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SAGA STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH ARTISTS IN DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY – AND CALLS FOR URGENT AND DECISIVE ACTION

The South African Guild of Actors - the collective voice of professional actors - stands in solidarity with artists facing secondary victimisation at a time when their livelihoods been decimated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Performing Artists have been among the hardest hit as venues have been shut down, while erratically imposed curfews and other restrictions have rendered much artistic activity unviable. The Presidential Economic Stimulus Package (PESP) was intended to create employment opportunities in the creative sector but has instead tipped many into the economic abyss.

The official response to the pandemic has served to emphasise the need for a different policy, funding, and strategic approach to the arts. A sustainable creative sector should be supported in realising the potential of South Africa's rich vein of talent. It is ironic that as we commemorate Human Rights Day, many artists have been stripped of their dignity; the late statesman Nelson Mandela characterised this as a "challenge to their very humanity".

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises and upholds the dignity, value, and rights of creative workers. This is echoed by section 16(1)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which defends the fundamental right "to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts".

SAGA deplores the ineptitude displayed in the management of the PESP; it demands urgent executive action that will see funds released to those in need without further delay. Furthermore, SAGA calls on President Cyril Ramaphosa to ensure accountability and transparency, with visible consequences for delinquent members of his Executive.

Moreover, we urge the President to act urgently and decisively. His sustained dithering over the Performers Protection and Copyright Amendment Bills has robbed actors of the right to earn royalties. These might have provided relief at a time when they are prevented from working while their image continues to be economically exploited to the benefit of others.

The continued marginalisation and victimisation of artists is a violation of the founding provisions of our Constitution, "[to promote] human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms".



Adrian Galley
SAGA Vice Chair

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