

media

The logo for the Media Monitoring Project features the word "media" in a red, lowercase, serif font. To the right of "media" is a blue graphic element consisting of a curved line that ends in a series of white dots, resembling a stylized eye or a signal. Below "media" is the text "monitoring project" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

monitoring project

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Monitoring the Media since 1993

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29 May 2008

Dear Mr Thloloe

RE: Complaint about the *Daily Sun*

This complaint is submitted by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) together with its partner CoRMSA (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa) and is endorsed by the attached list of organisations.

MMP and CoRMSA, hereby submit a complaint regarding a series of stories on non-nationals run in the *Daily Sun*, which MMP submits are a violation, individually and collectively, of several clauses of the South African Press Council Code.

MMP submits that the stories violate the following clauses:

1. Reporting of News

1.1 The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.

1.2 News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:

1.2.1 Distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;

2. Discrimination and Hate Speech

2.1 The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.

2.2 The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter.

3. Advocacy

3.4 Not distorting the facts in text or headlines.

The complaint is made on the following terms:

In terms of the standard complaints procedure as set out on the Press Council Website, MMP hereby submits a complaint about an article published on the 15th of May 2008.

While it seems to be common practice to submit a complaint on the basis of one article, in the present instance the complaint is based on one article together with a selection of articles from the 21st of May going back to the 8th of April 2008. As the most recent article is within the stipulated time for submission, MMP requests that the Ombudsman consider the complaint. Further, as the MMP is submitting a complaint based on an ongoing trend and pattern of reporting it is requested that the items which were reported over 14 days ago are considered as supporting evidence of the complaint.

The central elements of this complaint are: MMP submits that the *Daily Sun's* ongoing and continued use of the term, "aliens" to refer to non-national's is inappropriate and discriminatory. In addition, its usage together with the manner of reporting and the structure of stories about non-nationals and government is such that it constitutes a fundamental violation of the basic principles of reporting news truthfully, accurately, fairly and in a manner that is balanced and placed within context (See Clause 1 of Press Code).

Furthermore, this complaint will show that the *Daily Sun* has failed to condemn the recent xenophobic attacks. Not only did the paper refrain from making a clear call to stop the violence (until an editorial on 26th May), but there is also a strong case for arguing that its reporting legitimates the recent violence by perpetuating stereotypes of foreign peoples. These reports are likely to leave readers with a construction of reality that explains current events in a distorted and untruthful manner.

In essence, the reporting of the *Daily Sun* appears to make the xenophobic violence understandable and justifiable, rather than clearly condemning it as unacceptable.

The following analysis shows that three main substantive conclusions emerge from the manner in which the recent xenophobic violence has been reported by *The Daily Sun*:

- Foreign nationals in South Africa are consistently presented as "aliens" and as the primary source of all problems;

- Government is presented as the institution that has enabled the 'aliens' to unfairly take advantage of South Africans and South African resources, and;
- Violence is portrayed as an understandable and legitimate reaction to this state of affairs.

1. Introduction

Media context:

Recent events and comments emerging from government and political parties have raised the potential for a media tribunal to be established as well as potential legislation in the form of the Film and Publications Amendment Bill to be put in place, both mechanisms can be seen as a means of undermining press freedom. MMP has stated in a number of public platforms that media freedom needs to be protected and promoted and that for press self regulation is the most workable and reliable system. It is within this context that the media are required to demonstrate not only that in the overwhelming majority of instances that they operate ethically, and provide news in a balanced, fair and informative manner, but also, critically, that where media do err or violate the self regulatory press code, that action proportional to the violation is taken and seen to be taken.

The nature of this complaint is such that it deals with issues fundamental to journalism, and the scourge of racism. South Africa's racist history makes the current outbreak of xenophobic violence even more abhorrent and appalling, and places greater responsibility on all media in South Africa to challenge racism and xenophobia. For the purposes of this complaint, the MMP is taking racism and xenophobia to be intricately linked and equally repulsive, and in many instances one and the same.

Assumptions:

It is uncontroversial to state that the media in providing the news do not simply reflect it, they re-tell, or re-present the news and the world to their audiences. There are a host of processes of selection involved in the production of news. These impact and determine every stage of news production ranging from selecting which stories and events will be included in an edition or bulletin to who speaks, where they come from and how the story is reported, imaged and structured.

