



## ZIMBABWE ANTI-SANCTIONS MOVEMENT

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Date: 23/02/2022

**To:** Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA),

**Cc:** Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA),

Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies - Khumbudzo Ntshavheni,

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services – Ronald Lamola.

### **RE: COMPLAINT AGAINST THE SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION (SABC), SOPHIE MOKOENA, AND PETER NDORO.**

Dear Sir/Madam

As a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) that is legally registered in South Africa, according to South African Laws; we are writing to you to lay a formal complaint against the conduct of SABC and its employees, Sophie Mokoena and Peter Ndoro.

1. Over the past decade, we have observed that the SABC has been broadcasting unbalanced, one-sided, and biased narratives against Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean government.
2. This has been done mainly by Peter Ndoro and Sophie Mokoena who consistently advance a biased and false narrative against Zimbabwe by giving selective coverage only to anti-Zimbabwean political activists, while denying humanitarian activists that are pro-Zimbabwe and pro-Zimbabweans the right-of-reply.
3. Over the years, we have seen anti-Zimbabwean activists like Hopewell Chin'ono, Nelson Chamisa, Tendai Biti, Fadzai Mahere, Peter Mutasa, the late Dewa Mavhinga (before he passed on); being given disproportionate amounts of coverage on SABC's primetime to instigate serious and legally untested allegations such as that Zimbabwean government officials abuse Human Rights and loot state resources, without giving the officials the right to answer to those allegations.

4. Even more concerning is, we have seen SABC giving airtime to Xenophobic activists such as Ike Khumalo, for them to spread hate speech against Zimbabweans to foment Xenophobia.
5. This has continued to happen even after the UN Human Rights Council declared the 20 years of US, EU, and UK sanctions on Zimbabwe illegal at international law and a violation of human rights (on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2021) because they deprive Zimbabwean citizens access to clean water, healthcare, emergency services, food and economic development which in turn displaces millions of refugees into the SADC region and South Africa in particular.
6. Prior to that, as of the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 when the UN Human Rights Council announced that their **Special Rapporteur for the negative impact of coercive economic measures** will be coming to Zimbabwe to measure the negative impact of sanctions; we made calls and wrote emails to the SABC, asking for a right-of-reply or to buy airtime for a slot on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, which is SADC's anti-sanctions day, to correct the false narrative that the SABC has been advancing about Zimbabwean sanctions in the past 20 years.

After struggling to get through via the call center, our first interaction was with Hilton Wheelwright (National Sales Manager) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. He referred us to Precious Eze (National Sales Manager) but she was not at work. We were then assisted by Dintle Bebula who told us that it would be possible for us to buy airtime on a lifestyle show called Espresso.


We informed Dintle Bebula that we were looking for a slot on a current affairs show, to talk about sanctions on Zimbabwe and the landmark visit of the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur who was coming to measure the negative impact of the sanctions, which made a lifestyle show inconducive for the objective. Dintle advised that she had requested a meeting with her team to discuss the request.

For a week, we had no response from the broadcaster, so we reported our dissatisfaction to Lungile Fihla (TV Airtime Manager) who asked us to write a letter of complaint to the SABC Board.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, we wrote a letter of complaint to Lungile Fihla and copied the SABC CEO and the SABC Board, but we never got a response to this day.

Due to this dereliction and deliberate censorship of the Zimbabwean narrative, an important day agreed by all SADC governments as the SADC anti-Sanctions Day (25<sup>th</sup> of October 2021), passed without the SABC giving Zimbabwean humanitarian organizations an opportunity to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis affecting Zimbabwe, the SADC region, and more critically, South Africa, because of the illegally imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe.

7. The SABC basically denied Zimbabwe's leading anti-sanctions movement in South Africa, the opportunity to correct the false narrative they have advanced about Zimbabwean sanctions for over 20 years. For two decades, the SABC continue to give biased coverage to the beneficiaries of the illegal sanctions (the Zimbabwean opposition party MDCA, which is now CCC and their anti-Zimbabwe activists) to continue to advance disinformation on the causes of the crisis in Zimbabwe.


