



SCORING AN OWN GOAL AGAINST FREE SPEECH - Opinion

Of course this started a while before the Black First Land First #LandOrDeath protest outside editor Peter Bruce's home on Thursday morning. It probably started way, way before that. But recently we cheered and re-tweeted when the DA called for a boycott of all Gupta-media on 06 June (<https://www.da.org.za/2017/06/da-calls-boycott-gupta-media/>). We were called upon as South Africans to discern fake Gupta news from real news and we were warned that if we consume Gupta Media, we run the risk of "falling prey to propaganda."

Not to be outdone, Minister of Arts and Culture, Nathi Mthethwa, reportedly announced the withdrawal of government advertising from " 'anti-Zuma ' media." According to the IOL, Mthethwa "called on ANC supporters not believe everything they read in newspapers whenever bad things had been written in newspapers and elsewhere." (<http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/mthethwa-pulls-government-ads-from-anti-zuma-media-9745390>).

I argued then that threats of withdrawal of advertising amount to commercial censorship of the media and the media relies on advertising revenue for sustainability. Questions about the role and credibility of the media are important and need to be had in the context of fake news but the deteriorating levels of debate and increasing intolerance and intimidation are cause for concern. There can be no victors in this battle to 2019, and sadly, free speech is fast becoming a casualty of war.

---Ends---

About the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI): The FXI promotes and defends the right to freedom of expression. The FXI envisions a society where everyone enjoys freedom of expression and the right to access and disseminate information and knowledge. We undertake a wide range of activities in support of these objectives that advance the right to free expression. Our activities include; Litigation, legal advice and support, Research and monitoring, and Civic education and advocacy. The Institute also networks and collaborates with, a wide range of local and international organisations. Through the following objectives, we seek to:

- To fight for and defend freedom of expression,
- To oppose censorship,
- To fight for the right of equal access to information and knowledge, and
- To promote access to media and a free press.

About Tusi Fokane – Executive Director of the FXI

Tusi Fokane is a media and policy analyst with a focus on communications regulation. Her experience includes media policy development, research and analysis. Tusi holds a Masters in Management of Public Policy degree from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her particular interests are freedom of expression and human rights.