

Print media: to regulate or not to regulate? Send your views to PFC



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27 Oct 2011

Members of the South African public, including individuals, organisations, readers of newspapers, online publications and magazines, have until 30 November 2011 to send their written views to the [Press Freedom Commission](#) (PFC) about what type of regulatory systems should be put in place in SA. Is it independent regulation, co-regulation, self-regulation or statutory regulation?



PRESS FREEDOM
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The definitions of the abovementioned types of regulations can be found on the PFC website, www.pressfreedomcommission.org, PFC spokesperson Phillip Mtinkulu said last week, requesting people to send their submissions either via email (sapresscomm01@gmail.com), post (PO BOX 47180, Parklands, 2121, Johannesburg) or fax (+27 (0)11 482 6496).

The submissions may be written in any of the country's 11 official languages.

A series of public hearings

The commission said once the submissions have been received, it will embark on a series of [public hearings](#), *Listening to SA Campaign*, in January 2012 in Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Durban and Johannesburg, during which the public will be asked to make their oral submissions.

No dates have been given yet for these roadshows.

The PFC, an independent body of nine commissioners from different sectors of society, was [established in July this year](#) to investigate the best possible print regulatory system suitable for SA, which is in conformity with the country's Constitution.

The SA press has currently a self-regulatory system led by the [Press Council](#) of SA and governed by a press ombudsman and its subjects who manage conflicts between the press and readers who felt that they have been wronged by a certain article.

Make-or-break period

The commission has come at a critical time - a make-or-break period - when the relationship between the ANC-led government and the independent press has severely deteriorated over what many see as 'irreconcilable differences'.

But, apart from the Nelson Mandela administration, the following two administrations have clashed several times with the media. The relationship has been completely damaged in the past five years to such an extent that the ruling party has even proposed putting in place a [media appeals tribunal](#) (MAT) to punish what it calls 'irresponsible journalism'.

While the government continues to cry foul over what it sees as a litany of inaccurate and [unfair](#) newspaper reporting, which it claims undermines its authority and compromises nation-building, the press seems to say that it will defend its freedom 'until the last bullet'.

"Media freedom has always been defended in this country"

"Media freedom has always been defended in this country," former *City Press* editor and head of the Media24 Journalism

Academy [Mathatha Tsedu](#) said last week.

"It's about staying in those barricades; we won't go out of that space and we will not allow anyone to take it over," a defiant Tsedu said, undoubtedly throwing a provocative punch towards the ruling ANC.

The PFC, which sees its work as a historical and defining moment for SA, is hoping that the public's sincere and honest views will help it develop a suitable regulatory framework for print media, which may bring peace and romance between the ever-moaning ANC-led government and the press.





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