

NMT condemns spy agency for gagging *Patriot*

The Namibia Media Trust (NMT) has condemned an attempt this week by the Namibia Central Intelligence Service (NCIS) to censor and silence the media.



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This follows an urgent application which was brought before court on Thursday by NCIS director general, Philemon Malima, against the *Patriot* newspaper and its editor Mathias Haufiku, in a bid to stop the publication of a news report about an association of former members of the NCIS as well as the purchase of certain properties. The NCIS claims that the publication of this report would contravene the 1982 Protection of Information Act and threatens and/or jeopardise national security, and further insists that all information about the activities and assets of the NCIS should be kept under a blanket of secrecy.

To give the *Patriot* opportunity to respond to the application, the hearing was postponed by Judge Harald Geier to next week Friday. The newspaper has in the meantime withheld publication of the report pending the outcome of the High Court application. The *Patriot*, represented by lawyer Norman Tjombe, has filed notice that the newspaper would oppose the gagging order.

In the view of the NMT's executive chairperson, Gwen Lister, the 1982 Protection of Information Act, which dates back to apartheid days, is unconstitutional as it violates both freedom of speech and the media, and should have long since been scrapped.

“There are serious criminal penalties attached to this outdated law, which has a chilling effect on the work of journalists reporting freely in the public interest, and further flies in the face of our democratic Constitution and its guarantees of freedom of speech and expression.”

The NMT unequivocally condemned the NCIS using the courts and a draconian law to censor the media and to stifle the public's rights to access to information. Seen against the background of both President Hage Geingob's Harambee plan which promotes a more open and transparent regime, as well as ongoing efforts to ensure an Access to Information law for Namibia, the action by NCIS to stifle media freedom is unacceptable.

The NMT called on government to speedily strike this oppressive law from our statute books along with any other that undermine the constitutionally entrenched rights to free speech and expression.

Read the [original article](#) on [Namibian](#).

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