

SAJR refusal to publish ruling undermines PCSA

The SA Jewish Report (SAJR) has been expelled from the Press Council of South Africa (PCSA) following its refusal to publish a ruling against them.



Source: © Olga Yastremaska [123rf](#) The SA Jewish Report has been expelled from the Press Council of South Africa

The South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) says it finds it unfortunate that the SAJR forced the hand of the PCSA to take the unprecedented action of expelling the SAJR after the publication refused to abide by the rulings of the Acting Press Ombud and the PCSA Chair of Appeals, Judge Bernard Ngoepe.

Respect the Press Council

The matter stemmed from a complaint by the SA BDS Coalition and GIWUSA v SA Jewish Report.

According to Press Council Chair Judge Phillip Levinsohn, the decision was taken after lengthy correspondence and after the SAJR had refused to abide by the finding against them.

Judge Levinsohn said the Council spent time seeking to resolve the issue. However, the SAJR Report refused to publish the ruling against them.

Sanef has called on the publishers to reconsider their position. It has also asked the PCSA members to respect the Council and its rulings.

“The Press Council is the bulwark against interference in the media and any self-respecting media organisation should be a member of the Press Council.

“The Council continues to adjudicate complaints by members of the public and their findings, regardless of how they affect any member, must be respected. The work of the PCSA is important in strengthening our democracy and ensuring that freedom of speech is protected while the highest ethical standards are upheld by the media,” says the Sanef statement.

Undermining the Council

Sanef notes that parties dissatisfied with Press Ombuds’ rulings have the right to take them on appeal to the Appeals Panel, headed by an eminent, retired judge, and if they are still unhappy, that can take the process on judicial review.

“It is our view that no member of the Council should simply refuse to publish rulings against them. Therefore, compliance by the council’s members is deemed essential for its sustainability and credibility.

“Hence, the idea of simply refusing to adhere to its rulings not only undermines the Press Council but is also unfair to the complainants,” states Sanef.

The PCSA is a voluntary, co-regulatory, public-dominated body that, inter alia, mediates and hands down binding rulings in terms of the Press Code to ensure ethical, fair, journalism.

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