

Findings of 'NKANDLAGATE' - a critical textual analysis of the press coverage

Findings of a research report, conducted for the Media Policy & Democracy Project: a critical discourse analysis of the *City Press* and *Mail & Guardian* coverage of Nkandlagate between Sept 2012 & Sept 2013. ('media' here below refers to *City Press* and *M&G* only)

1 WERE THE MEDIA HOSTILE TO THE ANC?

NO. There is **no evidence** of undue hostility from the media. There is evidence of detailed and constant analysis, & calls for access to **information**.

2 DID THE MEDIA ATTACK THE DIGNITY OF ANC POLITICIANS?

NO. The media took care to argue points logically and not engage in *ad hominem* attacks. Deriding authoritarian behaviour is not an attack on someone's dignity.

3 Did the media operate to the detriment of the public interest?

NO. It would have been wrong of the media **NOT** to report on the story. The media's persistent calls for access to information that citizens are constitutionally entitled to serve the public interest.

4 Did the media treat the protection and promotion of media freedom as more important than responsible and ethical reporting?

NO. The Nkandla saga has been a test of the media's willingness to protect their freedom of speech and they have done so with determination. There is no evidence that responsible or ethical reporting were neglected in the pursuit of media freedom.

5 Did the ANC act to the detriment of the public interest?

YES. The ANC and security cluster officials displayed consistent reluctance to release information about the public funds spent on Nkandla - information to which citizens are constitutionally entitled.

6 Was the ANC hostile toward the media?

YES. Officials consistently responded in tones of reluctance, impatience, righteousness and arrogance. The President attempted to present himself as the victim instead of accepting the responsibilities associated with his office.

7 Whose voices did the media include and how were these voices positioned?

Coverage was confined to the voices of the social elite, politicians, lawyers, civil society leaders & public intellectuals. Voices of ordinary South Africans were not frequently represented.