

Outlook

Re: Resubmission of Amended Reduced Complaints regarding articles published by the Media24 Group

From Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>**Date** Sat 23 Nov 2024 20:56**To** Fanie Groenewald <fanieg@ombudsman.org.za>**Cc** Latiefa Mobara <mobara@ombudsman.org.za>; Khanyi Mndaweni <khanyim@ombudsman.org.za>; 'The Truth South Africa' <thetruthsuidafrika@gmail.com>; Darren de Rodez <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

2 attachments (669 KB)

Folders Files and Links For The Press Council.pdf; Press Council Follow Up 23 November 2024.pdf;

23 November 2024

Dear Fanie Groenewald

Re: Complaints of 22 August and 12 November 2024

I hope this message finds you well.

I hope the amended complaint submitted 12 November meets your expectations and provides everything that may be needed. I dedicated every day for a month entirely to reworking the complaint, condensing it to as few pages as possible while maintaining its substance. As you may have seen, the complaint references multiple articles—approximately half a dozen original pieces that were subsequently replicated, adapted, or repeated across six widely read Media24 platforms (Netwerk24, Die Burger, Beeld, Volksblad, Rapport, and News24). These publications collectively account for 21 instances of publication, increasing to 24 when articles based on Media24's reporting are included. Spanning a six-month period, these articles encompass over 7,000 words (excluding the repeats and adaptations), approximately 75% of which consists of false or fabricated content. This translates to 120 false and fabricated statements (repeated across all 20 instances) and representing over 320 breaches of the Press Code. Further complicated by not knowing exactly how much information and evidence is necessary to substantiate my claims. The unprecedented nature of the complaint is reflective of the unprecedented nature of the breaches and defamation.

To ensure digestibility, I structured the complaint into sections, allowing the reader to access its component parts as needed. The core complaint is outlined as follows: 1. **Introduction** (Pages 1–3), 2. **Violations of the Press Code** (Pages 3–9), 3. **News24 Communications** (Pages 9–10), 4. **Evidence** (Pages 10–14).

Based on my research and advice received, Media24's conduct represents one of the most egregious breaches of the Press Code, journalistic integrity, and ethics in recent years. These actions also potentially breach common law principles, and were criminal defamation still recognized under South African law, it would very likely apply here. Given Media24's dominance and reputation, these articles exemplify an abuse of power and a profound betrayal of reader trust.

So far, in addition to the full month, working 12-hour days compiling the new complaint, the original complaint required twice that effort, in all over one and a half thousand hours of work. With both only possible because of the year and a half of relentless work researching investigating, drafting the campaign as a whole. While at the same time having to start my life from scratch, homeless, my life savings stolen, my reputation ruined, and amidst the significant disadvantage of having my devices, equipment, data, and documents illegally retained by SAPS. Then the extremely challenging process of filing and chasing complaints with the various regulatory bodies. I undertook all of this alone, without financial resources or legal support,

I hope it is evident that when a publication launches a concerted, one-sided, unresearched, and extreme character assassination across five titles, the resulting complaint will naturally reflect the gravity of that misconduct. While I understand the considerable amount of material to digest, it feels as though I am being penalized for Media24's extensive and serious violations of the Press Code.

Unfortunately, I am not an attorney and can only provide a complaint based on the facts before me. Each section of the complaint is a product of the offenses, breaches, and harm caused. The size of the evidence section reflects the enormous volume of evidence I have to substantiate my allegations^[1]. The Press Code section results from the gravity and sheer number of breaches. The impact section's detail reflects the deep, extreme, and wide-ranging harm I have suffered. The length of the analysis of the articles stems from the 120 fabricated and false statements and the more than 300 Press Code violations that resulted. The context section was necessary because the articles, which should have been entirely unrelated to private vendettas or campaigns, were instead born of them, created by them, and

manufactured to assist them. The News24 communications section is extensive because my communication with them was extensive^[2]—making their rejection of my approach all the more shocking. The outcomes section reflects the dozens of attempts to remove me and the universal outcomes in my favour. In short, the length of the complaint mirrors the extreme nature and number of the breaches.

No one wishes more than I that the initial complaint submitted on 21 August had been deemed acceptable. Had that been the case, the matter might already be resolved, and I could begin rebuilding my life. Only I suffer while the articles remain uncorrected, which is why I invested over 300 hours creating a new, more concise submission despite the extensive nature of the violations.

Four years of my life have been taken, lost, or wasted: 2020–2022 spent working tirelessly, night and day, and investing everything I had into building the most exceptional villas, which should have led to a very comfortable semi-retirement. Instead, 2022–2023 was consumed by fighting greedy landlords intent on taking everything away—including spending a third of that year in Pollsmoor. The following year, 2023–2024, has been dedicated to building the evidence and information needed to expose the truth and achieve justice—a process that will likely take another two years. All of this effort is to at best put me back somewhere closer to where I was six years earlier. This final stage is stalled in some cases and, in other cases, cannot even begin until the defamatory articles are removed.

Given the significance of the breaches and the extraordinary damage done, as well as the many significant reasons behind the timing, I do not believe timing should be a reason to give any publication immunity from its egregious conduct. The purpose of press councils is to uphold ethical journalism and protect individuals from unfair reporting. Allowing late complaints, especially when supported by substantive reasons, aligns with the broader commitment to justice and accountability in media practices. Considering the sheer volume of information, as well as the challenges of finding the evidence without a single device or item of data, in itself explains the time taken. I appreciate that timescales are important for efficiency, but they are not intended to shield publications from addressing legitimate grievances.

I would deeply appreciate it if you could review my submission. While the full material may take a few hours to read fully, the four main sections can be reviewed in under an hour, and I am extremely keen to start and finish the process.

May I also ask if you could provide any guidance on how long the process typically takes? The complaint procedure document mentions a target of settling complaints within 15 days of the respondent receiving them, but I am uncertain what this means for the overall timeline. **I ask this not just because damage and harm continue and grows, but because so much depends on the outcome of this complaint. Until the matter is resolved, many other aspects of my life remain stalled, while other aspects remain in growing jeopardy, for example:**

My immigration status: As I have mentioned before, Media24's articles have severely affected my efforts to normalize my visa and immigration status. While immigration attorneys are optimistic about the success of an application, they have cautioned that the articles pose a significant obstacle. My case requires escalation to the Director General of Home Affairs through a Letter of Good Cause, which involves a discretionary decision made by a senior official. In such cases, politics and optics play a significant role. Even with substantial evidence supporting my application, references to these articles could, and likely would, result in rejection. While I could provide a copy of the Press Council complaint, the officials involved are unlikely to invest the time to read it and would naturally be interested in the outcome rather than the complaint itself. That position transforms where those articles have been replaced by the truth. There is almost no prospect of normalizing my immigration status until that happens. Nor is this a subject I can revisit—if my application is rejected, it will be fatal for much of what follows.

My mother: My mother, in her seventies, was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2022, a condition exacerbated by the trauma caused by my arrests and Media24's defamatory narrative. I have not seen her since December 2020 when I first came to South Africa. Initially, in 2021, flight restrictions prevented travel, then from early 2022 to mid-2023, the theft and illegal retention of my passport, as well as unlawful arrest and detention, made it impossible. Since then, the need to normalize my sabotaged immigration status has further delayed travel. I am desperate to return to the UK to see her, but this cannot happen until my immigration status is resolved. There is also the devastating possibility that she may pass away before these corrections and retractions are published.

The inability to rebuild, secure a job, or a home: My life remains entirely on hold until the false public narrative created solely by Media24 is corrected. With the articles still published and uncorrected, my chances of re-entering the property sector or any trust-based industry are effectively non-existent. The articles have destroyed all opportunities to re-establish my professional life or rebuild my lost business, creating a relentless barrier to restoring my previous success. I cannot return to the property industry in any capacity. **Nor can I find a job**, and even if I could, it would be impossible to keep it—the moment any employer or client encountered the articles, my position would immediately be jeopardized. **I cannot even rent a home**, as no landlord or agency would consider letting property to someone portrayed by Media24 as the embodiment of a rogue tenant.

