

## Daily Dispatch (Final Edition) - 11 Feb 2019

### ANC'S MANIFESTO FIASCO

ANC'S MANIFESTO FIASCO Minister apologises for blocking journalists at ANC rally SIYA TSEWU and LIZEKA TANDWA MTHATHA BUREAU [siyatOdispatch.co.za](http://siyatOdispatch.co.za) It took three ANC provincial leaders to defuse the situation when a group of members disrupted treasurer general Paul Mashatile during his speech at the Eastern Cape manifesto launch at Badibanise Stadium in KwaBhaca. As Mashatile was about to start his keynote address to a crowd of about 1,000 members who braved the wet and chilly weather, a group of about 100 people, believed to be from the OR Tambo region, started singing in protest. The disgruntled group raised placards, demanding water and sanitation, an end to gender based violence, and community inclusion in economic plans and projects in their area. Some placards read: "Why vote?" PEC member Stella Ndabeni Abrahams, public works MEC Pemmy Majodina and provincial chair Oscar Mabuyane intervened to regain order in the marquee. Ndabeni Abrahams headed straight to the disruptive crowd to try to calm them, and Majodina started singing in an attempt to drown them out. Mabuyane reprimanded the singing crowd: "Comrades, you have made your point, please sit down. No discipline will not be tolerated because we are a party of order and discipline. Mazi phele izimilo ezinemihlisela misbehaviour must come to an end." During that interaction, Ndabeni Abrahams, the minister of communications, prevented an SABC TV crew from filming the protest. In a statement on Saturday evening, she offered her "sincere unreserved apologies for the altercation with some members of the media. I wish to assure the media and South Africans at large my unreserved commitment to media freedom. I sincerely regret the incident." Calm was finally restored and with a tremble in his voice, Mashatile resumed his

speech, in which he urged everyone to head to the polls on May 8 and vote for the ANC. "The service delivery issues that our members are raising here are all dealt with in the manifesto. We are prioritising growing the economy and providing jobs, especially for the youth. "We are also committed to providing free education to children from poor families. We also want to invest in early childhood development ECD because we do not want to complain when they reach grade 12," he said. "We note that we have had problems with pit latrines in the past. We do not want to have more children die in this way. That is why we have committed to eradicating all pit latrines in three years." Mashatile said the ruling party would not protect anyone who was found to be in the wrong. "We support the Zondo Commission and other commissions. The ANC is not corrupt, but we are making sure that those who are corrupt in our ranks, will be dealt with. Furthermore, we are calling on all members to do right by our people. ANC members must lead by example." Mashatile said the party intended to fight femicide. He added the ANC supported land expropriation without compensation. Speaking to the Dispatch on Sunday, Ndabeni Abrahams said: "I did not see my actions as barring the SABC." In the SABC footage, Ndabeni Abrahams is seen covering the screen with her hand as the cameraman tries to film the internal protest. Her actions caused a stir on social media, with many questioning her credibility as a communications minister responsible for the SABC. She was recently appointed in her position by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Ndabeni Abrahams told the Dispatch she was scared that the SABC camera crew would fuel the fire of disgruntlement among party members. "I was just focusing on the people toying and therefore I was scared that if they see cameras, they would continue. Ndabeni Abrahams said she now realised the impact of her actions. "I was not really looking to muzzle the SABC. My main focus was on what was happening at the

event. I really apologise for it," she told the Dispatch. The South African National Editors' Forum Sanef lambasted the minister and called for an urgent meeting. Sanef chair Mahlase said empirical evidence showed that when senior party leaders and politicians muzzled journalists, their supporters followed in their footsteps. "Sanef is concerned that attacks against journalists are escalating and calls on political parties and those elected to lead not to use journalists as pawns in their political infighting and or to cover up corruption." DA MP Phumzile van Damme said Ndabeni Abrahams's actions were no different from previous ANC ministers who sought to control the SABC through political interference. Her actions caused a stir on social media, many questioning her credibility