While the majority of mass media have differing processes for determining their news, and while many media assert and adopt differing series of selection processes which affect the news produced, there are also commonly understood systems for reporting and commonly adopted practices. A practical example of the commonality of these principles can be seen in the print media's willingness to self regulate and agreement to adhere to basic principles codified in the South African Press Council's Press Code.

While there is enormous scope for exercising freedom of expression within the boundaries of the code, certain actions and reporting that may fall outside of the code may require censure from the press council's press ombudsman.

As exemplified by the code, while there is great scope for diversity of views and opinions to be expressed within the boundaries of the code, both the code and the South African Constitution set out areas which either constitute a breach of the Code or fall outside of constitutional protection. Thus it makes sense for there to be a clause in the press code that deals with discrimination and hate speech.

The existence of the Press Code and the Constitution do not mean; however, that there will not be contraventions of either, or that the issues they seek to address will no longer occur. As evidenced from the recent violence in Gauteng, racial/ethnic/national discrimination is not only present but can take extreme, violent forms.

Overt discrimination is unlikely to be encountered in today's South African media. This is not to say that discrimination is no longer present in the media; rather that the manner in which it manifests is likely to be more shrewd and subtle. For example, a bias against a certain group can be found in the repeated use of certain words that can create labels with negative connotations. Researchers such as Paul Carter and Ruth Wodak who specialise in discourse stylistics and analysis, have shown, for example, that racism can emerge simply by the repeated use of simple words.

The MMP's commitment to freedom of expression is clear, and the MMP openly admits its bias towards human rights in the way it operates.

It should also be noted that the MMP has on various occasions commended the *Daily Sun* for its coverage of different issues including stories about children and child abuse. MMP further submits the *Daily Sun*, in its capacity as the biggest daily newspaper in South Africa, can play a very constructive and positive role in reporting the news in South Africa.

2. The Complaint:

The MMP submits that the contraventions as set out below are extremely serious, given the context of the recent xenophobia based violence, further, that they occur as an ongoing pattern, and that they deal with the very fundamentals of journalism, and the rights to dignity and equality.

The *Daily Sun*:

MMP monitors newspaper articles on race and xenophobia on a continual basis, and is able to pick up on trends in the media. One of the newspapers monitored on a daily basis is the *Daily Sun*. *Daily Sun* is the biggest daily newspaper in South Africa. It boasts a circulation of over 500 000 across Gauteng, Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga and Northwest Province, and plans to expand to KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and the Eastern Cape.¹

Media 24, the publisher of the *Daily Sun*, describes their readers in and around the major urban centres of South Africa as predominantly black, working class,

¹ http://www.media24.com/generic.aspx?i_BusinessUnitID=3&i_CategoryID=5&lang=Eng

English literate with a high school education – often also described as the economic core of South Africa.²

The *Daily Sun* is a tabloid newspaper, not only in format but also in style and focus. To an extent, this explains the paper's focus and approach to reporting and in some instances may entitle the paper to additional leverage in considering matters of news reporting. It is not surprising therefore, that the paper will focus on the dramatic and sensational and will tend to limit its news to factual, event based articles rather than providing articles with background and context. However, the paper still has a responsibility to its readers to give a fair and justifiable representation of reality and, like other print media in South Africa; it is obligated to operate within the limitations of the Press Code.

2. *Daily Sun's* construction of reality

The *Daily Sun* has employed three primary frameworks for portraying non-South Africans and xenophobic-based violence, which influence the understanding and perception of the current xenophobic attacks in and around Johannesburg:

- Referring to foreigners as “aliens” and contextualising them in a negative manner;
- Representing the state as having completely failed the people, and;
- An oversimplification and distortion of the causes and responsibility for problems and causes of the violence.

Aliens

One of the most striking features of the *Daily Sun's* reporting of the violence and during the period submitted is the ongoing and continued use of the word “aliens” used to refer to non-South Africans.

Since the Alien Control Act of 1991 was repealed and replaced by the Immigration Act in 2002, there does not appear to be any official sanction of the term “alien” to be used when referring to a non-national citizen of South Africa. Of course, this is not to say that media have stopped using the word, nor is it inherently wrong to do so. Newspapers *The Citizen* (“Two killed in attack on aliens” 13/05/2008 p. 3) and *The Sowetan* (“Aliens find refuge at Methodist church” 22/05/08 p. 6) have used the word, in a limited number of stories in their coverage on the current xenophobic attacks. However, the *Daily Sun* uses the term to refer to non-nationals of South Africa on a continual basis and in a continuously negative context.