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8. The consequence of this manufactured consent and deliberate silencing of the alternative narrative on Zimbabwe by the broadcaster is that the false narrative has become dominant, and it has obscured the devastating impact of sanctions, which are a crime against humanity placed upon Zimbabweans and the citizens of the SADC region, who are affected by the displacement of the Zimbabwean refugees.


In turn, this has misled the SABC audience in South Africa, SADC, and the African continent to believe that Zimbabwe's problem is an incompetent and corrupt government and not the sanctions.

This has resulted in the increased vilification of the Zimbabwean government, which has led to the continuation of isolation and lack of solidarity for the Zimbabwean people by the international community, NGOs, and other humanitarian organizations.

9. Since the UN Human Rights Council declared the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the US, EU and UK; illegal and tantamount to persecution (a Crime against Humanity) because they deprive innocent Zimbabwean citizens access to Clean Water, Food, Healthcare, Education, Economic Development, and the right to life; We have seen a deliberate and malicious attempt to isolate the voices of pro-Zimbabwean humanitarian activists, which is in contrast to the South African government's pledge to help Zimbabwe fight these illegal sanctions.
10. Additionally, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, the MDCA rebranded itself as the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), and the South African national broadcaster went into overdrive to give free publicity and promotion to this party that has used illegal sanctions to persecute Zimbabwean citizens for over two decades as a ticket to power. However, in contrast, ZANU-PF held a political rally in Marondera on the very same day, but it got no coverage on the channel.

The fact that SABC through Sophie Mokoena and Peter Ndoro decided to cover the events of one political party and neglected the other; *Ipsa Facto* campaigned for the CCC party and de-campaigned ZANU-PF.

11. We now perceive the actions of the SABC as tacit support for the persecution of Zimbabweans (who have been displaced in their millions, as refugees into South Africa and other SADC countries) by the crimes against humanity of sanctions which seek to effect forced regime change in Zimbabwe.
  12. In fact, when we consider that the SABC's giving more coverage to radicals like Ike Khumalo (who is now in court for hate speech that influenced the July 2021 riots and whose utterances are in contravention of the South African constitution), alongside Zimbabwe's opposition party that called for the illegal sanctions that are collectively punishing innocent civilians and the broadcaster in question actively denying humanitarian activists an opportunity to tell the story of the suffering of the Zimbabwean people under illegal sanctions. The SABC is clearly advancing an agenda to destabilize Zimbabwe. This is an unacceptable pattern of destabilization being driven by South Africa's national broadcaster, and this conduct cannot be allowed to continue.
  13. In essence, by SABC taking sides and censoring alternative views on Zimbabwe, while giving biased coverage to the anti-Zimbabwean false narrative from an opposition that called for the illegal sanctions on Zimbabwean civilians; the broadcaster is denying South Africa, SADC and international governments, parliamentarians, humanitarian groups, NGOs and the general public, accurate and balanced information to make an independent choice on the Zimbabwean humanitarian crisis.
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It seems, SABC is hell-bent on exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe, which will inevitably displace more Zimbabwean refugees into South Africa to worsen the already volatile anti-foreign sentiment that the media house is fanning in the country.

14. The conduct of the broadcaster, its employees and directors, is contrary to SADC, AU and UN principles of friendly relations between nations and regional cooperation. Instead, the institution through Sophie Mokoena, Peter Ndoro and other decision makers, mirrors the same destructive role played by RTML radio station in Rwanda to incite the 1994 genocide in that country.
15. We are now of the view that SABC and its directors are still perpetuating the total war of the apartheid State Security Council upon Zimbabwe, and other liberation movements in the region (including the ANC itself), to advance a neo-colonial agenda in the region.

The question we ask is: Is this the mandate given to the institution by the South African Broadcasting Act of 1999? And if not, where are the members of this institution deriving their mandate?

The SABC is the leading broadcaster in the SADC region. It has more reach and impact on the minds and the hearts of SADC citizens than any other broadcaster, hence, SABC's mandate should go beyond serving just the narrow interests of South Africa, but the interests of the entire region and Africa in line with AfCFTA and AU objectives.

We seek redress on the issues raised above.

Thank you.

Kind regards



Rutendo Matinyarare

Chairman : Zimbabwe Anti-Sanctions Movement