My health: Ironically, a significant part of the reason for moving back to Cape Town was to enjoy a more relaxed, healthier pace of life. I had come close to kidney failure on three occasions, resulting in my having a permanent catheter. In 2021, I underwent major surgery to address this issue. However, it requires constant monitoring, blood

tests, and the possibility of further surgery. Unlike before the theft of everything I owned, I cannot afford private medical care or the treatment I need. Such care is only available during trips to the UK, which I currently cannot undertake. It has now been two years since my last full check-up. In addition, my father had prostate cancer at my current age, which also requires constant monitoring—another necessity I cannot meet until either (a) I have the ability to generate income again or (b) I can travel to the UK.

My dogs: I am struggling even to afford basic necessities, such as veterinary care for my dogs should they become unwell. I also cannot afford the cost of R70,000 each to transport them to the UK should my visa application fail.

Approaches to attorneys: Media24's portrayal has significantly hindered my ability to secure legal representation. Attorneys have explicitly told me that the first step must be the removal of the false narrative. If I had the financial means to retain attorneys outright, this might not be an issue, but as I am reliant on contingency-based agreements, overcoming this hurdle is essential. Attorneys are a vital component in my efforts to sue the state and the individuals responsible.

Attached is the contact sheet I have been working on. This relates to the multiple attempts to: (a) file formal complaints and motivate investigations into the extensive criminality and corruption, (b) address the many aspects of my life that have been sabotaged or destroyed, (c) recover the millions stolen from me, and (d) ensure those responsible are brought to justice. As you can see, so much now depends on the Press Council, and so much is stalled while awaiting the outcome of this complaint.

Approaches to anti-corruption organizations: Media24's narrative has similarly obstructed my ability to seek assistance from organizations dedicated to exposing corruption and investigating criminality by state employees, such as police officers. Media24's portrayal of me as a con artist, criminal, and international crook discourages these entities from engaging with my claims, undermining my efforts to highlight misconduct. My experience with regulatory bodies in South Africa has shown that, unlike in the UK where submitting a complaint ensures investigation, the default here seems to be looking for reasons not to investigate. It has been made very clear to me that motivating investigations and ensuring they receive adequate resources will remain infinitely more challenging while that public narrative persists.

However, it is worth noting that, despite the universal challenges in initiating and completing investigations, every occasion on which an investigation has been conducted has confirmed my allegations as wholly accurate. Unfortunately, starting or finishing investigations is only part of the process. For those investigations to serve a purpose, those found guilty must be prosecuted and convicted, but the articles make this far less likely and provide the criminals with an effective means to avoid accountability.

Inability to file charges and pursue recovery: Just as I face obstacles in engaging journalists, securing legal representation, and resolving my visa issues, I am similarly hindered in reporting the numerous crimes committed against me. Although I am able to file reports, the events are so extreme that I must already overcome healthy scepticism, which I can do with the facts and evidence. However, while the articles tell a story that is the polar opposite of the truth—painting me as the criminal rather than the real criminals—there is no possibility of getting a fair hearing or motivating a genuine investigation. Actions I am currently unable to start or progress include but are by no means limited to: (1) Civil and criminal action to recover R4,500,000 worth of possessions from my home at Fisherman's Bend and R1,050,000 worth of possessions from Leirmans Road, both illegally retained by the owners when they had me arrested and removed on 14 December 2022. (2) Civil and criminal action to recover my R15,000,000 jewellery collection, stolen by my then-fiancé during my first detention in Pollsmoor, and R2,500,000 worth of artwork and contents of my London home, taken by a former tenant during my second detention in Pollsmoor. (3) Criminal and civil action against the landlords and the WDS campaign, as well as civil action against the state and the Minister of Police for unlawful arrests and detentions.

In the almost two years since my December arrest—no more than illegal evictions in disguise—those who stole from me are better off by at least R120,000,000 (through rental premiums, capital value increases, and stolen items^[3]). By definition, I am worse off by an even greater sum. The articles grant those responsible near-immunity from investigation, allowing them to deflect scrutiny easily. Worse, they portray what was stolen from me as if it were somehow the product of crime, further complicating my ability to seek justice.

Reward and protection of criminal actions: Media24's articles have effectively shielded those orchestrating the campaign against me. By portraying me as the villain, the media has obscured the actions of my accusers, protecting them from scrutiny and accountability. These articles reward their misconduct and insulate them from consequences.

Constant threat of retaliation: Media24's narrative has emboldened those involved in this campaign and provided them with false credibility. The articles were used to justify and motivate my December arrest and were instrumental in enabling them to steal my property and business while I was unlawfully detained. Until the articles are removed and corrected, I remain as vulnerable to another attack as I was in 2022. This situation will only change when the narratives are corrected, and the real criminals are exposed.

The many actual victims, including post-arrest victims: The impact of Media24's articles extend beyond my situation. Following my arrest, Mr. de Swardt, Keith, and Inge Broad, along with Sergeant Stevens, deliberately kept Booking.com unaware that I no longer managed or occupied the properties. They failed to inform the platform on

purpose—a critical step if my arrest had been genuine. Instead, they allowed unsuspecting guests to arrive and discover they had nowhere to stay, only to be told by a waiting Inge Broad or WDS that they had been scammed. This strategy was intended to turn guests into victims and create the appearance of a premeditated scam. After being granted bail, I reached out to every guest who had booked after my arrest. Of those who had not spoken with Keith or Inge, 98% received refunds or alternative accommodations—charges all levied against me. Guests who interacted with Inge or WDS, and were shown the articles, were less fortunate, with nearly all failing even to request refunds. My attempts to guide them toward recovering their funds were met with hostility and distrust. Without these articles, the falsehoods spread by WDS and Inge would have lacked credibility. Instead, the articles gave their lies undue weight, leaving me unable to counter them effectively.

Whether intentional or not, Media24's actions have created additional victims beyond myself. Until the articles are removed, those guests will continue to suffer and continue to believe the lies told by WDS and Inge Broad.

My personal life: Media24's narrative has irreparably damaged my personal relationships. Each attempt to forge new connections is undermined by the articles, readily accessible online, that present a sensationalized and misleading portrayal of my character. The stigma fostered by their reporting has eroded longstanding relationships and deterred potential new ones. Dating has become an inevitable cycle of termination, as any romance dissolves upon exposure to the articles' toxic content. This pattern extends into other areas of my life. For instance, when seeking help to compile the vast amount of information needed for my legal battle, I initially received significant interest from qualified candidates. However, upon mentioning the articles, I was met with silence or outright hostility.

Death threats: I have received several death threats as a result of the articles. In video recordings of Mario Boffa's confessions, he discusses his relationship with Denis Dalton, John Schalkwyk, and theirs with WDS and Ms. Disberry, including their plan to drug and torture me, access and empty my bank accounts, and murder me to disguise the crime. He also admitted to embezzling R1.2 million by transferring guest payments to himself and others. The articles, bolstered by Mario's faux petition, allowed them to deceive those they had stolen from and blame me. Telling them I had done it. This has resulted in multiple threats, including one from a well-connected guest from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who explicitly threatened my life and sent thugs to find me. Until these articles are removed, I remain in very real danger. I have the recording if needed.

My dignity: Media24 has stripped me of my dignity, portraying me as a dangerous, calculated criminal accused of scamming thousands of guests while pocketing millions of Rand. WDS and Sergeant Stevens even orchestrated my public exit after the arrest to maximize media exposure, parading me before the cameras as a trophy.

Relationships with family and friends: Media24's defamatory portrayal has infiltrated nearly every significant relationship in my life.

My attempts to expose the truth: Despite extensive efforts to present credible evidence and correct the record, Media24 has disregarded my attempts to share my side of the story. Their refusal to engage with clear evidence has allowed their narrative to dominate, stifling each attempt to restore my reputation. While some journalists have found my evidence credible and expressed interest in publishing my story, they have felt unable to proceed due to Media24's dominance and the entrenched media narrative. A journalist who recognized the public interest in my story even recommended filing a complaint with the Press Council.

Non-Media24 articles: For example, Vernon Pillay expressed genuine shock upon learning of Media24's articles. He apologized sincerely and offered to correct and report the matters but made it clear he would await the Press Council's outcome before doing so.

In conclusion: The repercussions of Media24's reckless reporting extend far beyond financial losses, casting a pervasive shadow over my life—from my family's well-being to my personal freedom. These false accusations, embedded in the public record, have left me grappling with the nearly impossible task of restoring a life irreparably altered.

