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SOS Welcomes Resolution of the FXI Blacklisting Complaint against the SABC

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The SOS Coalition welcomes the joint statement released by the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) and SABC yesterday. The statement follows the six-year long blacklisting case saga which ended with the FXI withdrawing its complaint against the SABC, and the broadcaster admitting its guilt for violating its Charter, its editorial policies and the broadcasting code, as well as committing to adhering to these codes and ensuring that no such violations will happen again.

For too long spectres of editorial interference have eroded South Africans' trust in and reliance on the SABC as a broadcaster of choice, and this renewed commitment from the public broadcaster comes as an ideal opportunity to begin rebuilding that trust.

Delighted as the Coalition is that this matter is finally being laid to rest, SOS laments this missed opportunity for the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) to assert its position as an institution that can be trusted with policing broadcasting violations and enforcing strict compliance with regulatory requirements. Indeed, it comes as a great disappointment that ICASA would, at the first instance, be reticent to hear a matter that fell directly under its purview and then find itself compelled to do so by an order of a Court, only to see the matter resolved outside of and despite itself.

The Coalition believes that transparency and accountability are central to an SABC that works, and for these to happen, not only must the SABC strive to demonstrate its commitment to these tenets in all aspects of its work but, where necessary, ICASA must act quickly, decisively and proactively to enforce compliance.

The SOS Coalition represents a number of trade unions including COSATU, COSATU affiliates CWU and CWUSA, FEDUSA, BEMAWU and MWASA; independent film and TV production sector organisations including the South African Screen Federation (SASFED); and a host of NGOs and CBOs including the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-SA); as well as a number of academics and freedom of expression activists.

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