

Minister Motsoaledi's attack on HNF was 'profoundly anti-democratic'

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The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) is deeply concerned about Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi's attack last week on the Helen Suzman Foundation and its funders. "This was a profoundly anti-democratic line of attack and seems to suggest that the government is going to deal with its problems by blaming NGOs, the media and other elements of civil society," CFE's Anton Harber said.

HNF last week initiated court action against Motsoaledi's treatment of Zimbabweans living in South Africa. Motsoaledi responded by saying this actions was "a perfect example of the destructive role some NGOs could play".

"South Africa is now under the dictatorship of some of the NGOs with some have faceless and dubious funders. Their ultimate aim is to assist in the dislodgement of the government of the day from power by all means available."

He said the HNF had the right to go to court, but should not "abuse the Bill of Rights".

Harber said: "The Minister can disagree with HNF, but there is no call for an attack on the work of human rights defenders. Bodies such as the HNF play a crucial public service role in holding the government to its constitutional commitments.

"It is a great irony that they body named after a human rights pioneer who was often accused by the apartheid government of being unpatriotic should face similar accusations from an ANC leader," Harber said.

- *The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and expanding the right to free expression for all and enabling everyone to exercise this right to the full.*

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