

STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISM SCHOOLS

As educators, scholars and researchers in journalism and media studies in South Africa, we stand for the values of media freedom, informed debate and intellectual rigour.

This background explains why we fear that the cherished democratic values of freedom of expression, media freedom and the right to information are currently at risk.

We reject the proposal for a Media Appeals Tribunal and the current version of the Protection of Information Bill. We are also extremely concerned about a climate of intimidation and suspicion that has included the heavy-handed arrest of journalist Mzilikazi wa Afrika.

We note that these developments have led to a rapid deterioration in the relations between the state and the media. Further, we are concerned that the ensuing discussion about the state of media freedom in the country has taken on an antagonistic, either-or character which worsens these tensions instead of working towards solving the underlying problems.

One of our jobs is to prepare students to join the media industry, and we are concerned about what all these developments signal to young South Africans wishing to start a career in journalism.

We take seriously our task to inculcate the values of social responsibility, independence and accountability in our students, while also stressing that these values are premised on a press that is not subject to statutory regulation or intimidation of journalists.

As scholars and researchers we are not blind to the faults of the South African media. In our scholarship we will continue to point to these shortcomings and suggest ways of improving the media's democratic role. But critique can only bear fruit in an environment that allows for unhindered investigation, the gathering of sound empirical evidence, and the free exchange of ideas.

We therefore call on the public and civil society to make their voices heard in rejecting the current threats to media freedom. In turn we undertake to:

- continue to prepare students for their role as citizens and as ethical media practitioners;
- research alternative ways of managing conflicts between media, state, business and civil society;
- create spaces for debate between the public and members of the media industry about the media's role in a democratic South Africa.

As a first step towards the above goals, we will work together as South African journalism educators on a colloquium to further address these issues and develop a range of creative responses.

As a constituency that helps shape the value-chain of journalism and its environment, we welcome engagement with others about how best we can contribute positively to the current impasse.

Signatories:

1. Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Department of Journalism;
2. Durban University of Technology, Department of Media, Language and Communication (Journalism Programme);
3. Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (Johannesburg);
4. Monash University, Journalism Program
5. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy;
6. North-West University, School of Communication Studies;
7. Rhodes University, School of Journalism and Media Studies,
8. The Media Workshop (Port Elizabeth);
9. Tshwane University of Technology, Department of Journalism;
10. University of Cape Town; Centre for Film & Media Studies;
11. University of Fort Hare, Department of Communication;
12. University of Johannesburg, Department of Journalism, Film and Television;
13. The Centre for Communication, Media and Society's staff and students, University of KwaZulu-Natal;
14. University of Pretoria (BA Languages: Journalism programme);
15. University of South Africa, Department of Communication Science
16. University of Stellenbosch, Journalism Department;
17. University of the Free State, Department of Communication Science;
18. Walter Sisulu University, Journalism Department;
19. Wits University, Department of Journalism and Media Studies.