



SOS: Support Public Broadcasting Coalition

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Booing of the President: SOS Supports Call to Investigate SABC Censorship

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The SOS: Support Public Broadcasting Coalition notes with concern the [story carried by City Press](#) in which it is alleged that SABC news management deliberately omitted any mention of the booing of President Jacob Zuma during the Mandela Memorial Service from its headline news bulletins on the 10th of December 2013. SOS member organisation, Media Monitoring Africa, viewed the headline news bulletins from SABC1, SABC 2 and SABC 3 and confirmed that no mention of the booing incident was made in any of the bulletins.

SOS acknowledges the fact that many citizens thought the booing was inappropriate given the gravity and importance of the ceremony however despite these concerns Coalition members believe strongly that the incident was newsworthy and the SABC, as our public broadcaster, should have covered it.

The decision to deliberately omit the information constitutes a clear violation of the SABC's Editorial Policies. The Coalition notes the following key principles included in the Policies:

"We report, contextualise, and present news and current affairs honestly by striving to disclose all the essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts, or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis" pg. 20

"The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters also requires the SABC to report news truthfully, accurately and objectively. In this regard, the staff may not allow their professional judgment to be influenced by pressures from political, commercial or other sectional interests" pg. 20

"SABC news staff are expected to present issues fairly, not to take sides, and to afford the public access to the full range of views on a subject. In this regard, editorial staff should not become emotional, or use emotive language, in writing stories or conducting interviews".
Pg. 20

SOS joins [Media Monitoring Africa's call](#) for the SABC Editor in Chief, GCEO Lulama Mokhobo to carry out an urgent investigation and to brief the public on its terms, progress and outcomes. SOS will be writing to the GCEO to this effect. Going forward, the Coalition calls on SABC news management to ensure it not only adheres to its editorial policies but further practices the highest standards of ethical professional journalism.

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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