



SOS: Support Public Broadcasting Coalition

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Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance the Only Hope for a Transformed SABC

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SOS is alarmed to learn of the findings in the Public Protector's preliminary report on the investigation her office undertook on the SABC. The investigation into the public broadcaster followed a series of complaints by SABC staff concerning a range of irregularities by senior and executive staff, members of the Board and former Minister of Communications, Dina Pule. The range of damning findings made in the report includes:

- Dishonesty and the abuse of power by a number of high ranking officials;
- Irregular appointments and increments in salaries; and
- Irregular expenditure resulting out of unlawful and improper conduct.

The Coalition is further alarmed by the Minister of Communications, Yunus Carrim's, intention to brief Parliament on the status of criminal prosecutions arising from investigations by the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in a closed meeting. In his written response, last week, to questions posed to him by Members of Parliament regarding details of the number of people that were investigated and charged, as well as the status of each case, the Minister declined to provide these details, describing them as confidential in nature. He, however, offered no substantive basis for this.

Since its founding, the SOS Coalition has repeatedly underscored the importance of transparency, accountability and good corporate governance as cornerstones for a transformed SABC that visibly demonstrates its commitment to serving the people of South Africa. Read against the Public Protector's preliminary report, it becomes clear that the rosy picture of a transforming SABC painted by the SABC Board over successive years has not been an entirely accurate or honest exercise.

This raises a number of questions for the Coalition and, indeed, the people of South Africa:

- Will the people of South Africa ever know the true extent of impropriety happening inside of their public broadcaster, the SABC, and see the appropriate action being taken to remedy it?
- Is there any hope for the rescue of the SABC's credibility when its highest ranking officials are repeatedly implicated in unlawful and improper conduct?
- Are the institutions charged with oversight of the SABC performing their duties effectively, if at all, when such damning reports seem to be the order of the day in respect of the SABC?

The Coalition looks forward to the Public Protector's final report and, for the sake of transparency and the effective operations of the SABC, our public broadcaster, urges her office to make it as widely accessible as possible. The Coalition further urges the Minister of Communications and Parliament to do all in their power to hold all those named in this and other reports publicly accountable for their wrong-doings and show their commitment to zero-tolerance for improper conduct in public institutions and the realization of an SABC that works and is accountable to the public.

The SOS Coalition represents a broad spectrum of civil society stakeholders committed to the broadcasting of quality, diverse, citizen-orientated public-interest programming aligned to the goals of the SA Constitution. The Coalition includes a number of trade union federations including COSATU and FEDUSA, a number of independent unions including BEMAWU and MWASA; independent film and TV production sector organisations including the South African Screen Federation (SASFED); a host of NGOs and CBOs including the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), and a number of academics and freedom of expression activists.

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