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EFN calls on Government to withdraw action against *The Patriot*

THE Editor's Forum of Namibia calls on the Namibia Central Intelligence Service (NCIS) to withdraw its court action against *The Patriot* newspaper and its editor Mathias Haufiku, with immediate effect.

The EFN also condemns the use of old apartheid draconian laws to censor and silence the Namibian media.

Last Thursday, the NCIS and its director general, Philemon Malima, approached the court and stopped *The Patriot* from publishing a story, claiming such publication will jeopardise national security.

Although the hearing was postponed until Friday, April 20 this week to give *The Patriot* an opportunity to respond to the application, the NCIS was successful in using the draconian 1982 Protection of Information Act in stopping the publication of the story.

The EFN agrees with the view expressed by the Namibia Media Trust (NMT) that the specific Act is unconstitutional as it violates both freedom of speech and the media, and should have long since been scrapped.

It is a shame that an apartheid law is still on Namibia's statute books and is being used by the current Government to silence the media and to promote secrecy.

Such an action is against the very sentiments expressed by President Hage Geingob when he told the World Press Freedom Day ceremony last year that "as long as I am given the mandate to lead this great country, freedom of the press is guaranteed".

At the same ceremony President Geingob said the Namibian media form part and parcel of the governance architecture, with the responsibility of ensuring that elected officials are held accountable and deliver on promises made and that there was a need for Namibian media to become the freest in the world.

"We are talking about being number one, not just in Africa, but in the world. I often talk of the formula I have conceived: accountability + transparency = trust. For trust to be established, we need both accountability and transparency."

Actions such as that of the NCIS stifle transparency and accountability in the name of national security. They also go against Namibia's Harambee Prosperity Plan which aspires to keep the country number one in Africa on the World Press Freedom Index as adjudicated by the Reporters' without Borders.

Joseph Ailonga
Chairperson
Editors' Forum of Namibia
Mobile: +264 812 717 853