

Broadcasting Amendment Bill sent back to Parliament



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The controversial and 'unworkable' [Broadcasting Amendment Bill](#), which is meant to give politicians the power to sack the SABC board, has finally been shunned by President Kgalema Motlanthe and sent back to Parliament for reconsideration. The president's decision gives a brief but vital reprieve to the current embattled board led by Khanyisiwe Mkhonza.

"The President signed a letter this week, authorising the bill to be referred back to Parliament for reconsideration," presidential spokesperson Thabo Masebe said today, Tuesday, 10 February 2009, during a news clip on SABC Morning Live.

Numerous objections

Masebe added that the presidency has received numerous objections from various groups, including opposition political parties, raising concerns about the constitutionality of certain sections of the bill.

Motlanthe's decision not to sign the bill into law is likely to frustrate many of his ANC comrades who, last month, put him under heavy pressure over the outstanding bill. ANC chief whip Nyami Boo was said to have engaged Motlanthe over the delay to enact the bill that would have seen the allegedly problematic and 'partial' board swiftly given the boot.

ANC insiders claim SABC news director Snuki Zikalala and some of his political journalists, including Sophie Mokoena, are supporters of Congress of the People (COPE) - accusations rejected by Zikalala as baseless and unfounded.

The Star newspaper quoted Zikalala as saying: "If there is evidence that some journalists sit in at COPE meetings, they must produce evidence.

"At the SABC, we don't want allegations which are not tested. Within the newsroom we don't want any journalist to practice [political] activism."

Many loopholes

Some media groups have said the bill is 'unworkable' and has many loopholes in its current form. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) executive director William Bird said, "The hurry to get it passed and to remove the current board would seem to be at odds with the essential requirement of due process.

"While this may sound like a small issue, it is absolutely essential that due process is integral to the removal of the board as

a whole or on an individual basis.

“If it is not, it would open the board up to the most disastrous potential of being subject to the political whims of any party that decides that they are not happy with a particular board.”

This is the [second bill to be rejected by Motlanthe](#) in the past 10 days. Early this month, the president also referred the Films and Publications Amendment Bill back to Parliament.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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