

Complaint against Lotus FM upheld

The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of SA (BCCSA) upheld a complaint against SABC's Lotus FM station about a radio drama that contained a discussion on the relationship between Israel and Palestine.



The commission said in a judgment which was released last Thursday that the radio drama "Sunshine Mall" contravened clause 13 of the broadcasting code in one of its episodes.

"We are of the view that the contravention amounted to a bona fide error, and that it is not necessary to reprimand the SABC or impose another sanction."

The complaint by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies stated that the episode contained "a lengthy section that very clearly took the form of a politically motivated comment".

It said that in the course of the episode one of the characters discusses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with her boss against the backdrop of an anti-Israeli protest at one of the mall's shops.

"The central point to stress is that the 'discussion' was very obviously framed as a vehicle for the character to propagate an extended, completely one-sided anti-Israel diatribe."

The complaint stated the character made several contentious allegations against Israel.

A contravention of the broadcasting code

"The relevant segment concludes with a bowdlerised quote by [former president] Nelson Mandela purportedly stating that South Africa's freedom was not complete until the freedom of the Palestinians was achieved," the complaint read.

"What Mandela actually said was: 'But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians; without the resolution of conflicts in East Timor, the Sudan, and other places...'."

"Hence Mandela did not, as falsely intimated, suggest that the Palestinian cause was of especial importance but rather listed it as one of many others."

It said the failure of Lotus FM to provide the other side of the argument was a contravention of the broadcasting code.

The SABC responded that the show was a drama and not a discussion program.

"Being a drama, the script allows for opinions to be expressed by characters without the need to have a counter-view to this opinion, even though, as the complainant concedes, there was an attempt to do so by the second character in the discussion," the response read.

"We might add that the drama series, with its intent to be as topical as possible when its characters discuss events, has indeed had characters expressing opinions or views on a wide range of issues, including the Marikana massacre [and]... the Gupta plane landing at Waterkloof Air [Force] Base."

Source: Sapa, via I-Net Bridge

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