The Urgency

As previously stated, I am trying to get everything sorted out as soon as possible. In 2022, my mother, in her late seventies, was diagnosed with lung cancer. I have been unable to visit her due to SAPS's sabotage of my visa extension, orchestrated by Mr. de Swardt and his clients. In fact, I have not seen her since I left the UK in December 2020, initially due to travel disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until the articles are removed and corrected, I stand almost no chance of being able to normalize my immigration status. If significant progress is not made soon, we risk running out of time. My top priority is to secure apologies, unreserved retractions, and, most importantly, full corrections of the libelous articles published in 2022 and 2023 before my mother's health further deteriorates—or worse.

The Very Real and Present Danger

I had deliberately limited the number of bodies I contacted and filed complaints with, focusing solely on IPID to investigate the police and PSIRA to investigate the PI. This was because I naively hoped and expected the

investigations and prosecutions to be completed quickly and effectively before those under investigation became aware of my efforts, thereby putting myself in serious danger.

I purposefully waited a year and a half after my arrest to allow sufficient time and distance between that attempt and the present to reduce the likelihood of additional fabricated charges being brought against me to achieve my removal and halt the process entirely.

After spending the last year and a half compiling various folders of information and evidence, I have significantly increased both the number of approaches and the organizations and individuals I contact. These include the Home Affairs Minister, the Minister of Police, the Director General of Home Affairs, the Western Cape Minister of Police Oversight and Community Safety, the Commander of Central Cape Town SAPS, the SAPS complaints system, Premier Alan Winde, the Press Council Ombudsman, the continuation of dialogue with the British Embassy, and the Police Ombudsman to address IPID's complete failure to respond.

I have also reached out to journalists and publications, whether those that have previously published articles or others who may yet do so. As a result, I am now exposing myself to the significant risk of another attempt to incarcerate me—or worse.

Those involved have already demonstrated their willingness to use highly illegal and immoral means to achieve their objectives. Mr. de Swardt and SAPS's list of crimes is far too long to detail fully here, numbering several hundred criminal offenses. However, their actions include: arresting and attempting to imprison Ollie Sokanyile purely out of spite and revenge, weeks after regaining control of the property and thereby achieving their goals; using arrests to disguise illegal evictions; illegally arresting me twice and attempting to bury me in Pollsmoor Prison on both occasions with extraordinary fabrications designed solely for strategic advantage; using the distraction of my arrest to conduct a secret, unofficial, and illegal raid and arrest at my other Llandudno property to achieve an eviction in disguise; harassing and threatening individuals I knew or who worked with or for me, coercing them with threats of ten to thirty years' imprisonment unless they signed pre-written witness statements; stealing over R100 million in rental premiums, millions spent on refurbishments, and several million in possessions, furniture, artwork, and other contents of my homes during my arrest, all of which the landlords have since kept and refused to return; using unlawful arrests as weapons, including appealing our recent win in December and arresting me the very next day, thereby removing their only opponent.

Additionally, there was the extremely sinister plan devised by Mr. de Swardt and SAPS after my arrest to create victims. This involved deliberately keeping the platforms unaware of the change in control of the villas, resulting in hundreds of families being left homeless. This was done solely to aid their civil court actions to seize control of the properties.

He undertook all these actions purely for strategic advantage for his clients. It is therefore fair to conclude that there is no limit to what they would do to avoid investigation, prosecution, imprisonment, or public exposure as criminals of the worst kind in the media.

As you can imagine, I am determined never to return to Pollsmoor or to endure that horrific experience again. It is utterly terrifying to think that private individuals can weaponize arrest and detention in a personal vendetta for financial gain, all funded by South African taxpayers. Now that I have crossed that line, I have taken an extraordinary risk. I am eager to bring as much of the truth as possible into the public domain as quickly as possible because their incentive and benefit in removing me diminishes significantly once that occurs.

The scale of damage caused by these articles cannot be overstated. Ten articles, across four respected titles, presented the most one-sided journalism conceivable. The tone and content gave readers the impression of factual reporting when, in reality, they were well-prepared fabrications, regurgitated verbatim, and laundered to lend them unparalleled credibility and power. This power was weaponized by WDS and his clients with devastating effect.

As a result, I am unemployable, undatable, unable to reestablish myself, unable to lay charges against those who hounded me like an animal and then locked me up for months in a prison unfit for animals. I am unable to travel, unable to see my mother, unable to tackle my health issues, unable to provide for my dogs if they become unwell, unable to find a home, and unable to relax while I remain so exposed. I have already lost or wasted four years of my life because of these articles and the effects they have had and continue to have on my life, and I am desperate to begin the process of rebuilding.

I apologize for taking up your time, and am very grateful for your attention to date, but the magnitude and significance of removing and correcting these false and fabricated articles cannot be overstated.

Kind regards,

Darren

Attached:

- I noticed that the complaint did not reference all the articles. Specifically, there was one in **News24**, four in **Netwerk24**, four in **Rapport**, then replications including four in **Beeld**, four in **Volksblad**, four in **Die Burger**, along with the **Ground News** replication and the **IOL** article based on the Media24 articles. I have updated the attached table to reflect this. As such I have updated the tables of articles as attached
- To assist further, I have created a more targeted index of folders and files containing information and evidence substantiating my claims, including detailed descriptions for each item and created direct links (named URLs) providing access
- Additionally, I have categorized the statements into four columns: **fabricated**, **false**, **misleading/selective**, and **accurate**, to streamline the review process.
- Lastly, I have included a **contact sheet** documenting the numerous attempts to: (a) File formal complaints and motivate investigations into the extensive criminality and corruption. (b) Address the many aspects of my life that have been sabotaged or destroyed. (c) Recover the millions stolen from me. (d) Ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

As you can see, so much now depends on the Press Council, and so much remains stalled while awaiting the outcome of this complaint.

