

# Sanef calls for arrest of parties threatening SABC's Lesedi FM journalists

Following the SABC's Lesedi FM journalists' lives being threaten for covering the local government elections in the Free State Province, the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) has called on law-enforcement agencies to investigate and arrest the responsible parties.



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The criminals have accused the Lesedi FM news team of being responsible for the ANC's defeat at the Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality and Metsimaholo Local Municipality.

Lesedi FM News Current Affairs senior producer, Dimakatso Motsoeneng, received death threats including unprintable violence against her children, with her colleagues, Palesa Chubisi and Lahliwe Matsoso, receiving similar threats.

## Dangerous hot spots

“The attacks are particularly harsh on women journalists with additional risks that range from sexual harassment, cyber-harassment to rape threats and even murder threats,” says Sanef.

“We also believe that these attacks show disregard for the important role that journalists play in bringing news to the people, especially during this election period,” it adds.

Anyone with a complaint about a story or broadcast should submit this to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) or the Press Council where it would be fairly and independently adjudicated.

“We remain concerned about the impact of these attacks on the media’s ability to represent all voices in storytelling and ensuring that all voices are heard.

“Many areas in the country are increasingly becoming dangerous hot spots to report from as several reporting crews have been robbed and attacked,” adds Sanef.

## A threat to media freedom

Sanef believes that the safety of journalists is intertwined with the general safety and wellbeing of communities whose stories they are out to cover.

“Lack of safety compromises the working environment of journalists as well as their livelihoods. It also threatens media freedom.

“These attacks place enormous physical and emotional burdens on journalists who are already exposed to severe constraints under a deadly Covid-19 pandemic. Without journalists focusing on the plight of communities, local government stories will go unreported,” states the forum.



Sanef and the CFE fight SABC's closed door hearing of Magopeni

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## SABC attack

SANEF believes that the ANC should also do its own investigation and distance itself from these criminals using the governing party's name.

“The party should also rein in its leaders who have publicly attacked the SABC as such behaviour encourages cyberbullying by party members and their followers, particularly on social media,” says Sanef.

The incident comes on the back of Transport Minister and ANC’s head of elections, Fikile Mbalula’s, attack on the SABC for its coverage of the November elections.

Mbalula, who claimed the SABC never showed the good side of the ANC by focusing on poor service delivery, not only blamed the public broadcaster for the ANC’s dismal performance at the polls but he also singled out and attacked SABC editor-in-chief & group executive: SABC News & Current Affairs, Phathiswa Magopeni.

Mogopeni is facing a disciplinary hearing for negligence and bringing the SABC into disrepute after the broadcaster ran an episode of its investigative programme *Special Assignment* in contravention of a court order.

Since then Magopeni has lodged a grievance against the SABC. It has been reported that SABC board chair, Bongomusa Makhathini, wants a Sanef-linked board member, Mary Papayya, to recuse herself before he answers questions related to the grievance.

Sanef is a non-profit organisation whose members are editors, senior journalists and journalism trainers from all areas of the South African media.

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