



Media Statement

10 February 2025

SOS COALITION, MEDIA MONITORING AFRICA, THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDITORS' FORUM AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EXPRESSION: CALLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTER'S WITHDRAWAL OF THE SABC BILL

The SOS Coalition (SOS), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) have jointly written letters to the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President as Head of Cabinet, and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies (PPCCDT). These letters emphasise the critical importance of upholding the separation of powers doctrine and respecting due process.

After months of advocacy for the withdrawal of the SABC Bill, SOS, MMA, SANEF and CFE welcomed the decision by the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Solly Malatsi, to withdraw the Bill. However, they are now deeply disappointed by the prolonged delay on the part of the Speaker of Parliament in gazetting the withdrawal of the Bill and ongoing unlawful, unconstitutional interference by the Cabinet in the withdrawal of the Bill.

According to the Rules of the National Assembly, the Minister has the authority to withdraw a bill before its second reading (Rule 277 read with Rule 334). Minister Malatsi followed due process by formally notifying the Speaker of the National Assembly in writing about his withdrawal of the Bill.

These letters serve as a reminder that:

- The Speaker must gazette the withdrawal of the SABC Bill and has no authority to overrule the Minister's decision. Failure to do so constitutes failure to fulfil her constitutional duties and disregards the public interest.
- The PPCCDT must respect the separation of powers and remove the SABC Bill from its agenda as it has been lawfully withdrawn by the responsible Minister.
- The Cabinet has no authority to overrule the Minister's decision in withdrawing the Bill and must respect the Rules of the National Assembly and the authority of the Minister to do so.

We urge the Speaker, the Committee and the Cabinet to respect the separation of powers doctrine and proceed with the formal gazetting of the SABC Bill's withdrawal in line with the Constitution and the Rules of the National Assembly as any continued deliberation of the SABC Bill by the Committee and Parliament in general would be unlawful.

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The following organisations have endorsed this letter and the campaign calling for the withdrawal of the SABC Bill:

Ahmed Kathrada Foundation	Lawyers for Human Rights
All Nations Community Centre	Legal Resources Centre
Alternative Information Development Centre	MMA (Media Monitoring Africa)
Amabhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism	Msunduzi Association of Residents Ratepayers and Civics (MARRC)
amandla.mobi	My Vote Counts
Bench Marks Foundation	OUTA (The Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse)

Cape Town TV	PARI (Public Affairs Research Institute)
Centre for Applied Legal Studies	People's Media Consortium
CFE (Campaign for Free Expression)	Project YouthSA
Dear South Africa	Public Service Accountability Monitor
Defend Our Democracy	Right2Know Campaign
Equality Collective	Right2Protest
Freedom of Expression Institute	SANEF (South African National Editors Forum)
groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa	SASFED (South African Screen Federation)
IAJ (Institute for the Advancement of Journalism)	SECTION27
ILRIG (International Labour Research and Information Group)	Social Policy Initiative
Imali Yethu Coalition	The Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation
IPO (Independent Producers Organisation)	Workers World Media Productions
SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition	Youth Must Rise