What is meant by “aliens”?

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “alien” is defined as follows:

“Alien: adj. 1) belonging to a foreign country. 2) unfamiliar or unacceptable 3) relating to beings from other worlds. N. 1) a foreigner. 2) a being from another world.”

The online source WordNet (r) 1.7, defines alien as:

² http://www.media24.com/generic.aspx?i_BusinessUnitID=3&i_CategoryID=5&lang=Eng

“adj 1: not contained in or deriving from the essential nature of something; “an economic theory alien to the spirit of capitalism”; “the mysticism so foreign to the French mind and temper”; “jealousy is foreign to her nature” [syn: foreign]

2: being or from or characteristic of another place or part of the world; “alien customs”; “exotic plants in a greenhouse”; “moved to a strange country” [syn: exotic, strange]

n 1: a person who comes from a foreign country; someone who does not owe allegiance to your country [syn: foreigner, noncitizen, outlander] [ant: citizen]

2: anyone who does not belong in the environment in which they are found [syn: stranger, unknown]

3: a form of life assumed to exist outside the Earth or its atmosphere [syn: extraterrestrial being, extraterrestrial]

v : arouse hostility or indifference in where there had formerly been love, affection, or friendliness [syn: estrange, alienate, disaffect]”

(from <http://dictionary.die.net/alien>, accessed 20/05/08

What is clear from the above definitions is that the term “alien” is used to refer to something or somebody outside of the centre, something or somebody different to “us.” The use of the term on a very basic level serves to locate those who it is applied to as not belonging in South Africa. In so doing it locates the reader, of the “the people’s paper” as being the centre, or the “us”.

It is again uncontroversial to note that language is not neutral, and certain words bring with them a series of connotations. New connotations can also be attached to a certain word by repetitive use of the word in a particular context, and MMP believes the *Daily Sun’s* reporting on non-nationals in South Africa does exactly this. The word “alien” is consistently used in their reporting to produce an idea of who does and does not belong, or have a right to be, in this country.

The creation of the “Other” is a term extensively discussed by Edward Said in his social theory of orientalism, and refers to the manner in which social groups form their identities and generate internal cohesion by collectively differentiating themselves against a common enemy. The main effects of these processes of “othering” are:

- The division of social space into two groups, “us” and “them” respectively
- The establishment of a hard political boundary between “outsiders” and “insiders”
- The legitimisation of discrimination, abuse and violence against the “outsiders”

Although processes of “othering” occur in a range of settings, the impact of the mass print media is considerable where, the consistent creation of an “other” in the media marginalises the defined group and defines them, in this case very literally, as strangers.

An article that serves to clearly illustrate this distinction is the front page article on Wednesday 14 May, titled: “Cops said I was an alien! Homeboy angry after jail horror!” A clear distinction is made between “homeboys” and “aliens”, “us” against “them”, and by implication who deserves humane treatment.

The word "alien" is also weighted with further negative connotations in the *Daily Sun*, as it is almost always attached to stories about criminality, theft, and most recently the xenophobic attacks, as illustrated by the articles cited below. The continual reference to "aliens" and their link with some negative, often illegal, act would clearly create sub-conscious concerns if not acrimonious feelings regarding foreign peoples.

In addition, the *Daily Sun* deepens and builds further negative connotations into "alien" by often associating the word with a larger event or concept as can be seen in the following examples where "alien" is used together with the term, War ("War on aliens"), terror ("The alien terror"), and tsunami ("Mugabe's tsunami").

On a slightly different level, the *Daily Sun's* use and reference to aliens supports a reading of the people being referred to not only as foreign and on the margin and different, but from another planet and a threat to the "us". All such headlines bear a strong resemblance with science-fiction titles, further distancing *Daily Sun* readers from a human connection with non-South African residents. This link to "science-fiction aliens" is made overtly visual in the design of the logo that *Daily Sun* started to use after the second weekend of xenophobic attacks. This logo carries the caption: "The Alien Terror!"



The logo was used in the *Daily Sun* reporting on the xenophobic attacks on 20/5, 21/5, 22/5 (left). Poster for science-fiction movie "War of the worlds" to which it shows a strong resemblance (right).

