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PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

12 March 2013

The Station Manager
SAFM
SABC
Auckland Park

For Attention: Mr Dennis O'Donnell

Dear Sir

Re: Objection to SAFM & SABC Censorship on programming relating to Palestine's Occupation by Israel:

An interview was arranged during late last week with an esteemed Christian Palestinian guest, the academic and human rights campaigner, Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, and scheduled for this morning at 9am. Yesterday we were informed that the interview would include a person nominated by the Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD) to ensure "balance on a sensitive issue". Late yesterday we were informed that the interview was cancelled because the JBD nominated guest would not avail himself.

We hereby strongly object to this vile act of crude censorship in the name of "balance" to simply pander to the racist and undemocratic position of local Zionists who wholly support Israel's racist apartheid and illegal occupation of historic Palestine and its continued genocide of the Palestinian people.

Your act of censorship in the name of "balance" is unlawful and unconstitutional, violating South Africans' rights of freedom of expression and access to information. For no other programmes on SAFM/SABC that discusses issues relating to political conflict in other countries is there this insistence on "the other side" to be represented to the extent where programmes are unilaterally cancelled by the other side when they refuse to participate. Why is the same approach not adopted in relation to Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Syria, Egypt, Mali etc.?

In any event if you insist on balance then you should also have invited Hamas and several other significant groups in Palestine/Israel who have different perspectives on the conflict since Professor is a Christian Palestinian.

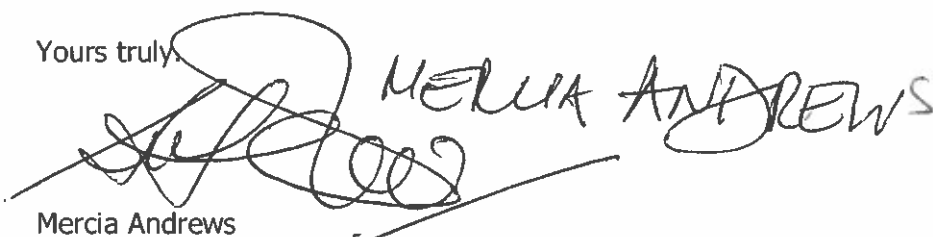
This is of course not the first time that SAFM and the SABC has censored a programme and displayed such blatant bias towards local Zionists and Israel. A case in point was the

extensive interview done with a young Zionist Palestinian Israeli on SAFM during 2012. Why did you not ensure balance by inviting "the other side" to respond?

We are also mindful that this has become a pattern of the local Zionist lobby, a modus operandi of theirs and a ploy to sabotage radio and TV programmes that potentially is critical of Israel. This is a tactic the SAJBD has used previously as well in order to get a programme cancelled that they don't want to go on air. That is, they hear about the programme, then demand of the SABC that the programme must be 'balanced', i.e., include someone that they nominate, get SABC's agreement to this, then inform the SABC at the last minute that their nominee is unwilling or unavailable. The SABC, then, having given an undertaking not to air the show without a Zionist, cancels it.

We demand that you desist from such bias and censorship that favours the local Zionist lobby and Israeli oppression that has been outlawed and condemned by the UN and that you have another programme on the issue during this week, being Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW).

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MERCIA ANDREWS', with a large, stylized flourish above it.

Mercia Andrews
(Secretary)