

# Icasa to rule on SABC's ban on protest reports

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The SABC is likely to know on 7 July whether its contentious decision to ban coverage of violent protests is valid.



Lobby groups Media Monitoring Africa, the SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition and the Freedom of Expression Institute lodged a complaint with the complaints compliance committee of the Independent Communications Authority of SA (Icasa).

They argued that the SABC's recently adopted editorial policy prohibiting the coverage of violent protests was in violation of its role as a public broadcaster.

This decision has been at the heart of a crisis gripping the organisation amid allegations that controversial chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng was censoring news and purging those who disagreed with him.

The broadcaster's acting CEO, Jimi Matthews, resigned this week, saying he could no longer support the way the broadcasting corporation was being run.

This followed the suspension of three senior journalists - economics editor Thandeka Gqubule, Radio Sonder Grense executive producer Foeta Krige and Afrikaans news producer Suna Venter - for contravening an order not to cover protest actions.

On Thursday another three senior journalists were reportedly charged internally for expressing concern about the editorial policy.

SAfm current affairs executive producer Krivani Pillay, Special Assignment executive producer Busisiwe Ntuli and senior investigative reporter Jacques Steenkamp earlier this week penned a letter to Motsoeneng, stating that the decision amounted to censorship.

Icasa's complaints committee heard arguments on the matter last week and it will have to submit its recommendations to the authority, which will decide whether to adopt the report or not.

*Source: Business Day*

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