

COPE: Minister 'eroded' SABC, ICASA independence



By [Issa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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The Congress of the People has launched a scathing attack on communications minister Sphiwe Nyanda for 'eroding' the independence of the public broadcaster and communications regulator ICASA.



"We condemn General Nyanda for the severely critical role he played [in this saga]," COPE MP Juli Kilian wrote in the party's first online newsletter, *Lentswe la Setjhaba* (*Voice of the Nation*) released late last night, 3 February 2010.

The party said that the online newsletter is intended to give South Africans a summary and overview of COPE's work, opinions and policies.

Kilian, a member of the parliamentary communication committee, added: "The minister is displaying a complete lack of judgment and ignorance of fundamental constitutional principles."

"The SABC is in a mess because of minister neglects to intervene when he is supposed to, and intervenes when he is not supposed to."

"South Africa is lagging behind other comparative countries when it comes to internet access and mobile costs. The minister instead spends his time defending irregularities in his department."

Under pressure

The former army general and current communication minister has been under immense pressure since the *Mail & Guardian* last week reported that he was allegedly involved in controversial business relationships and alleged insider deals with government and parastatals.

The newsletter also quoted Kilian as saying: “The controversial appointment of one of Nyanda's old cronies as the new CEO of the SABC further highlights Nyanda's reckless lack of commitment to clean government and points to a weak understanding of his responsibilities as cabinet minister.”

Kilian said on Monday that these ‘controversial’ deals can no longer be ignored, and called on Minister Barbara Hogan to launch a probe into Nyanda's affairs.

The online newsletter will be released fortnightly and will contain contributions from parliamentarians and ordinary citizens, the party said.

COPE president Mosiuoa Lekota, parliamentary leader Mvume Dandala, deputy president Mbhazima Shilowa and members Anele Mda and Denis Bloem are the first editorial contributors of the first online newsletter.

Dandala urged the all ordinary citizens to the newsletter, saying the party will record their stories of hope from across the country.

“We are starting small and simple in order to test your reaction,” the party said.

To contribute or to give feedback, send a mail to .

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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