

SABC sails into troubled waters - again



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The SABC is once again sailing deep into troubled waters - a repeat show that threatens to compromise its fragile stability. As board member [Peter Harris](#) abruptly resigns and director of news [Phil Molefe](#) 'controversially' replaces [Robin Nicholson](#) as acting CEO, the media is bracing itself once again for episodes of court battles, more political interference, more resignations of board members and huge payouts.



It is understood that Harris, who did not give reasons of his departure as confidentiality agreements gag any board member to do so, was unhappy about the way the Nicholson saga was handled, a 'plot' believed to derive from communication minister [Roy Padayachie](#)'s haste to change the articles of association, according to reports.

Intention to sue

The [Sunday Independent](#) newspaper yesterday, Sunday, 3 July 2011, reported that Nicholson had served the board with a lawyer's letter on Thursday night 30 June, announcing his intention to sue the cash-strapped public broadcaster.

[City Press](#) quoted Nicholson as saying that SABC board members lacked "integrity" for "lying" to him.

It is believed that the fact that [Dr Ben Ngubane](#) was out of the country at the time the meeting to amend the articles of association took place could give Nicholson a 'solid edge' to challenge the appointment.

"Process has not been followed properly and the current appointment is fraudulent. The general meeting called by the minister did not quorate," he told *City Press*.

Continuous secrecy

[SOS is said to deplore the continuous secrecy](#) surrounding the SABC's [articles and memorandum of association](#), stating that they must be publicly available and not to be entered into or amended without the public being heard on the matter.

"The SABC is not a typical company; it is the public broadcaster and must be open, and transparent in its dealings," the

organisation said in a statement.

If the 'Nicholson CEO War' drags on and on and that the gods of victory look certain to rule in his favour, the SABC - which has a history of paying huge handshakes to its outgoing CEOs - could be forced to settle the matter peacefully, and eventually hand over another golden handshake to Nicholson.

Former CEO [Dali Mpofu](#), 'took home' about R11 million, while [Solly Mokoetle](#) was 'given' R3.4 million - to go away peacefully.

"No coincidence"

"Nicholson's position has always been in question. It was no coincidence that that he was away when this happened," an unidentified board member told *The Sunday Independent*.

"He was told to go to the Auckland Park offices and pack up his things - you can imagine him walking in with his tail between his legs. He is humiliated."

Molefe, who replaces Nicholson, was also at the centre of another boardroom battle, after he was unilaterally appointed head of news in May 2010 by Dr Ngubane, in contravention of the Broadcasting Act of 1999, the SABC's articles of association and internal processes and protocols.

Weekend newspapers also reported that Transnet National Ports Authority's [Tau Morwe](#), a candidate who came out tops during the process of appointing a permanent CEO, has been rejected by the ruling ANC, which prefers [Joe Mjwara](#), 'one of their own'.

"We don't know about his activism"

"Technically, his CV looked impressive, but where he came from, his background politically, was not clear. We don't want to take chances with the position of the CEO. We don't know about his activism," an ANC member said, according to *Sunday Independent*.

"There's a high possibility, a 99% chance that we have to restart the process," a board member was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, head of TV and radio news and current affairs [Mike Siluma](#) has been appointed as acting director of news.

For more:

- Google News Search: [SABC CEO](#)
- Twitter Search: [SABC CEO](#)

Corrected at 12.45pm on 4 July 2011.

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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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