

Independent won't be threatened: Howard

Independent Media on Thursday warned the *Mail & Guardian* that it would not be cowed by threats, following reports in *The Star* and other papers on the *Mail & Guardian's* financial situation.



Tony Howard says Trevor Ncube's claims that Iqbal Survé (pictured) was orchestrating a media probe of his (Ncube's) business are devoid of any truth. (Image: [The Media Online](#))

Independent deputy executive chair Tony Howard said the company would not be "intimidated or deterred" by either the *Mail & Guardian* or other media houses attempts to report on Independent's initiatives to transform from a "legacy print media company" to a modern media and content company.

What Independent was doing, he said, was no different from any other South African print media houses or across the world. "We find this obsession of our competitors with the changes taking place at Independent surprising and somewhat sinister."

Howard claimed the *Mail & Guardian* in particular had been "relentless" in its pursuit of Independent, well before Sekunjalo (Independent's new owners) successfully bid for the company from its Irish owners, probably because of *Mail & Guardian* owner Trevor Ncube's failed bid to buy three of Independent's newspapers.

Ncube then tried to get former *Mail & Guardian* editor, Nic Dawes to use his position as chairman of the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) to formally oppose the sale of Independent to Sekunjalo, "on the most spurious grounds", Howard said. Dawes had later been forced to retract and apologise by his Sanef colleagues, he said.

Negative tone

When this bid failed, the *Mail & Guardian* then started a disinformation campaign against Independent and Sekunjalo, said Howard, and ever since the tone and thrust of Ncube's newspaper's coverage of Independent had been "stridently negative".

Referring to Ncube's claim this week that Independent executive chairman Dr Iqbal Survé had spoken to Ncube to get him to stop his journalists from writing negative stories about Independent, Howard said the last direct conversation between Survé and Ncube had taken place last year after Sekunjalo acquired Independent and only concerned Ncube's failed bid to buy the three newspapers.

Ncube's claims that Survé was orchestrating a media probe of his business were devoid of any truth, said Howard, as Survé had been in Brazil at a Brics council, and had no knowledge of what was happening back in South Africa.

"The redesign of our business is an internal matter and we will deal with it in this manner, respecting the rights and privacy of our employees - as well as the company's and shareholder's rights to re-engineer the business to meet the needs of transforming the business into a modern media and content company," said Howard.

"The company will not comment further."

Trevor Ncube's response

This is the response *Mail & Guardian* published last week:

[M&G's Trevor Ncube responds to accusations...](#) "Trevor Ncube, publisher of the *Mail & Guardian*, responds to reports published in the *The Star* newspaper that his operations are in financial trouble."

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