

Sanef condemns attacks on foreign nationals and police attacks on journalists

The South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) discussed the role the media can play in enhancing social cohesion in light of the attacks on foreign nationals mainly of African origin at its Council meeting in Durban on Saturday, 18 April 2015.



Assisting communities

In addition to condemning the attacks as shameful and disgusting, Sanef believes media organisations can contribute in curbing the attacks by fostering tolerance among communities. Sanef applauded all media organisations that have been consistent in providing platforms for much-needed constructive dialogues and messaging through free advertising spaces. These are the key ingredients for peace.

"We urge all colleagues in the media to do their best in ensuring that while they accurately and fairly report on the attacks - as they have been doing - they also do whatever they can to assist communities of different backgrounds to find each other.

"We are concerned that some of the criminal elements behind these attacks on foreigners have targeted journalists to prevent them from doing their work. Society needs to build a culture of tolerance, without which media freedom would be under threat from those who seek to profit from violence not reported in the media," Sanef Chairperson Mpumelelo Mkhabela said.

Anti-media bashing

Sanef added that respect for journalists and their role in reporting on conflict situations should start with the law enforcement agencies.

"Some law enforcement officers have contributed to anti-media bashing by confiscating camera equipment of journalists and deleting their photographs. Sanef is in discussion with police commissioner General Riah Phiyega and her team of officials to ensure that law enforcement officers focus on the task of dealing with criminals and stop unconstitutional attacks on journalists.

Sadly, such attacks are being emulated by some metro police officers" Mkhabela said. Sanef will hold its annual general meeting on 4 July in Johannesburg. The AGM will host a conference of stakeholders to debate self-regulatory framework for print, digital and broadcast sectors in line with the convergences brought on by technology.