

News release

National Press Club condemns Julius Malema outrage

The National Press Club strongly condemns the actions of ANC Youth League President Julius Malema at a news conference this morning.

Malema kicked a journalist out of a media briefing after calling the reporter a "bastard". He was condemning the Movement for Democratic Change for criticising from its office in Sandton, when BBC journalist Jonah Fisher mentioned that the youth league leader lived in Sandton.

He shouted at the journalist saying: "You are a small boy, you can't do anything. Go out, bastard!" Malema also accused the gathered media of being obsessed with him and so desperate to sell newspapers they were willing to write anything. He asked security to remove the journalist.

He also accused the journalists of treating him the way white people used to treat blacks, saying: "Don't come here with that white tendency!"

Yusuf Abramjee, chairperson of the National Press Club, said such behaviour against the media is unacceptable in a democratic country where media freedom is part of the Constitution. "The media has a job to do and we will not sit back and watch our colleagues being abused. This is a very unfortunate event and the National Press Club is shocked by this."

Abramjee recalled the words of President Zuma in his acceptance speech at the club's Newsmaker award a few weeks ago that media freedom is part of the promotion of a vibrant debate within the country. Zuma said in his speech "we celebrate the freedom of the media which is enshrined in our Constitution, which allows the media to report on almost anything they wish to, within the ambit of the law."

Abramjee said something would have to be done. "We cannot sit back and watch a journalist being manhandled."

He also called on all journalists not to sit back and watch their colleagues being abused – saying that everyone should have walked out in solidarity with the BBC reporter.

"Journalists need to stick together. It is entirely appropriate to walk out should a news conference degenerate into a shouting match and should journalists be sworn at and insulted.

"This is not the first time that Malema has chosen to attack journalists and it appears to have become a trend in the past few weeks."

The National Press Club re-iterates its statement of a few weeks ago – where it called on all the name calling to end.

(Ends)

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Date 8 April 2010