The list below of *Daily Sun* articles on non-nationals shows the repetitive use of the word "aliens". On some occasions, the word "alien" is used even where a reference to the non-national identity of the article's subject is not relevant, violating clause 2.2 of the Press Code. "Bloody end of alien lover" (09/05/2008, p. 2) and "63 Aliens bust in crime drive" (9/04/2008, p. 13) are articles about crime and not about refugees or non-nationals. A reference to the nationality, or 'otherness', of the subjects was not necessary in these instances, and its only function appears to be a contribution to the perceptions that *Daily Sun* constructs about foreigners, in that the use of the word associates non-South African residents with negative events.

- "I know that thug!" "Do not rob thy neighbour! Nine alien thugs robbed a Metrorail security man... they did not know he had recognized one of them" (08/04/2008 p. 1)

- "Magic rats are stealing my cash!" "A tuck shop owner believes that a Zimbabwean merchant is sending debt collectors to her place – magical rats! The frightened woman admits that she has owed the alien merchant money since last year" (14/04/2008 p. 3)
- "This isn't magic, it's theft! Aliens disappear with the cash" (15/04/2008, p. 10)
- "63 Aliens bust in crime drive" (9/04/2008 p. 13)
- "Aliens: We've lost faith in cops" (15/04/2008 p. 2)
- "Alien girl (9) dies in attack! (16/04/2008 p. 5)
- "Bloody end of alien lover" (09/05/2008 p. 2)
- "They wait for dark before they attack! Aliens use muthi to steal our cattle!" (09/05/2008 p. 11)
- "It's war on aliens! 20 bust for attacks!" (13/05/2008 p. 4)
- "Cops said I was an alien! Homeboy angry after jail horror (14/05/2008 p. 1)
- "War against aliens! Thousands forced to flee Alex" (14/05/2008 p. 2)
- "Aliens: The truth! *Daily Sun* tells why Alex exploded" (15/05/2008 p. 1)
- "Alex aliens want to go home" (15/05/2008 p. 2)
- "Destruction rages in Diepsloot! Looters wage war on cops as alien attacks spread"
- "Blood and flames! Aliens killed and injured as new attacks stoke flames of hatred" (19/05/2008 p. 3)
- "Rampage! 13 aliens dead as angry flames of hatred spread!" (19/05/2008 p. 1)
- "The Alien Terror!; Helicopter chases warring crowds! Fleeing the mighty wind! Going home to moz! Page 3" (20/05/2008 p. 1)
- "The Alien Terror!; Goodbye Mzansi! 500 fearful Mozambicans pack up and go..." (20/05/2008 p. 3)
- "The Alien Terror!; Battleground: Images of war in the streets!" (20/05/2008 p. 4)
- "Aliens run for their lives!" (21/05/2008 p. 1)
- "Shots fired in alien battle" (21/05/2008 p. 2)
- "We're leaving... with nothing! – The alien terror!" (21/05/2008 p. 3)

The stories selected above are from the period April to May. MMP has a range of similar articles, some dating back to 2006, with similar links and storylines and can provide these on request.

In addition to clearly establishing non-nationals as the 'other', the *Daily Sun's* repetition and constant negative associations means the term has become a rhetorical declaration that shapes and distorts what is being said in the text. That is, the fact that the term is used, either in the headline or in a title or logo box means it colours, shapes and distorts what is in the text and the reading of it.

Even in those cases where the content may be positive, the use of "alien" in titles, or in the content, undermines or minimalises the effect, precisely because it necessarily shapes and distorts the reading of the articles. An example of this is, "SA is hell for alien kids" (08/05/2008 p. 10). The story is in essence about challenges being experienced by refugee children. It is positive that it was

covered, but the use of "alien" in the headline immediately draws empathy and understanding away from the children who are not "us".

Furthermore, by constantly using the term "alien" and its negative connotations and associations, the *Daily Sun* is clearly perpetuating negative stereotypes that are racially based and discriminatory. Accordingly, MMP submits that the *Daily Sun* has violated clause 2.1 which states:

2.1 The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.

That the nationality of the people involved is, in many instances, irrelevant to the story being told, suggests that the *Daily Sun* has also violated clause 2.2 which states:

2.2 The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter.

While an individual analysis of one item alone may not yield this finding, it is the pattern, in reporting and editing, that reveals the *Daily Sun's* construction and support of stereotypes and semantic manipulation of its readers.

In creating a level of understandability and even acceptability of the xenophobia, MMP submits that the *Daily Sun* has crossed a line of media responsibility and ethics. However, MMP is not equipped or qualified to judge whether or not in addition to being violations of the above mentioned clauses of the Press Code, whether such continued use and repetition of discriminatory stereotypes amounts to hate speech, as well. Accordingly, MMP submits this is a matter that the Press Ombudsman and the South African Human Rights Commission can investigate and, if necessary, take further action on in assessing to what extent if any the *Daily Sun's* coverage is in violation of clause 2.3 "material which amounts to hate speech."

