

We're not the apartheid regime, Zuma tells media

 By Issa Sikiti da Silva

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President Jacob Zuma has reacted angrily to suggestions that the creation of a [media appeals tribunal](#) is an attempt by the ruling party to control and bulldoze the media using the tactics of apartheid regime. Writing in [ANC Today](#), the party's online weekly newsletter, the sexagenarian head of state said to suggest that the ANC and its government could have any similarities to the apartheid regime is not only preposterous, but also disingenuous and an unbearable insult.

Astounded



The South African president said he was astounded by the commentaries and opinion pieces written by some within the media fraternity and within the society broadly, in reaction to 'this important' debate.

He slammed what he called 'misleading' and 'over-defensive' arguments by some media practitioners and their supporters that have muddled what would have ordinarily been a productive and a necessary debate within the context of the country's Constitution.

He also lashed out at the media for putting itself on the pedestal of being the guardian. "We therefore have the right to ask, who is guarding the guardian? All institutions, even parliament has mechanisms in place to keep them in check.

"Almost all professions have similar mechanisms from teachers to architects, doctors, engineers, politicians, lawyers and others... Can a guardian be a proper guardian when it does not reflect the society it claims to protect and represent?" he wrote on Friday, 13 August 2010.

"No holy cows"

"Let the real debate begin. Let there be no holy cows!" Zuma concluded.

The president's killer punch at the media only epitomises the worsening relationship and irreconcilable differences between the Fourth Estate and the government - a sad trend in Africa's powerful but youngest democracy, once hailed a 'miracle' all over the world.

But the media, who have vowed to 'die with their boots on for their freedom', remain undeterred by the president's furious comments.

Yesterday, *The Sunday Independent's* Mpumelelo Mkhabela wrote: "Now, why would the ANC go all out to propose tribunals when it should close down the corrupting tap from its own ranks.

"Puzzling"

"It is puzzling that when the media reports about the conduct of some ANC leaders, 'wherever they are', and how they are betraying the party's principles and therefore short-changing society, it is said to be going 'overboard'.

Writing in the same newspaper under the headline 'The Media Tribunal: behind the farce', Onkgopotse JJ Tabane said: "This misguided tribunal proposal is largely a painful admission of failure to use its muscle to influence the press."

Meanwhile, the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM), a Grahamstown-based organisation, said in a statement that the

[Protection of Information Bill](#) is a blow and a complete negation of democracy which will make it even more difficult, if not impossible, to expose corruption at municipal level.



"Absolutely nothing to do"

"The proposed bill and tribunal have absolutely nothing to do with freeing the press from the [yoke] of capital. It is the very same capital that acts through the ruling party and continues to dominate economic power," UPM chairperson Ayanda Kota said.

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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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