

***Sunday Times* 'deeply' regretful for 'failing SA'**

NEWSWATCH: As reported on News24 yesterday, the *Sunday Times* has apologised and announced that it will return all awards and prize money received for three now-discredited reports - on the Cato Manor police unit dubbed as a 'death squad', the SARS 'rogue unit' and Zimbabwean 'renditions'.



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Editor Bongani Siqoko said in [a statement published yesterday](#):

“ I believe it is only just and fitting for us to humbly reconsider our decision to accept such prestigious awards.

Accepting such accolades will be a negation of a higher journalistic idea. It will be for this reason that we will be returning all the awards and the prize money... There was clearly a parallel political project aimed at undermining our democratic values and destroying state institutions and removing individuals who were seen as obstacles to this project. We admit that our stories may have been used for this purpose. ”

Although the purpose of investigating the stories was to expose the truth, something went wrong in the process of gathering the information and reporting. "What is clear is that we committed mistakes and allowed ourselves to be manipulated by those with ulterior motives... We should have joined the dots. We should have paused and asked more questions."



[NewsMaker] Bongani Siqoko

Louise Marsland 7 Jan 2016



While the paper feels as if it has 'failed SA' and is 'deeply' regretful, it holds the stance that it should have still covered these incidents.

"There was, and is, a middle path that we should have taken. We should have reported on these incidents, but with caution and care."

UPDATE: Ray Hartley, former *Sunday Times* editor, at the time of the publication of two of these stories (now editor of *BusinessLive* and *Rand Daily Mail*), responded to the paper's apology, but it declined to publish his piece. He sent his version of events to colleagues in the media, and it was widely circulated by journalists and members of the public on social platforms, as reported in [Former Sunday Times editor Ray Hartley's blistering response to 'death squad' criticism](#) on News24.

Continue reading [Sunday Times to return awards, prize money for discredited reports](#) on News24, which has since published an [update](#), reporting that reporters Mzilikazi wa Afrika and Stephan Hofstatter have left Tiso Blackstar, however, not as a result of being fired.

For more:

- ['Sunday Times' apologises for 'tainted' scoops](#) - EWN.co.za
- [Paul Hoffman SC: Sunday Times needs to expose rotten 'sources'](#) - BizNews.com
- [Sunday Times eating humble pie](#) - Citizen.co.za

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