

Max du Preez receives Nat Nakasa Award

Apart from awarding the 2008 Nat Nakasa Award for courageous journalism to veteran journalist Max du Preez, the South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF), at its recent annual AGM in Johannesburg, restated its firm opposition to any attempt by the government to control the media, such as the ANC's proposed statutory media tribunal.

It pointed out that the industry's editorial self-regulatory system, the Press Council with its press ombudsman and Appeals Panel, dealt effectively with public complaints in the way similar institutions acted in 60 democracies throughout the world.

SANEF reiterated that such steps would restrict media freedom and contravene freedom of expression rights in the Constitution.

Members recommitted themselves to improving standards of journalism and enforcing the Press Council's Press Code of Conduct. Members reiterated their unwavering support for the media's Constitutional rights and the importance of upholding them in South Africa's democracy.

SANEF members expressed their concerns about unsubstantiated complaints by senior ANC members about the Press Council, as well as attempts to discredit the judiciary, which acted as a bulwark against the erosion of Constitutional rights.

Members also deplored the increasing attempts by Government to exercise control over the media through legislation such as the Films and Publications Amendment Bill, the Protection of Information Bill and the National Key Points Act. Particular criticism was raised around a draft Bill designed to dissolve the board of the SA Broadcasting Corporation, which it was felt would result in politicians gaining unacceptable powers over the public service broadcaster. SANEF noted that the crisis at the SABC was a result of political interference in the selection of SABC board members.

SANEF also expressed solidarity with and noted its deep concern at the continued detention without trial of journalists in several African countries, such as Eritrea, and also the continued harassment of journalists in many countries, including Zimbabwe and Somalia. It called for the release of all journalists and urged the African Union to plead for the unconditional release of journalists in line with the spirit of transparency and accountability enshrined in NEPAD.

SANEF 2008 - 2009 Council

The SANEF 2008 - 2009 Council was voted in as follows:

Jovial Rantao, editor of *Sunday Independent* and deputy editor of *The Star* was re-elected SANEF chairperson, as were the deputy chairperson Henry Jeffreys, editor of *Die Burger*, Mary Papayya, bureau chief of *Sowetan* in KwaZulu-Natal as Secretary-General and Juanita Williams, news editor of Independent Online as Treasurer.

Others on council include:

- Femida Mehtar, Executive Director
- Amina Frense, Gauteng Regional Convenor
- Guy Berger, Eastern Cape Regional Convenor
- Robin Sewlal, KwaZulu Natal Regional Convenor
- Willem Pretorius, Western Cape Regional Convenor
- Judy Sandison, Diversity & Ethics Chair
- Khathu Mamaila, Media Freedom Chair
- Paddi Clay, Education & Training Chair
- Clinton Nagoor
- Elizabeth Barratt
- Gavin Stewart
- Gaye Davis
- Hopewell Radebe
- Jabulani Sikhakhane
- Lizette Rabe
- Mark van der Velden
- Mathatha Tsedu
- Raymond Louw
- Tim du Plessis

The AGM took place 26 - 27 July 2008.

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