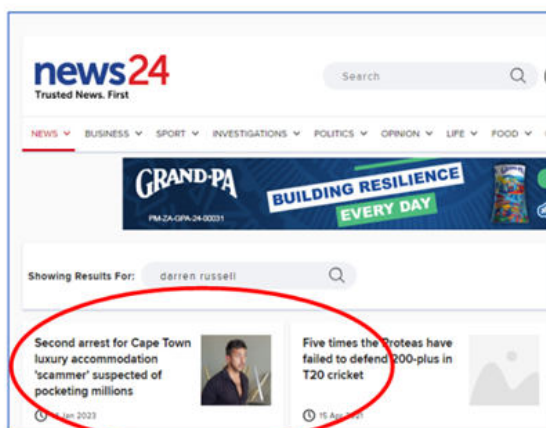
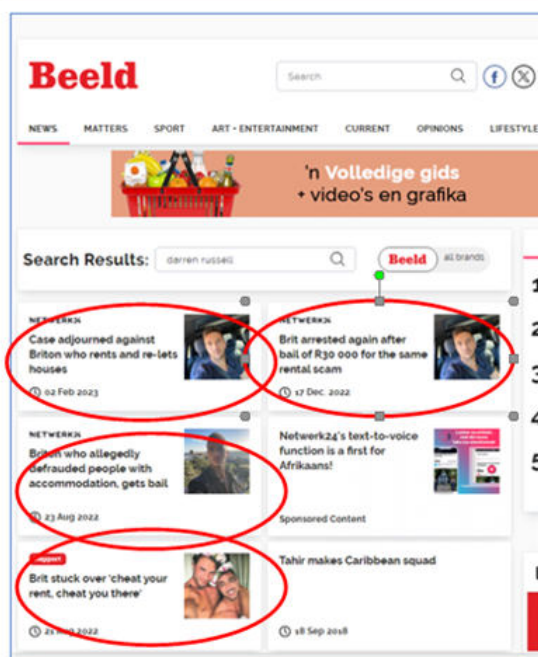
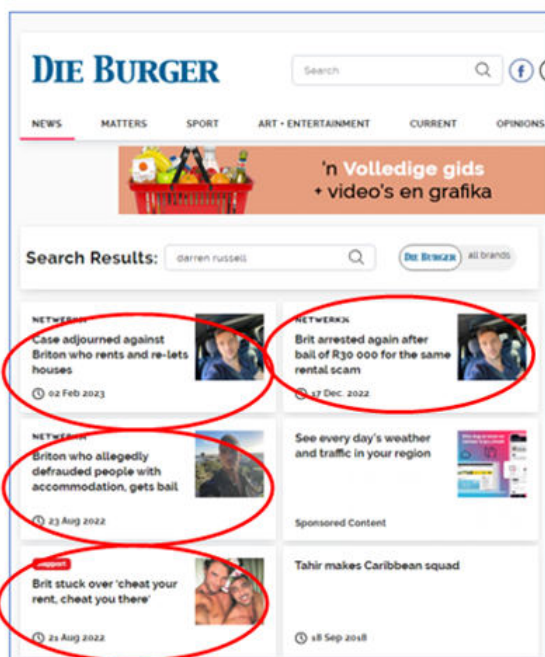
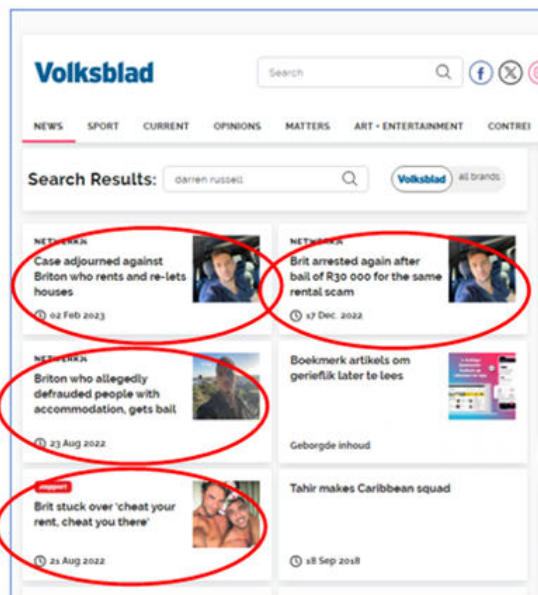
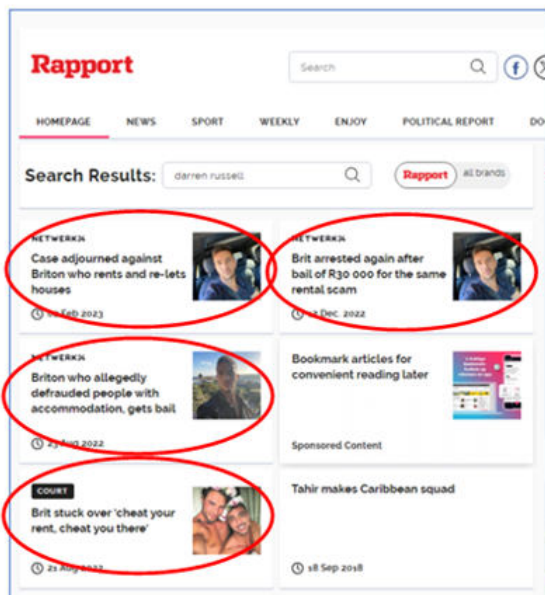
[1] [1]What I have provided represents just a fraction of what I have compiled. There are over 400 folders, several thousand files, all indexed if needed.

[2] [2] it includes copies of my detailed correspondence with the publication, providing them with a very clear account of the defamatory nature of the articles, and included an index document granting access to other significant materials that detailed their severe and significant breaches of the Press Code

[3] LdRP & fine jewelry and gem collection - 15,000,000; London home and artwork- 2,500,000; Fisherman's bend possessions - 4,500,000; Leirmans possessions- 1,050,000; Leirmans capital value- 13,000,000; Fisherman's capital value- 18,000,000; Hove capital value - 6,000,000; Monterey capital value-3,000,000; Fisherman's, Leirmans, Hove and Monterey rental premium- 55,776,000

Screenshots taken on 23 November 2024 show that all the articles remain available across all of Media24's platforms. This is deeply concerning. My detailed letters and the extensive enclosures substantiating my allegations, even for the most sceptical journalist, should have prompted alarm from any responsible editor. Yet, not only did they fail to engage meaningfully, they outright rejected my attempts to correct the record and left all the articles fully accessible online. This shows an absolute disregard for the damage I made clear their articles had caused and a complete disregard for the Press Code.

This situation underscores a critical flaw in the Press Council's 20-day rule for lodging complaints. While such a time frame might have relevance for physical print articles or online articles that are quickly removed, it is entirely unjust when applied to articles that remain online currently and indefinitely. These articles are not historical events or "past" publications; they are current, actively accessible, and as damaging and powerful as the day they were first published. For any reader encountering these articles for the first time, the original date of publication is irrelevant—the harm and defamation are just as immediate. It is profoundly unjust to permit publications a loophole simply because the complaint was not filed within an arbitrary period, particularly when the defamatory content remains live and accessible.



From: Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

Sent: Wednesday, 06 November 2024 16:23

To: Fanie Groenewald <fanieg@ombudsman.org.za>

Cc: Latiefa Mobara <mobara@ombudsman.org.za>; Khanyi Mndaweni <khanyim@ombudsman.org.za>; Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>; 'The Truth South Africa' <thetruthsuidafrika@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: Resubmission of Amended Reduced Complaints regarding articles published by the Media24 Group

Dear Mr. Fanie Groenewald,

Thank you very much for your email, I appreciate the opportunity to address the points you raised, clarify aspects of my complaint, and respond to your questions. The size of my initial submission reflects both the volume of detail necessary to accurately portray the scope of the harm and, admittedly, some uncertainty on my part about the exact level of evidence required. The most substantial challenge, however, lies in the sheer scale of the articles' impact: six core articles, along with eleven variants published across multiple platforms and titles, containing around 22 false, 80 fabricated, and 17 misleading statements—with only 14 found to be accurate. Addressing 119 statements has been a monumental task, and perhaps surprisingly, the reduction has required even greater effort. Since receiving your email, I have worked continuously to streamline this material to create a document that is more manageable yet still conveys the depth and importance of the issues raised.

Without legal training or the support of an attorney, compiling the original complaint and subsequently distilling it has been one of the most demanding undertakings of my life. I share this not as a complaint but to underscore the significance of this matter to me and the profound impact these articles have had.

To support my complaint, I have carefully selected evidence from among hundreds of folders and thousands of files, organizing them into new folders and links for ease of access. I can substantiate each statement, and if additional information, evidence, or answers are required, I am more than willing to provide them.

The amended complaint, attached here, has been reduced from 665 pages into a single document of which the core complaint elements are reduced to 14 pages that address all the relevant Press Code violations. For further clarity, I have organized the complaint into separate sections, allowing the Ombudsman to focus only on the areas deemed relevant. **The main sections that constitute the complaint itself are:**

Introduction - Pages 1-3

Violations of the Press Codes - Page 3-9

News24 Communications - Pages 9-10

Evidence - Pages 10-14

Which as mentioned is now condensed into fourteen pages.

Additional sections on context, background, outcomes, and impact are included if needed. [\[Amended Press Council Ombudsman Complaint\]](#). Separately, I have condensed the 300+ pages of analysis of the articles into a more focused run-through of just the false or fabricated statements [\[Link: Article analysis\]](#). As requested, I have also provided copies of my [\[communications with News24\]](#), including the attachment I sent them, as well as [\[proof of withdrawal\]](#) and the [\[Case outcomes\]](#).

This way the Ombudsman need only read those sections they consider pertinent and relevant. If further reduction in page count is required, I would highly appreciate feedback on which content should be prioritized. Although I hope that, in reading the complaint document, it will become clear that the extremely unusual nature of the articles, including the exceptional volume and severity of the Press Code violations, means that any complaint addressing these satisfactorily must naturally be substantial.

The publication of these defamatory articles has caused harm on an extreme scale, impacting every aspect of my life. This harm has occurred both directly and as a consequence of the ripple effects that followed. I have lost my home, my life's work, and all accumulated assets, including my income and business. Before these articles, I had six properties generating R20 million per year in profits, with over thirty million in moveable assets. Today, I have nothing. The articles were directly used to justify my second arrest, effectively filling the gap of an empty docket and costing me my liberty, resulting in three months of incarceration in Pollsmoor Prison. The destructive impact of these articles has taken four years from me, between the ruin of what I built and the year spent seeking justice. As things stand, while these articles remain uncorrected, it is impossible for me to secure housing, rebuild my life, or start a new business. They have severely impaired my ability to engage attorneys, approach anti-corruption organizations, and publicly reveal the truth. Until these articles are corrected, I cannot file charges against those responsible for theft, embezzlement, and other offenses, as no police officer will take these matters seriously while the false narrative remains unchallenged. As a result, the individuals responsible for these crimes remain free to act again. Additionally, I have received credible death threats directly stemming from these articles, and others who have been harmed by the campaign also await justice.

