

Embedded journalism is dangerous - ANC spokesperson



By [lssa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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Embedded journalism is dangerous: it distorts the truth and does not do anybody any good. This is according to ANC spokesperson Jessie Duarte, who was speaking yesterday, Wednesday, 15 October 2008, in Parktown, Johannesburg, where the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) and the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) jointly hosted an event to commemorate the 31st anniversary of Black Wednesday.

"As the African National Congress, we are concerned about embedded journalism, whether it is taking place at political or corporate level. We don't want it near us because it doesn't tell the truth and hides the real facts," Duarte said.

"It is a matter of concern if one looks at SABC News. What we find it is bias [in] the way the news is presented. SABC denies that there are political deployees, but we protest. Some of their programmes are one-sided.

"Honestly, the notion of journalists working at Luthuli House [ANC HQ] and at the same time working for other media organisations makes me sick.

"We don't want a public broadcaster that is uncritical of the ANC-led government, but one that gives news with editorial integrity."

Deep trouble

Duarte warned that media organisations that are hostile to the ANC will be in deep trouble. "We can live with critical but definitely not with hostile," she said. "We will fight and we will defend ourselves against any attack."

She said the ANC still has a problem with media self-regulation because the press ombudsman seems to be protecting the media by passing judgements in their favour.

"The *City Press* matter left us with a sour taste. Does self-regulation mean protecting the media or upholding the integrity of journalism? Believe me, the idea of a media tribunal is not popular within the ANC, but we need to engage with SANEF with fairness to ensure that people take further steps when they feel offended by the press.

"Press freedom is not only for media owners but for all citizens. If you offend us on page one, make sure you apologise on page one, not unambiguously on page 10."

However, SANEF chairperson Jovial Rantao said his organisation firmly believes in self-regulation - a system, which he

said, works properly. “In countries where there is no self-regulation and where government controls the media, there is no democracy.

“We believe that the standards of our journalism are high and rank among the best in the world. Our best defence against any attack is to publish material full of truth, impartiality, honesty and balance.”

Media freedom fundamental

Furthermore, Duarte said the question of media freedom is fundamental to the ANC as it believes that without it democracy would not flourish. But she pointed out that the real challenge now facing SA media is the juniorisation of newsrooms, which results in the lack of knowledge of political landscape, deeper research and deep thought.

“I know that we have very dedicated and professional editors but no matter how busy they are, they should keep an eye on the bottom line.”

On media sources, she said: “Media is being manipulated by their sources - people with agendas who distort and rearrange the truth.

“While I understand that you operate on sources, I would say: don't be proud of it,” she concluded.

Juby Mayet, a retired journalist and a 1977 Black Wednesday survivor and activist, recounted the events leading to the ‘famous’ Wednesday 19 October 1977.

IAJ executive director Jacob Ntshangase said that his organisation will work closely with SANEF to start collecting and recording these events in the view of creating archives.

The following books were launched at the event: *Remembering Black Wednesday, 19 October 1977-2007, 30 years on*, *Declaration of Table Mountain* and *The Extraordinary Editor - a handbook for SA media leaders* (by Elizabeth Barratt and Guy Berger).

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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