

Senate president's censorship threat

Swaziland senate president Gelane Zwane has insulted and threatened journalists for turning up to a meeting to which they were invited, according to reports in the *Times of Swaziland*, the country's oldest privately-owned newspaper.

Zwane, who was in attendance at the meeting, held Thursday, 17 January 2013, to prepare for the opening of parliament, allegedly uttered rude words in the direction of journalists. The alleged insult was uttered in the local language, SiSwati.

"F***** ngalabantufu betindzaba," she said, much to the shock of all, including the speaker of parliament, Prince Guduza, who was seated next to her, reported the newspaper.

Loosely translated, the insult reads as: "F*** off news people".

The Times of Swaziland article also reported:

"Zwane further went on to say if anything that had been discussed yesterday [Thursday, 17 January] was published in the media then she would ensure that those journalists were banned from covering the 2013 State Opening of Parliament slated for next month."

Zwane's outburst apparently came after the clerk of parliament, Ndvuna Dlamini, who had convened the meeting, said he wanted to say something but couldn't because the media were present.

"It was at this point that Zwane interjected and said she was glad Dlamini has mentioned this. 'Last year the media came here and published all that was discussed at this meeting, said Zwane'."

The Times of Swaziland article, written by Sibongile Sukati, went on to say that "the media was invited by the office of the Clerk of Parliament and no instructions were given that the event should not be covered".

The Swaziland chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Swaziland) has repeatedly spoken out against this kind of treatment of the country's journalists.

MISA-Swaziland national director, Vuyisile Hlatshwayo, has appealed to Zwane to use the Editors Forum, Swaziland National Association of Journalists (SNAJ), or MISA to address whatever grievances she may have against the media.

"No matter what might have happened you don't address other professionals like that. Journalists are responsible for information dissemination in the country. Swazis in positions of power need to learn that no one is more Swazi or patriotic than other Swazis," said Hlatshwayo.

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