2.2 Aliens, government and *Daily Sun* readers

MMP supports the *Daily Sun's* efforts to reflect the problems, concerns and ideas of their readers in their coverage. Indeed, one of the most positive aspects of the creation of the *Daily Sun* is that it targeted a group of readers who previously had been largely marginalised. It is also important to bear in mind that there are many serious challenges that need to be addressed in South African society and the media, and a significant amount of information needs to be communicated.

However, media users utilise the information that is provided as a means to construct a framework through which they see reality and with which readers make sense of their everyday lives. As noted previously, language does not provide a neutral view on reality, and neither does media.

Clearly, it is vital to report on the xenophobic violence, on failures of government, and other key social actors as the majority of media have. However, it is not sufficient, in the South African context, for a news medium to claim that it is just merely reflecting the ideas that circulate amongst its readers, where,

“the people of South Africa believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity” (Preamble South African Constitution)

and that there is a need to,

“heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights,” (Preamble South African Constitution).

It should be further considered that stereotyped and racist ideas about non-national people do not just come into being on their own spontaneously. Such ideas are created in a dialogue between different actors, two of them being the media and their public. Every time the *Daily Sun* chooses to make use of negative stereotypes and language when referring to non-nationals, they are both supporting and producing a perception that can become reality for its readers.

This is not to suggest that many of the issues and challenges the *Daily Sun* reports on are not valid or do not resonate with its readers, rather it requires an understanding of news which accepts that the media does not simply reflect reality but is performative; it presents the world to its readers from a particular perspective and to varying degrees constructs a particular reality. It constructs this reality directly through the stories it selects, the way the paper is laid out, the language used and images portrayed. In the present context, the *Daily Sun*, does this indirectly by asking its readers to position themselves in a very particular way in relation to understanding the non nationals and the state. As presented earlier through the repetition of negative connotations of “aliens”, readers are asked to position themselves as the centre, with non-nationals as the other, as different, as criminal and wrong. Not only does this serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes and discriminatory language, it also serves a broader ideology of positioning the “aliens” as not belonging, as people who really should not be here as being a problem for local South African people.

MMP is not claiming that the *Daily Sun* blames foreigners for the problems experienced in South African society. The *Daily Sun* is in fact very clear as to who they blame for not solving, or indeed enabling, ‘the problem’. The editorial that was published on their front page on 15/05/2008, states,

“It’s ANOTHER government failure. Let there be no mistake about this: if there is blame here, it lies on the shoulders of the government and its agencies.”

However, although the government is the one who is to blame the editorial clearly infers *who* is the problem. To highlight this, the following sections from the editorial are useful:

- “Too many South Africans are walking around unemployed while many foreigners, often prepared to work for less money, have jobs. Job creation has not kept up with reality in our country.”
- “South Africans living in tin and cardboard shacks are tired of seeing foreigners buying RDP houses from corrupt officials. These houses are supposed to be free to the poorest South Africans. But too many housing and local council officials are crooks.”
- “Many of us live in fear of foreign gangsters and conmen. Much terror has been caused by gangs of armed Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and others. Not every foreigner is a gangster, of course – but too many are. And too

many of our cops are NOT doing their jobs. They concentrate instead of making a few fast bucks out of helpless aliens."

The passages from the editorial, above, in the *Daily Sun* clearly portray foreign people as those who benefit from government negligence or direct support, or indeed from the "aliens" apparent inherent criminality, making it seem like their 'otherness' is the reason why they are being advantaged.

In addition to the construction of alien as evil not belonging, the other common trend in the reports submitted is for the state to be continuously represented as a failure on every level. While this is not necessarily directly linked to the representation of non-nationals, it serves to highlight another key element of the coverage that is limited and unfair.

The editorial also leaves the reader with the perception that government is apathetic and corrupt. This is further underlined by another editorial the following week (19/05/2008 p. 8), which states,

"What has government done so far to make life unbearable for criminals? ABSO-BLOODY-LUTELY NOTHING!"

