



23 November 2019

PRESS STATEMENT

On the Timing of Corruption Exposés

On November 22, 2019, the Namibian Presidency issued a statement referring to a “media disinformation campaign aimed to influence voters, tarnish the image of the country and the President” ahead of elections on November 27.

Accusing media of strategically timing corruption exposés during the run-up to presidential and national elections, the statement cited publication of the fishing quota scandal, known as the #fishrotfiles, and reports on the disastrous Kora awards, the Presidency said Namibians were being “curiously bombarded with negative and largely distorted articles” at a time the country was going to the polls.

In our view, this is both an ill-conceived and thoughtless statement.

The #fishrot investigation has been years in the making and regardless of when it was brought to public attention, the exposure of a corruption scandal of this magnitude should be welcomed by all Namibians, as it reveals the ruthless plunder of our natural resources by a select few politicians and greedy individuals. The subsequent resignation of two Ministers and other key figures is proof of the veracity of these reports.

The Presidency is both being disingenuous and confusing people by attacking real news rather than the prevalent disinformation which has been circulating on social media during this 2019 election campaign.

Namibians not only need, but also have the right to know when our scarce resources are being abused at the expense of the majority of our people, or when money is stolen, and journalists continue to play a crucial role in informing the nation in this regard.

Gratuitous censure of the media such as this statement from the Presidency, are putting the country at risk of losing its number one status at the top of Africa’s press freedom rankings. It also risks jeopardizing the safety of journalists in the exercise of their work.

Instead, all right-thinking and committed Namibians, including a government which is committed to fighting corruption, should welcome the watchdog role of journalists in our democracy which has resulted in outing corruption and wrongdoing on a massive scale.

Journalism such as this has no agenda to promote one political party or presidential candidate over another. It is simply intended to inform Namibians of the abuse of precious resources which could and should otherwise be used to benefit the majority and lift the standards of the poor and impoverished.

Issued by:

Gwen Lister
Executive Chairperson
Namibia Media Trust
Email: info@nmt.africa