



**Call the SSA off the SABC, CFE
demands.**

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Campaign for Free Expression calls on President Cyril Ramaphosa to call off his “dogs of war”, the State Security Agency (SSA) which appears to be interfering in the SABC’s coverage of the elections.

And CFE calls on the SABC Executive and Board to clearly back Editor-in-Chief Moshoeshoe Monare in his resistance to this interference.

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It was reported in City Press/New24 today that Monare has been summoned by the SSA for security vetting after the leaking of a recording of Ramaphosa talking about the media at an ANC NEC meeting. Ramaphosa was heard saying the ANC would “challenge” any negative publicity ahead of the elections and anyone taking potshots at the party would be “fiercely confronted”.

“An SSA vetting at this time is pre-election intimidation and the agency should be quickly and firmly slapped down,” said CFE executive director Anton Harber. “The ANC might investigate an internal leak, but it is entirely improper for the SSA to be undertaking such intimidatory action now. It is again interfering in party political matters, as it did during the Zuma presidency.”

It is significant that this comes shortly after the SSA tried in a new Bill before parliament (the General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill, GILAB) to give itself vastly expanded powers to carry out security vetting on NGOs and religious bodies. Fortunately, following a public outcry, this has been watered down. But the Bill still proposes to give the SSA powers to vet SABC journalists (because they work at “critical infrastructure”).

CFE and others have called for journalist to be excluded from the Bill to prevent interference with the SABC’s editorial independence.

CFE also notes that the SABC has been ambivalent in its response to the SSA action. SABC spokesperson Mmoni Seapolelo was quoted as saying that the security vetting is not at its request, but “it was not an anomaly that executives at SOEs are vetted”.
Harber said: “One of the primary functions of the SABC Board is to protect is editorial staff from political and other interference, particularly at the delicate time of an election. They need to defend Monare against such intimidation forcibly and unequivocally.”

The Campaign for Free Expression is a 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, whether it by speaking out, by protesting, by revealing information, by blowing the whistle on wrong-doing, by arguing, debating, writing, painting, composing or just by shouting out your opinion.

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