

# R2K to host protest parties across SA today

Protest parties and street carnivals in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban today will mark World Press Freedom Day. Supporters are asked to wear red and black as a sign of their opposition to the National Key Points Act and the passing of the Secrecy Bill.



The 3rd of May is recognised around the world as World Press Freedom Day, a day to reflect on the right to open access to information - the right to know. The Right2Know campaign (R2K) will hold a protest party and street carnival at the SABC (a national key point) on Friday, 3 May 2013 from noon until 4pm.

## What is a key point?

The campaign aims to highlight what R2K describes as a tactic used by the SAPS and the minister of police to deny citizens of their right to know, an infringement on their basic human rights - the abuse of the National Key Points Act. R2K says that currently, the National Key Points Act is being used to make a mockery of the right of access to information and perpetuates the shroud of secrecy over information that is vital to the public interest.

The National Key Points Act is a draconian and obscure piece of apartheid-era legislation, says R2K, which remains on our statute books and gives the head of the SAPS the power to declare any place a 'national key point', if it is deemed important to national security. Any site can be named a key point, from airports and factories to power stations and presidential residences - yet the public does not even know which buildings now fall under the Act.

## Refusal to release key point locations

On 4 October 2012, according to the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), the Right2Know Campaign launched a request for the Minister of Police to release the full list of National Key Points. The police refused this request and R2K appealed. After the police missed the legal deadline to respond to the appeal, R2K granted them a 30-day extension, which the minister missed also. Eventually, on 7 March 2013 the minister, Dr Siyabonga Cwele, upheld the decision to refuse to release the list of National Key Points.

The R2K campaign finds the minister's reasons for refusing to release the list unacceptable and illogical, and notes some examples of how it believes the National Key Points Act has been used to prevent south Africans the right to know:

- In the midst of the Nkandla-gate scandal, the president's Nkandla property was declared a national key point, preventing those investigating the story from accessing relevant information which would be in the public interest.
- Private-sector players in the petrochemical industry have attempted to use the Act to prevent communities in South Durban from gathering information on their environmental impact.
- Citizens have been denied their right to assemble at certain places on the grounds that they wish to gather at a 'national key point', infringing on their constitutionally enshrined right to assembly.
- Finally, there is no publically published list of National Key Points. Therefore, although citizen's rights are limited at places, which are national key points, there is no way of knowing where these places are. This means that you could be breaking the law without even knowing it, by staging a protest at a national key point or even photographing it.

In a report released earlier this year (Secret State of the Nation report) the R2K Campaign revealed how there has been a 54% increase in the number of national key points across the country in the last five years - but still do not have a list of them. The state is actively promoting this unjust law, says R2K, using it in blatant disregard for the citizen's right to know, the public interest, and open access to information.

## **SABC is key point**

The SABC is reportedly a national key point and therefore R2K plan to do what the National Key Points Act would prohibit it from doing and gather at the SABC on World Press Freedom Day. the R2K campaign will be holding a street carnival protest party in celebration of World Press Freedom Day, to highlight its demands for a greater culture of openness in South Africa, and to call for a rolling back of the shroud of secrecy.

The festival will include a youth theatre group staging their drama called Press and media expression, as well as a National Key Point photo booth live-tweeting pictures of R2Kers from in front of the SABC and various other artists.

## **Picketing cellphone providers in Cape Town, supporting whistle-blowers in Durban**

Pickers will gather at the MTN & Vodacom regional offices in Century City, Cape Town and at the City Hall in Durban. This marks the first public demonstration against the high cost of mobile communication upheld by the virtual duopoly for these two corporations.

Protesters will gather on the corner of Century Boulevard and Heron Street in Century City, Cape Town at 1pm. In Durban, the R2K will be highlighting opposition to the passing of the Secrecy Bill at the Durban City Hall from 10am to noon. The Secrecy Bill is deemed a threat to journalists, whistle-blowers and activists across South Africa.

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