

MEDIA ADVISORY

BLACK WEDNESDAY, 49 YEARS LATER: CAN THE SABC SURVIVE DEMOCRACY AND THE ELECTIONS?

Honourable Khusela Diko to Deliver 16th Percy Qoboza Memorial Lecture as South Africa Heads to a Defining Election Year

Approved for public release.

Date: Monday, 19 October 2026

On 19 October 1977, they banned organisations, shut down newspapers and locked up Percy Qoboza. They thought silencing the press would kill democracy. They were wrong. 49 years later, the threat is different. It is not just censorship, it is capture, collapse and credibility.

The University of South Africa (Unisa), in partnership with the National Press Club and the Qoboza Family, will host the 16th Percy Qoboza Memorial Lecture.

Theme: PUBLIC INTEREST OR PUBLIC BROADCASTER: CAN THE SABC SURVIVE DEMOCRACY?

This year, the question is urgent. As South Africa heads into a high-stakes election cycle, who will guard the public interest?

The SABC is not just a broadcaster. It is the only media house constitutionally mandated to reach every South African, from villages to townships to suburbs in all official languages. It is the stage where political parties debate, where election results are announced, where fact must triumph over disinformation, where the poor still rely for news when data is expensive and newspapers are gone.

Yet the SABC goes into this election wounded:

- Politically interfered with, financially unstable, and editorially contested
- Fighting for relevance against TikTok, YouTube and well-funded disinformation machinery
- Trusted less than it should be, but needed more than ever

Can it still be a referee in an election where everyone wants to own the scoreboard? Can it still speak for the public when it is fighting to survive?

Delivering this year's lecture is Honourable Khusela Sangoni Diko, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies, the committee that holds the SABC's future, funding model and independence in its hands.



This lecture honours Percy Qoboza, the editor who proved that a fearless pen is more powerful than a banning order.

This is not nostalgia. It is a warning. And a reckoning.

So that it will never happen again.

Date : Wednesday, 21 October 2024.

Time : 18:00

Venue : 4th floor Function Hall, Kgorong Building, Unisa Main Campus, Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Tshwane

Members of the media are invited to attend the lecture or join via the following link:

/Ends.

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