

Botswana: Radio station ban political programs

GABORONE: The chief executive officer of Gabzfm radio station has banned all political broadcasts on the station. In an announcement on 24 August 2009, Kenneth Moeng said, "All political, politically motivated discussions, commentary or opinions" , are banned from being broadcast on the radio station.

MISA-Botswana says it has reliably learnt that the ban was orchestrated by a complaint letter written by the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) to Gabzfm radio station, expressing dissatisfaction over the manner in which the radio presenters portrayed the ruling party.

BDP claims the remarks and opinions from the presenters were clearly aimed at demonising its party president and head of state President Seretse Khama Ian Khama.

Moeng however maintains that he had taken this measure well before he received the BDP letter but delayed in delivering it. "You may tally them because they are more on the same issue which is politics but it had no influence from the BDP one," said Moeng, adding that he felt it was necessary to intervene to redirect the station in as far as programming is concerned and that the action was just an internal "operational matter".

Meanwhile, the ruling BDP is currently under internal wrangling two months prior to national elections. This is made worse by the general commentary that the country has slipped into dictatorship.

MISA-Botswana has condemned Moeng's action and called on the management of the radio station to avoid making editorial decisions based on external political pressure. MISA-Botswana further stressed that it does not encourage any interference in editorial matters, be it internal or external forces.

Source: *Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)*