

Campaign for Free Expression NPC
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**Campaign
for Free
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The public won the right to watch the SABC's disciplinary action against news editor-in-chief Phatiswa Magopeni, thanks to the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) and the SA National Editors' Forum (SANEF).

"It was an important case with much at stake, so it was invaluable that it should be open to enable the public to see if there was a genuine case, or whether Ms Magopeni was being persecuted, as she claimed," said Anton Harber, CFE executive director.

Magopeni was charged with misconduct, negligence and bringing the SABC into disrepute and the hearing was set down for late-December. The SABC initially refused a Sanef request to open up the hearing for media coverage. CFE and Sanef wrote to the chair of the hearing, Advocate Nazeer Cassim, to argue that the hearing was of significant public interest and there was strong precedent for disciplinary hearings for key figures at public institutions to be open.

SABC withdrew its objection and the chair allowed the media to attend. Magopeni was found guilty on the charge of misconduct and it was recommended that the SABC board reprimand her.

Next up is Magopeni's formal complaint against Group CEO Madoda Mxakwe and board chair Bongumusa Makhatini. Magopeni has accused them of editorial interference and attempting to force her out of the SABC. "It is crucial that we defend the independence of SABC news, so it will be important to hear the full details of her allegations of interference in elections coverage by the chair and GCEO," Harber said. "The SABC's standing and credibility are fundamental to free speech in this country."