

Alert Update

21 November 2007

MDC condemns attacks against journalists

The MDC has denounced as primitive acts of barbarism the assault and harassment of journalists on 18 November 2007 at the party's headquarters in Harare.

South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) correspondent John Nyashanu was harassed and harangued by militant party youths outside the MDC offices at Harvest House in Harare on 18 November 2007.

Two other freelance journalists were similarly harassed by the rowdy youths amid reports that one of them was slapped during the melee at Harvest House. MISA-Zimbabwe is reliably informed that one of the freelance journalists was slapped and tripped to the ground by the youths when he returned to Harvest House to pursue an interview. MISA-Zimbabwe cannot name the freelance journalists for security reasons.

“The MDC has never believed in the politics of violence and denounces the barbaric politics of brutal coercion ... and we condemn whoever was responsible for the primitive acts of barbarism,” said the MDC in a statement issued on 21 November 2007.

The MDC believes in a free and unfettered press. Our information and communication policy makes it clear that press freedom should be an integral part of the bill of rights because we believe in the freedom of journalists to operate in a free and unfettered environment.”

MISA-Zimbabwe on 21 November 2007 also held a meeting with officials from the MDC's secretariat in view of the disturbing reports of the attacks against journalists. National Director Rashweat Mukundu stressed the need for the party to rein in its supporters and educate them on the critical role played by journalists and the media in the democratisation process.

The meeting was attended by Mukundu, MISA-Zimbabwe Research and Information Officer Nyasha Nyakunu and Toendepi Shonhe, the chief executive officer of the MDC and Luke Tamborinyoka, the party's director of information and publicity.

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