

South Africa engineers PR disaster

NEWSWATCH: The South African government's decision to deny the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, a visa to visit the country for a peace conference on Friday, 27 March 2009, has backfired. According to various media reports, Government maintained his presence would draw attention away from SA, and our hosting of 2010. Its decision has instead drawn international attention to SA for all the wrong reasons and the conference has been cancelled.

 By [Rod Baker](#) 25 Mar 2009

Government's refusal to grant a visa has led to South African Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and former president FW de Klerk to boycott the event, according to the *Mail & Guardian Online*, *The New York Times*, WowOwow and Phayul.com. This has been followed by the executive director of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Geir Lundestad, saying that he too would not attend the conference.

The SA government has denied any pressure from the Chinese government to block the Dalai Lama's visit. However, many observers believe that *is* the reason for Government's action, which has been reported in the world's media.

Unusually for SA, where ministers almost always toe the official line, according to the *M&G Online* Health Minister Barbara Hogan is reported to have condemned the snub and called on the government to apologise.

For more:

- M&G Online: [SA peace meet postponed over Dalai Lama visa spat](#)
- The New York Times: [Peace conference in South Africa is cancelled](#)
- WowOwow: [Tutu withdraws from Peace Conference over South Africa's Dalai Lama snub](#)
- Phayul.com: [Peace conference called off over Dalai Lama visa row](#)
- M&G Online: [Hogan: Government should apologise to Dalai Lama](#)

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