in South Africa have had to live in a book famine, having access to a mere 0,5% of published works in formats they can read.

In September 2022, the Constitutional Court recognised the problems of this law, and read their own exceptions for persons who are blind or visually impaired into the Copyright Act. But this was only a temporary solution, as Parliament was ordered to fix the Act by September 2024. Parliament has done its part. On 26 February this year, the National Assembly plenary voted in favour of the Copyright Amendment Bill, marking the last Parliamentary step before sending this Bill to your desk.

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Income Tax Exemption Reference Number: PBO 930022549. Nonprofit Organisation Registration Number: 055-382-NPO SECTION27, Non-Profit Company (2006/021659/08)  
Board of Directors: Ms S Stevenson (Executive Director), Ms AL Brown (Chair), Ms M Boakye (Treasurer), Dr B Brink, Ms N Seme, Mr N Spaul, Mr B Botha, Ms E Kelly, Justice J Froneman, Dr A Skelton, Ms S Kalla, Ms N Magadze, Prof. A Coovadia, Prof. M Chersich

Today, on World Copyright and Book Day, we urge you, Mr President, to sign the Copyright Amendment Bill. This Bill holds exceptions that will allow all persons with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired, to convert published works into formats they can read without the consent of the copyright owner.

The Bill will also allow South Africa to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, which was adopted in 2013. Ratification of this treaty will ensure that persons who are blind and visually impaired can exchange reading material across borders, use online libraries and consortiums, and gain access to hundreds and thousands of books they can read. For 11 years, persons who are blind or visually impaired living in South Africa have had to wait for ratification because our copyright laws were not adequate, and the President's assent to the Bill will allow the state to take this important step.

Mr President, you have the chance to radically change the lives of persons who are blind or visually impaired living in South Africa, who have been waiting for decades for the Copyright Act to be fixed.

Please, sign the Copyright Amendment Bill and let your administration help end the book famine in South Africa.

Yours sincerely,



**SECTION27**  
**Executive Director**  
**Sasha Stevenson**



**BLIND SA**  
**President**  
**Christo De Klerk**