On a personal level, one of my deepest concerns is that my mother, who is in her 70s and battling lung cancer, may pass away before the record is corrected. The situation is further complicated by my inability to normalize my immigration status while these articles and the false narrative they promote still stand.

In many respects, it may be necessary to suspend disbelief to understand the actions of WdS and his clients, as it can be difficult to imagine any rational person acting as they did. Their behaviour was so extreme in both scope and severity that it challenges comprehension. Nonetheless, every claim I make is grounded in concrete evidence, backed by videos, audio recordings, transcripts, WhatsApp messages, emails, and court documents. The outcomes from various proceedings further validate my claims, with chronological timelines and documented events adding even more weight. Moreover, despite having every opportunity to do so, WdS has never produced any independent evidence, instead relying on fabricated materials to create a facade of wrongdoing. In over 60 instances where independent evidence would have been critical, none was ever presented. That they felt compelled to manufacture evidence speaks volumes about the lack of substance in their accusations. Each element—whether it be an event, outcome, video, audio, transcript, email, WhatsApp exchange, action, document, or court ruling—individually supports my claims. Taken together, these interconnected strands form a unified and cohesive body of evidence that is so comprehensive, consistent, and thoroughly interwoven that it would be impossible to fabricate. The truth is self-evident.

Please find attached the cover letter, the reduced complaint requested (the main sections being **Introduction, Violations of the Press Code, News24 Communications, and Evidence**), the annexure with the reduced article analysis, the items that you requested ie News24 communications, the outcomes, and proof of withdrawal.

I truly hope that, in reading this complaint, the full scale of harm, the depth of injustice, and the severity of these Press Code violations will become clear. I am earnestly pleading for a decisive response, as it weighs heavily on me that my mother, who is bravely fighting a serious illness, may not have the chance to see my name cleared and the truth restored.

Thank you very much for your kind attention in this matter and for giving me the opportunity to submit the complaint

Sincerely

Darren

From: Fanie Groenewald <fanieg@ombudsman.org.za>

Sent: Tuesday, 08 October 2024 16:58

To: Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

Cc: Latiefa Mobara <mobara@ombudsman.org.za>; Khanyi Mndaweni <khanyim@ombudsman.org.za>

Subject: RE: Submission of Complaints regarding articles published by the Media24 Group (Email 1 of 5)

Dear Mr Russell

As you have accessed the Press Council's website and also our online complaints form, you most probably saw our "Information for complainants." If you have missed it, I attach a copy for easy reference.

I refer you to the following:

TIME FRAMES:

A complaint should be made as soon as possible, but **not later than 20 working days** after the date of publication. If the complaint is late, condonation may be sought by submitting a good and satisfactory explanation for the delay.

Furthermore:

EXCESSIVE LENGTH AND ANNEXURES

It is of the essence of the Press Council's complaints mechanism that:

- Complaints be considered and mediated or adjudicated on within the shortest possible time after the publication of the matter giving rise to the complaint;
- Complaints be considered and mediated or adjudicated in an informal manner.

In the light of the above, the Public Advocate will advise complainants (especially legal representatives) that excessive lengthy complaints and/or annexures should be revised before it will be accepted. A complaint should normally not exceed five A4 pages. Even complicated complaints should not exceed 10/15 A4 pages.

Your voluminous and out of time submission is thus completely unprecedented.

I note that the articles you are complaining about, are mainly reports on your court appearances.

The last seems to be the Netwek24 article of 2 February 2023, in which it was reported that the matter was postponed to 7 February 2023.

I could not find any follow-up article since then. What happened on 7 February 2024? What was the outcome of that matter? Were the charges dropped? If so, please send me some proof.

Finally, have you approached News24 or Netwerk24, or any other publication for that matter, informing them about the latest developments regarding Mr De Swardt? When have you last approached News24? What was their reaction?

I await your response at your earliest convenience.

Regards

Fanie Groenewald

Public Advocate

Press Council of South Africa

fanieg@ombudsman.org.za



Please visit the Press Council website www.presscouncil.org.za for the South African Press Code and our Complaints Procedures.

Disclaimer: The Press Council of South Africa (PCSA) complies with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and has adopted a policy (Press Council of South Africa POPIA Policy) to this effect. When you submit your personal information, you confirm that you have read and understand the Press Council's POPIA policy, and that you are aware of your rights as a data subject. You agree, and make the informed decision, that your personal information may be recorded and processed by the PCSA in executing its day-to-day activities, being the management of member affairs, and the investigation and adjudication of complaints against media members that subscribe to the Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African print and online media.

From: Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

Sent: Tuesday, 08 October 2024 14:48

To: Fanie Groenewald <fanieg@ombudsman.org.za>; enquiries <enquiries@ombudsman.org.za>; executive@presscouncil.org.za; complaints@presscouncil.org.za; publicadvocate@presscouncil.org.za

Cc: 'The Truth South Africa' <thetruthsuidafrika@gmail.com>; Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

Subject: Re: Submission of Complaints regarding articles published by the Media24 Group (Email 1 of 5)

Importance: High

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

8 October 2024

Dear Ombudsman,

I hope this message finds you well.

With regard to the formal complaint I submitted on the 22nd of August, I have yet to receive a response. I understand that the accompanying materials were extensive, but given the complaint involves multiple articles containing a total of seventy false statements, I was unsure how much evidence would be required to establish the defamation.

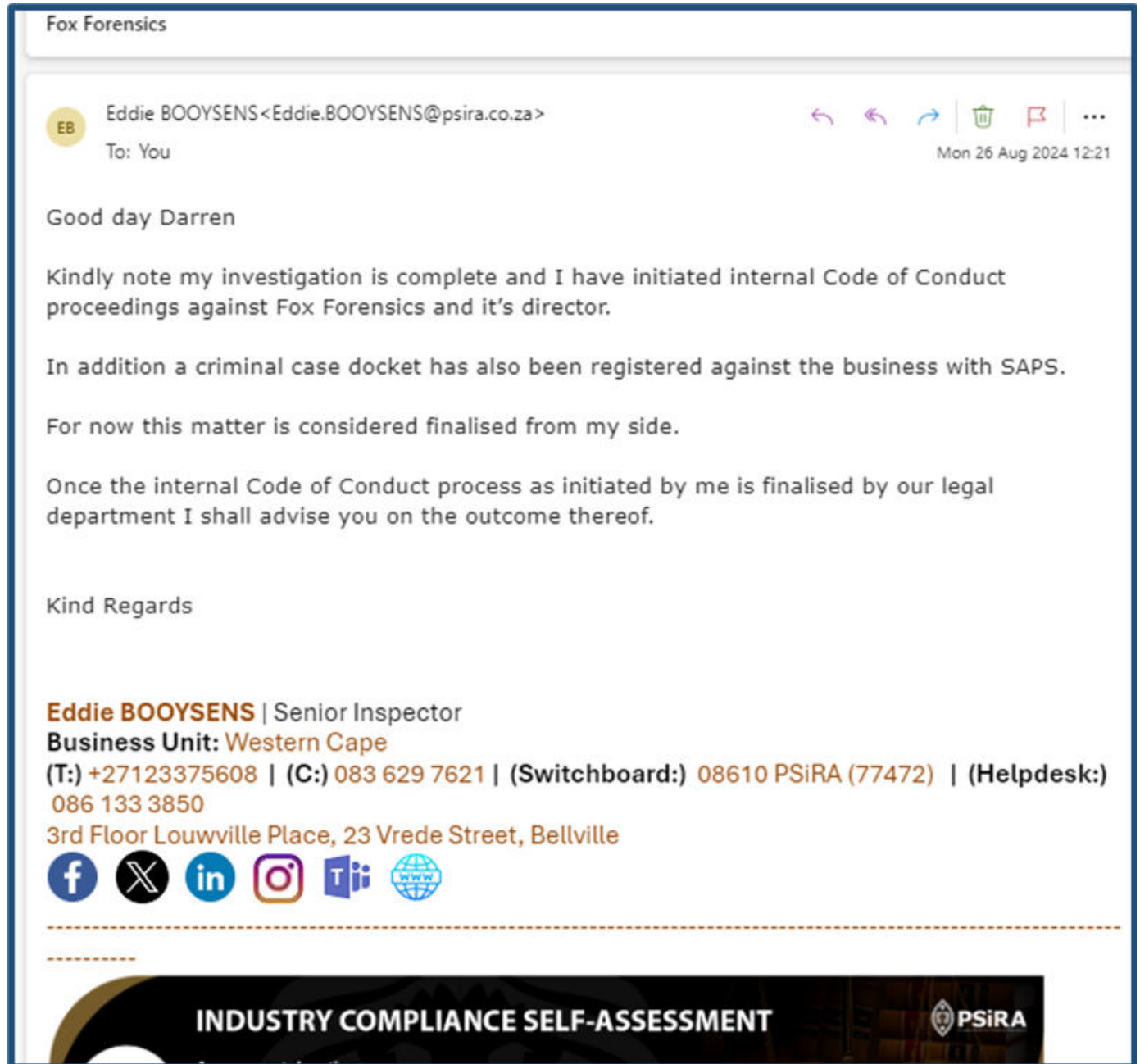
As I mentioned in my submission, the online forms seemed to be designed for singular articles or specific portions within an article. However, this complaint addresses not only the entirety of the articles but also their selective timing, the agendas they served, the criminals they assisted, and the false rebuttals to my attempts to engage with the publication.

