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Mr. Gwede Mantashe

Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy

29 October 2019

**OPEN LETTER TO MINISTER GWEDE MANTASHE ON JOURNALIST BRIBERY CLAIMS**

Dear Mr Mantashe,

The South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) condemns the bribery of journalists in the strongest possible manner, and we are extremely concerned by reports linking you to such a nefarious practice.

It is unacceptable to us that any South African, and especially a sitting cabinet minister would allegedly bribe journalists to quash a story about them.

The Sunday World reported that you had paid two journalists to “bury” a story about your relationship with the student, Lerato Habiba Makgatho. According to the newspaper, you paid the journalists R70 000 to “destroy evidence” backing the story. The Sunday World reported that you had not revealed the names of the journalists.

Today a new version of the story has been published where you deny the bribery allegations.

We eagerly await the truth to emerge and SANEF believes that it is imperative that you verify – under oath - which version of events is, in fact, correct and why you have made two contradictory statements.

Allegations of bribing journalists are a blight on the media industry and cause irreparable damage to our fight for media freedom.

It is therefore important that this issue is swiftly and decisively dealt with.

Minister - given the seriousness of the matter, SANEF will be writing a letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa to express our deep concern about the claims against you.

Furthermore, SANEF will be writing a letter to retired Judge Kathleen Satchwell, who is chairing our independent Inquiry into Media Ethics and Credibility, asking her to investigate this further. We will also be asking Judge Satchwell to look into the prevalence of “brown envelope” journalism across the industry.

We believe that “paid for” or what is known as “brown envelope” journalism is gutter journalism and goes against the ethics we hold dear. This dastardly practice fundamentally undermines our constitutional principles of freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of the media.

SANEF supports Sunday World editor, Makhudu Sefara who has promised to launch an investigation and to fire any journalist linked to bribery if any evidence is found.

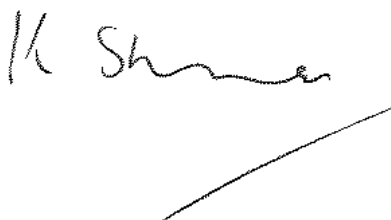
Allow us to remind you, Minister of section 2 of the Press Council Code deals with “Independence and Conflicts of Interest”. The Code states clearly that:

**The media shall:**

- 2.1 not allow commercial, political, personal or other non-professional considerations to influence reporting, and avoid conflicts of interest as well as practices that could lead readers to doubt the media’s independence and professionalism;**
- 2.2 not accept any benefit which may influence coverage;**
- 2.3 indicate clearly when an outside organization has contributed to the cost of newsgathering; and**
- 2.4 keep editorial material clearly distinct from advertising and sponsored events.**

Please do get back to us within the next seven days.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sharma', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath it.

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**Signed on behalf of the Chairperson of SANEF, Ms Mahlatse Mahlase;  
Deputy Chairperson, Katy Katopodis; Secretary-General, Moipone  
Malefane; Treasurer, Adriaan Basson; Eastern Cape Regional  
Coordinator, Sibusiso Ngalwa; Gauteng Regional Coordinator, Hopewell  
Radebe; KZN Regional Coordinator, Judy Sandison and Western Cape  
Regional Coordinator, Janet Heard.**