

# Motsoeneng stares down Malema

Fresh from leading a chaotic protest last week in Gauteng, Julius Malema is looking to start a new fire, this time threatening to lead the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in a mass action to burn television licences on the SABC's doorstep.

Malema last week led 2,000 EFF members on a rampage at the Gauteng legislature, demanding the party's elected representatives be allowed to participate in sittings wearing overalls and gumboots or domestic workers' attire. Despite the protest ending with police shooting into the crowd with rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades, Malema on Friday threatened to come back again with a larger crowd in an unprotected march.

SABC chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng was yesterday unfazed, saying his focus was to take the public broadcaster "higher and higher" and not focus on petty issues.

Malema's threats come as the SABC on Saturday cancelled plans to broadcast the EFF's first anniversary celebrations live on its free channel and the 24-hour news channel.

With 19 radio stations and four television channels, the SABC has the biggest reach of all the media in SA - making it a contested terrain for those who wish to influence broader society.

The public broadcaster is meant to share its coverage of political parties proportionally to their size of representation in Parliament.

The EFF is the third-largest party in Parliament after the 7 May national election.

## Controversy

A web of controversy has recently hit the SABC, including allegations of political interference following Motsoeneng's permanent appointment earlier this month.



SABC chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng is apparently unfazed. (Image: SABC)

In February, Public Protector Thuli Madonsela found Motsoeneng was unsuitable for the post. He is alleged to have a close relationship with President Jacob Zuma, but the Presidency has denied that Zuma influenced his appointment.

Malema told a crowd of more than 15,000 in Thokoza Park in Soweto on Saturday that no one must take the EFF for granted. "We must teach them to respect us. And if they are not going to respect us, we are going to force them."

Malema blamed the SABC's cancellation of the broadcast on political interference from the African National Congress (ANC).

He said the SABC in the past had said it could not broadcast EFF events because the party was not represented in Parliament.

"Today we are in Parliament but we are still being molested by the ANC," Malema said.

SABC spokesman Kaizer Kganyago said it was "unfortunate" that one of the country's legislators would urge the public to break the law. Kganyago said the payment of television licences was a law.



Julius Malema, EFF leader, has threatened to lead a protest to the SABC and burn TV licences there. (Image: EFF)

He said he was "not aware of any agreement between the EFF and the SABC" about broadcasting the rally live. "When we broadcast something we then tell people to watch it." He said the EFF may have just had an informal discussion with someone at the SABC. The party had the right to protest, he said.

ANC spokesman Zizi Kodwa said the EFF was among parties that "want to project themselves as much bigger than they are". It "imagined itself at the same level as the majority party" but "cannot enjoy the same media share as the ANC".

He said the EFF was aware it did not need to prove allegations of political interference against the ANC.

Source: *Business Day*, via I-Net Bridge

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