Since submitting my complaint, there have been a number of developments that are both very significant and highly relevant. They also provide significant validation and substantiation for my allegations, and crucially, they come from wholly independent bodies.

PSIRA Investigation and Criminal Charges

PSIRA has found Mr. Wouter de Swardt guilty of several extremely serious allegations. We expect their disciplinary procedures to lead to the revocation of his PSIRA membership, a lifetime ban, and any other appropriate sanctions.

Most significantly, PSIRA has deemed the situation serious enough to justify filing criminal charges, which they are now handling. To illustrate how rare such an outcome is, PSIRA has 2.7 million members and oversees all cases of misconduct or criminality within its ranks. In 2023, PSIRA initiated criminal charges in only two cases, making this an exceptional result.



Colonel McLean SAPS Inspectorate Investigation: Disciplinary and Criminal Charges

I am also pleased to share further positive news. Last month, I received a call from Colonel Colette McLean, commander at the SAPS Inspectorate, in response to a complaint I submitted. Colonel McLean informed me that her jurisdiction covers approximately 200 SAPS stations, including Belville Commercial Crime, making her responsible for investigating complaints against Sergeant Stevens and Belville Commercial.

Following her preliminary research, she requested a meeting to discuss the matter further. **As a result, she has decided to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Sergeant Stevens and launch a more in-depth investigation into his criminal conduct.**

To support this effort, I compiled a new dossier specifically related to Sergeant Stevens and Belville Commercial. Of particular importance is the table listing specific criminal activities involving Sergeant Stevens, Sergeant Duna, Mr. de Swardt, and his clients. The relationship between these two corrupt officers

and de Swardt alone has resulted in almost 300 separate criminal offenses, with over 100 additional offenses directly committed by Mr. de Swardt and his associates.

Western Cape Police Ombudsman Investigation

This recent progress is especially encouraging given that apart from the PSIRA complaint, I only began filing broader complaints regarding corruption in the last 4-6 weeks. This has included complaints to the Premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde, as well as the following entities: IPID Western Cape, IPID, the Home Affairs Department, the British Embassy, the UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, the Minister of Police, the Western Cape Minister of Police Oversight and Community Safety, the Commander of Central Cape Town SAPS, the National Prosecuting Authority, the Senior State Prosecutor, the Press Council Ombudsman, and [Change.org](https://www.change.org)

In the coming days, I also plan to submit a comprehensive complaint covering all these issues to the Western Cape Police Ombudsman and the Western Cape Anti-Corruption Unit.

The Accumulated Evidence That Already Exists and Is Publicly Accessible

It is important to highlight that even before the PSIRA investigation and Colonel McLean's investigation into Mr. de Swardt, substantial evidence supporting my position was already publicly available. This evidence has consistently disproved the allegations made against me, despite the orchestrated efforts by corrupt SAPS officers and private individuals involved in the campaign against me.

To date, I have a flawless record of success and complete vindication in every criminal matter. The overwhelming evidence supporting my position is accessible to anyone and continues to grow. The schedule of key events, as outlined below, is particularly significant.

The Respective Positions

My position and that of Keith Broad and his associates could not be more divergent. From the outset, I have maintained a consistent narrative, supported by verifiable facts and documentation. In contrast, their position has constantly shifted, often adapting when their previous falsehoods were exposed. This pattern of inconsistency underscores the baselessness of their claims and the integrity of my stance.

Scrutiny

Their fabricated allegations, brought forward by corrupt SAPS officers, were never subjected to genuine scrutiny until they reached independent bodies or courts. The charges brought against me were initiated without solid evidence, arrest warrants, or proper dockets, leading to several arrests and detentions that served only to disrupt my life rather than pursue justice.

Similarly, the defamatory articles were published without any fact-checking or due diligence, parroting the false accusations made by their private investigator. Despite the lack of scrutiny in the media or during the arrest process, every time the allegations were subjected to thorough examination by a competent legal authority, they have crumbled.

On the other hand, my allegations, because of the media campaign against me, have faced immense scrutiny. Every statement I made has been questioned, fact-checked, and investigated thoroughly. Despite this, my allegations have held firm, proven true each time they have been examined.

Forums and Proper Examination

There is only one legitimate forum capable of adjudicating the truth in this case: a court of law. Unlike media narratives or the actions of corrupt officers, the courts have the necessary expertise, oversight, and legal standards to examine the evidence impartially. It is here that both sides have faced scrutiny, and the results have been telling.

Outcomes: Wins and Losses

Throughout 2022 and 2023, I have appeared nearly two dozen times in criminal courts, facing a barrage of false charges, including four illegal arrests, three unlawful detentions, six malicious prosecutions, and numerous attempts to sabotage bail hearings.

In each instance where my case was properly examined, the allegations against me were found to be false, and I emerged victorious. The pattern is clear: every time their fabricated charges were scrutinized by an independent authority, they were dismissed or withdrawn.

Meanwhile, on every occasion where my own allegations have been investigated, they have been corroborated by the facts and substantiated by evidence. The PSIRA investigation, which led to charges against Wouter de Swardt, is just one example of how my position has been validated time and again.

PROOF OF POSITION

I am confident that these steps are only the beginning and that further criminal charges will follow. The evidence above is the strongest validation of my position. It is scandalous and shocking that any reputable news publication could align itself so closely with criminals. Even if they were duped, as so many others have been, that is no excuse for publishing fabrications. Worse still, these fabrications served a calculated purpose—one that News24 ended up aiding and abetting.

What's more troubling is not just their involvement with criminals but with individuals masquerading as private investigators and professional police officers. They abused the power and authority entrusted to them, committing countless serious crimes and manipulating the criminal justice system to inflict injustice. All the while, they fabricated evidence to paint me as the villain, with their clients cast as victims.

This significant vindication, alongside the thousands of pages of evidence supporting my position, should provide ample motivation for a thorough investigation.

Astounding Criminality

The table of offenses involving SAPS officers and the conspiracy column speaks volumes. The scale of criminality is staggering—not just in the number of offenses but in their severity and the blatant disregard for the law. The articles granted credibility to a consortium by portraying lies as facts. But since these lies were crafted to deceive and profit, News24's reporting was nothing short of propaganda, not journalism.

The tables below are crucial as they:

1. Expose extraordinary levels of criminality and corruption.
2. Demonstrate that every case brought by Mr. de Swardt has been found to be false and fabricated, while my allegations, after thorough investigation, have been proven true.

This connects directly to the disciplinary proceedings and investigation into Sergeant Stevens, who, along with Mr. de Swardt, played central roles in the campaign against me. Stevens acted as de Swardt's colleague, proxy, and inside man—a bridge between private interests and SAPS. It was through these special relationships that private individuals, without legal authority, were able to weaponize the state for personal gain.

The Urgency

As I've previously stated, "I am trying to resolve everything as quickly as possible." In 2022, my mother, now in her late seventies, was diagnosed with lung cancer. I've been unable to visit her due to SAPS's sabotage of my visa extension, orchestrated by de Swardt and his clients. The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated matters—I haven't seen her since I left the UK in December 2020.

I am hopeful that my Letter of Good Cause to the Director General of Home Affairs, along with complaints to relevant authorities, will restore my immigration status. By September 2023, with the bogus immigration charge withdrawn, I should have been able to travel. But the visa issues have cost me nearly a year of precious, irreplaceable time with my mother. If we don't make swift progress, time will run out.

My top priority is to receive public apologies, unreserved retractions, and—most importantly—full corrections for the libelous articles published in 2022 and 2023. This needs to happen before my mother passes away. For me, this is far more important than any damages, which would be months away at best.

The Very Real and Present Danger

Initially, I limited my complaints and communications regarding the criminality and corruption to IPID and PSIRA, hoping for swift, quiet investigations before those under scrutiny became aware, thereby avoiding further danger.

I waited a year and a half after my arrest to create distance, hoping to reduce the risk of more trumped-up charges designed to remove me from the scene.

It was only last month that I learned about the Press Council Ombudsman after a journalist suggested it as a remedy for the highly defamatory, entirely false, and influential articles still available to the public.

After spending 16 months compiling evidence and documentation, I've significantly widened the scope of my complaints and approaches. I've contacted the Home Affairs Minister, the Minister of Police, the Director General of Home Affairs, the Western Cape Minister of Police Oversight and Community Safety, the Commander of Central Cape Town SAPS, the SAPS complaints system, Premier Alan Winde, the Press Council Ombudsman, the British Embassy, and the Police Ombudsman—who will address IPID's complete failure to respond.

In addition, I've reached out to journalists and publications, both those who published the articles and others who may do so in the future. Unfortunately, this escalation puts me at serious risk of further attempts to incarcerate me—or worse.

Those involved have shown a willingness to use highly illegal and immoral methods to achieve their goals. Mr. de Swardt and certain SAPS members have committed too many crimes to recount here, but they include: arresting Ollie Sokanyile out of spite, using arrests to cover up illegal evictions, illegally arresting me twice, and attempting to bury me in Pollsmoor Prison with fabricated charges purely for strategic gain. They carried out a secret, unlawful raid at my Llandudno property while I was detained, threatened and harassed those connected to me unless they signed pre-written witness statements, and stole over R100 million in rental income, refurbishments, and personal possessions that my landlords now refuse to return.

Their unlawful arrests and constant appeals, combined with false narratives in the press, have systematically removed me as their only opposition. After my December victory in court, they immediately orchestrated another arrest the next day. To make matters worse, de Swardt and SAPS used the chaos caused by my arrest to leave hundreds of families homeless—furthering their civil court case to take over the property.

Given the lengths they've already gone to avoid prosecution, I have no doubt they will stop at nothing. The thought of returning to Pollsmoor is terrifying. The fact that private individuals can use state resources to exact personal vendettas, financed by taxpayers, is a chilling reality.

Now that I've crossed this line, I'm determined to bring the truth into the public eye as quickly as possible. Once the truth is exposed, their incentive to silence me will diminish considerably.

My Complaint to the Press Council

I believe my decision to submit a complaint to the Press Council, rather than pursuing immediate litigation for defamation, was a reasonable and measured approach. My hope was that if Media24 had been misled, rather than complicit, they would seize the opportunity to uncover and publish the truth.

The articles in question are especially harmful because they give undue credibility to a completely false narrative. Ironically, this false narrative was the very foundation upon which the articles were based. Rather than exploring possibilities or offering balanced reporting, the articles devolved into a misleading, false, and libelous narrative.

What Mr. de Swardt executed was a highly effective laundering of lies. Through the collaboration of the articles, the police officers, and the criminal justice system, these fabrications were presented as facts. This demonstrates the insidious power of recycling falsehoods until they gain credibility.

Major Concerns About Media24 Articles

The articles published by Media24 and its affiliates contain multiple fabrications and distortions of the truth, which, rather than reflecting balanced journalism, serve as weapons in a targeted and malicious campaign against me. These articles failed to meet the fundamental standards of accuracy and fairness that the press is duty-bound to uphold. Despite overwhelming evidence contradicting their content, Media24 has not issued any retractions or corrections, allowing these falsehoods to remain in the public domain. This is deeply concerning as it demonstrates a clear disregard for journalistic integrity and accountability.

Why Media24's Approach Appears Sinister Rather Than Accidental

The circumstances surrounding Media24's publication of these articles suggest something far more deliberate than journalistic oversight. The articles were not the result of a rushed or poorly fact-checked report; they were methodically crafted narratives designed to manipulate public perception, discredit me, and lend credibility to false legal actions taken against me. Media24's consistent reliance on biased sources, their failure to verify facts, and their refusal to seek comment from me reflect an intent to cause harm, rather than a mere journalistic mistake. The timing of the articles, which coincided with key legal proceedings, further suggests that this was no coincidence but rather a coordinated effort to damage my case and bolster the unfounded claims of the true perpetrators.

Serious and Significant Breaches of the Press Code

Media24's actions are not just harmful; they are in direct violation of the South African Press Code. By publishing unverified, inaccurate, and defamatory content, Media24 breached several key provisions, including the obligation to ensure truthfulness, accuracy, and fairness in their reporting. Furthermore, they failed to afford me the opportunity to respond or present my side of the story—another violation of the Press Code. These breaches are not minor or isolated; they are extensive and systemic, showing a blatant disregard for the ethical standards that govern journalism in South Africa.

The Intended and Actual Use of the Articles

The intention behind these articles was clear: to provide Keith and Inge Broad, along with their associates, with the means to justify their unlawful actions against me. The articles were weaponized in legal battles, used to support claims that were based on lies and manipulations. The Broads leveraged the media's coverage to further their campaign of intimidation and harassment, knowing full well that the articles would be seen as credible by the public, the courts, and law enforcement. The damage was immediate and far-reaching, influencing not just the legal proceedings but also public opinion, which was manipulated to view me as guilty before any facts were examined.

The Continuing Consequences of and Damage Caused by the Articles While They Remain Published and Without Correction

The harm caused by these articles is ongoing. As long as they remain accessible online, without any correction or retraction, they continue to perpetuate falsehoods about me. Each day that these articles remain available, they reinforce the lies and damage my reputation further. Potential business partners, employers, and members of the public will encounter these articles and assume them to be truthful, unaware of the fabrications they contain. The continuing availability of these articles not only prolongs the damage but also obstructs my ability to rebuild my life and restore my reputation.

Duty of Press Council to Act

The Press Council has an obligation to uphold the principles of truth, fairness, and integrity in journalism. In this case, Media24 has severely breached these principles, and it is the Council's duty to intervene. The Council must ensure that such blatant misreporting does not go unchallenged, as it sets a dangerous precedent for future cases where the media is used as a tool for personal vendettas and malicious campaigns. If the Council does not act, it risks allowing falsehoods to continue unchecked, undermining the public's trust in journalism as a whole.

Duty of Press Council to Act Irrespective of When the Complaint Is Submitted

It is important to recognize that the timing of this complaint should not limit the Council's ability or obligation to act. The ongoing nature of the damage, due to the continued publication of these articles, makes this an urgent matter. The consequences are not confined to the past; they are felt daily as long as the defamatory content remains available to the public. The Press Council's duty to investigate and rectify breaches of the Press Code is not bound by a specific timeline—justice and fairness demand that corrective action is taken, regardless of when the complaint is lodged.

Supporting Criminality and Aiding Evasion of the True Criminals Being Published

Media24's reporting has effectively aided in the evasion of justice by the true criminals involved in this case. By misrepresenting the facts and perpetuating a false narrative, the articles have shifted attention away from the unlawful actions of Keith and Inge Broad, Wouter de Swardt, and their associates within SAPS. The media coverage allowed these individuals to continue their illegal activities under the guise of legitimacy, shielded from scrutiny because the articles painted me as the villain. By failing to correct these falsehoods, Media24 remains complicit in their actions, allowing the true criminals to evade accountability.

Undertaking

I respectfully request that Media24 provide an undertaking that while I have no objection to them questioning Mr. de Swardt about his involvement, his role in the campaign, his relationship with Keith and Inge Broad, or any part of the allegations I have made, I do not consent to him being shown any of the evidence I have provided. This evidence is personal, private, and confidential and may well be used in future civil or criminal proceedings against him.

As someone who has been a direct victim of Mr. de Swardt's actions, I am acutely aware of what he is capable of. I trust Media24 will understand the sensitivity of this matter and respect the need for discretion regarding the evidence I have submitted.

Conclusion

The findings from the PSIRA investigation and the initiation of criminal charges, along with the SAPS Inspectorate's investigation and potential disciplinary and criminal actions against Sergeant Stevens, mark a crucial turning point. These developments are not just vindications of my claims but expose the true nature of the criminality behind the actions of Mr. de Swardt and his associates. The Western Cape Police Ombudsman's involvement further underscores the seriousness of the misconduct involved.

What Media24 misrepresented as legitimate "investigations" by Mr. de Swardt were, in reality, calculated fabrications orchestrated and funded by his clients to advance their own agendas. Time and again, these

allegations have been subjected to thorough legal scrutiny and consistently proven false. On the other hand, my claims—subjected to the same legal standards—have been vindicated at every turn.

The landscape now, with independent investigations and overwhelming evidence supporting my position, is vastly different from when the first defamatory articles were published. The allegations that once dominated the narrative have been thoroughly discredited by legal proceedings, investigations, and independent bodies. The evidence—whether direct or circumstantial—consistently corroborates my version of events and wholly dismantles the narrative presented by Media24 and its sources.

While the legal system, through more than two dozen court appearances, has provided consistent vindication for me, Media24 has failed to report these critical developments. They eagerly reported the most damning allegations when they were first made, but have remained silent each time the truth emerged in my favor. This selective reporting has left a dangerous, skewed narrative in the public domain.

I believe it is now time for the Press Council to bring the media—and thereby the public narrative—into line with the facts. The tide has clearly turned. Every piece of evidence now available substantiates my claims and disproves theirs. The role of the Press Council in rectifying this situation is critical. The Council must ensure that Media24 is held accountable for its role in spreading and perpetuating these fabrications.

If the Council does not act, these false articles will continue to cause ongoing harm and damage to my reputation. Public apologies, full retractions, and corrections are not only necessary but long overdue. The narrative must reflect the facts as they now stand.

I have provided ample evidence to support my claims, and I remain willing to supply further information if required. I trust the Press Council will thoroughly investigate this matter and ensure that journalistic integrity is upheld.

Kind regards,

Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell

Emails Sent to Date (22 August 2024):

[Access folder here](#)

1. **Complaint to the Press Council Re Media24 News24 Regards Multiple Articles Published. Docs 1-5**
2. **Complaint to the Press Council Re Media24 News24. Docs 6-20**
3. **Summary of the R200 Million Campaign (Including Index). Docs 21-22**
4. **Leirmans Road: Before and After the Transformation. Doc 23**
5. **Corruption and Criminality: SAPS, State, Mr. de Swardt, Consortium, Keith and Inge Broad. Doc 24**

Links to Relevant Folders:

1. **Table of Offenses and Criminality**
[Access folder here](#)
2. **Formal Complaint to SAPS Colonel McLean Inspectorate**
[Access folder here](#)
3. **National Prosecuting Authority: Complaint & Request for Investigation**
[Access folder here](#)
4. **Formal Complaint to the Press Council Ombudsman**
[Access folder here](#)
5. **Audio Recordings & Transcripts: Witness Testimony (Housekeeper of 16 Leirmans)**
[Access folder here](#)
6. **Audio and Transcript: Witness Testimony (Portfolio Manager Chandre Abrahams)**
[Access folder here](#)
7. **Video Recordings & Transcripts: Illegal Evictions & Assaults by Mr. de Swardt and His Thugs at 16 Leirmans Road**
[Access folder here](#)
8. **Video Recordings & Transcripts: Witness Testimony (Mario Boffa Confessions Series)**
[Access folder here](#)

9. Video Recordings & Transcripts: SAPS Officer Aiding Wouter de Swardt's Illegal Eviction[Access folder here](#)**10. Album of the Portfolio (Google Photos)**[View album here](#)**11. Album of the Portfolio (Google Drive - The Truth Suid Africa Album)**[View album here](#)**12. Link to Portfolio Imagery, Videos, and Photos**[Access the collection here](#)

From: Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>

Sent: Thursday, 22 August 2024 12:41

To: fanieg@ombudsman.org.za <fanieg@ombudsman.org.za>; enquiries@ombudsman.org.za <enquiries@ombudsman.org.za>

Cc: Darren de Rodez <darrenrussell10@outlook.com>; 'The Truth South Africa' <thetruthsuidafrika@gmail.com>

Subject: Submission of Complaints regarding articles published by the Media24 Group (Email 1 of 5)

The Press Council of South Africa
Building 12, Section B
Burnside Island Office Park
410 Jan Smuts Avenue
Craighall Park, 2196

fanieg@ombudsman.org.za
enquiries@ombudsman.org.za

22 August 2024

Dear sir/madam

Re formal complaint about highly defamatory articles, the content of which is entirely fabricated.

I would like to file a formal complaint against the Media24 Group, including News24, Rapport and Netwerk24 regarding several articles they published.

The complaint, as well as the specific breaches of the code, are listed in the attached document.

Included are the reasons for the complaint, as well as the timing, the remedies sought and the information that supports my complaints.

I would welcome speaking with someone to properly understand the remedies available

I had started to fill in the online complaint form, but it seems to be set up more for less complex complaints and ones in regard to single articles.

I apologize if I have omitted anything which may be needed, as I have prepared the documents without the assistance of an attorney and I was unaware of the process until this week, until a journalist recommended this as a route to address the defamatory and inaccurate articles.

If I need to amend anything or provide any additional information or documentation I am very happy to do so

the matter has become pressing due in part to my mother's lung cancer diagnosis and illness, and the need to tackle these articles which are impacting every aspect of my life, including complicating the normalisation of visa status (in particular so I can visit my mother in the UK) and obstructing my attempts to ensure those responsible for the criminal campaign are brought to justice, as well as the fear my mother will pass before these highly defamatory, extremely damaging and very distressing articles are removed and corrected.

I apologise also for having to send five emails, but due to size restrictions per email, it has been necessary to split the files into sections.

I look forward to hearing from you and would be delighted to assist in any way necessary.

Thank you very much for your time and attention

Yours sincerely

Darren de Rodez Benavent Russell
+795481226

EMAIL ONE OF FIVE

1. Complaint to the Press Council Re Media24 News24 Regards Multiple Articles Published. Docs 1-5.

The Complaint

The Breaches of The Code of Ethics and Conduct

EMAIL TWO OF FIVE

2. Complaint to the Press Council Re Media24 News24. Docs 6-20.pdf

Media24 and their refusal to engage included copy correspondence.

The articles and a detailed analysis of the content

The allegations

Addressing the specific fabrications

Media24 News24 Addendum^

News24 Articles. Selection Of. English & Africans (Compressed)

WDS Dossier. Post December Arrest Dossier. Cases Listed

Wouter De Swardt Online Reviews

Wouter De Swardt's (WDS) Dossier Used in Civil and Criminal Proceedings Analysis of The Submissions Of

Wouter De Swardt His Clients And Saps [U...

Case No. 7902.22 Application to Hear Oral Evidence and Affidavit Darren Russell IPID 6 August 2024.

Chasing Report of Corruption and Criminality. Including File Index ...

L003. Representations Re Vis (Full Length) To the Ssp. On Behalf of My Client 29.6.2023...

National Prosecuting Authority 15 Aug 24

The Abhorrent Post-Arrest Plan to Create Victims. Saps WDS His Clients.

The Real Victims, Villains, Winners, & Losers. Chapter 11. WDS, Saps

Wouter De Swardt (WDS) Of Fox Forensics. The Man His Methods and His Criminality

EMAIL THREE OF FIVE

3. Summary of the R200 Million Campaign (Inc Index). Docs 21-22.pdf

The main documents bringing the various component parts of the campaign into one file.

EMAIL FOUR OF FIVE

4. Leirmans Road. Before and after the Transformation. Doc 23.pdf

Images of the property before and after, tackling many of the fabrications included in the articles.

EMAIL FIVE OF FIVE

5. Corruption and Criminality. SAPS, State, Mr de Swardt, Consortium, Keith Inge Broad. Doc 24

Document of the extensive criminality and corruption of the campaign by Mr de Swardt, the original author and motivator