In an article titled, "Bob's Tsunami", *Daily Sun* clearly again blames the problem on the South African government by stating;

"President Mbeki says there's no crisis in Zimbabwe – but the flood of miserable refugees rises every day." (17/04/2008 p. 1)

While "aliens" are again not directly blamed, it is clear that without the "aliens", solving the issues affecting ordinary South Africa's lives would be easier.

What is also of great concern is that these editorials and articles may encourage readers to distrust information disseminated from government authorities. In their coverage of the recent xenophobic violence in Johannesburg, the *Daily Sun* does make use of government or government related sources that condemn the violence.

- Jacob Zuma (16/05/08 p. 4 and 19/05/08 p. 3),
- Gauteng Safety and Security MEC Firoz Cachalia (14/05/08 p. 2),
- Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula (15/05/08 p. 2),
- Winnie Mandela (15/05/08 p. 2),
- Cosatu and the SACP.

All are quoted in *Daily Sun* articles about xenophobia, condemning the violent events. However, all sources mentioned are the same authorities the *Daily Sun* accuses of inactivity, and failure.

"If there is blame here, it lies on the shoulders of the government and its agencies." (15/05/08 p. 1)

The *Daily Sun's* own coverage undermines the effect of such quotes.

It would seem difficult to argue that there are no non-nationals are involved in crime, crime does after all occur all over the world. Equally there is a great deal of validity for the concerns of the readers of the *Daily Sun* about lack of houses, and unemployment. A Sunday Times editorial on 18/05/2008 also stated:

"Poor people feel the competition firsthand. They see the limited benefits of the liberation for which they struggled hard being usurped by newcomers."

It is clear that the poor are always going to be the ones who experience first hand the most direct impact of refugees, and service delivery limitations. Even with all these issues taken to be valid to varying degrees, the structure of the reporting of the xenophobic attacks and the role of the state is clearly not only biased and limited but perspective is presented that condones xenophobia, and a state that has completely failed its people.

If this perspective is clearly present, then the violence being meted out to non-nationals seems justified. After all, following this logic, if the state as the key agency for implementing law and order has failed, what choice is left for ordinary South Africans but to take the law into their own hands? Certainly the front page story of the *Daily Sun*, "flames of fury" would support such a notion.

On the same page as the editorial of the 15th of May, is a picture of two injured men and a flaming truck, with the caption, "Flames of fury!" The story opens with the words,

"Angry crowd attacks! They've discovered the hard way that crime-battered people have had enough of suspicious strangers!"

The story later explains that the town, where the violence occurred, had been suffering from crime and the police had done nothing to help them. The violence and mob justice covered is not condemned, nor is there a clear mention of the need and imperative for democratic justice.

This position is further supported by the absence of suggesting alternatives to violence as a means of solving problems, or of unpacking multifaceted issues and events. Even the editorial on 26/05/2008 which seems to suggest there should be alternatives and that the violence should be stopped fails to offer any concrete possible solutions.

"There are less deadly ways to attack our problems. There are MANY clever, creative and honest ways to fight poverty... we write about them in *Daily Sun* every day."

Simplification of multi-causal issues:

The problems that are mentioned as important causes for xenophobia are unemployment and housing issues. Clearly the levels of unemployment and lack of housing are unacceptably high. Both are complicated issues, caused by many different factors. The *Daily Sun* does not try to unpack the issues for their readers. While it would be unusual for a tabloid like the *Daily Sun* to offer analysis of these issues there are a variety of methods that could be adopted to unpack and explain the issues that need to be addressed. In the editorial of 15/05/2008, oversimplification suggests that foreigners benefit from government failure. Their "otherness" being the reason for this, while there most certainly are additional reasons; including skills levels discrepancies.

Even the reason for the outbreak of the violence is oversimplified, being framed as "another government failure", where many other newspapers have suggested that the other reasons for the expansion of violent attacks is not people's hatred of foreigners but linked to poverty and criminal violence, and a culture of violence.

As mentioned previously the *Daily Sun* has previously fulfilled their responsibilities as a newspaper and reflected issues that are of concern to South African citizens. However, the *Daily Sun* does not make a sufficient effort to provide its readers with reasonable solutions. Many citizens rely on the press/media to tell them what avenues are available for taking appropriate action. Newspapers, therefore, have an immense opportunity and responsibility to empower their readers. Reflecting readers' concerns, but limiting their understanding of the causes is in opposition to the media's purpose and responsibilities. Not only does the *Daily Sun* miss out on an opportunity to empower their readers by reasonably unpacking the reasons for their problems, it also leaves readers with a skewed, limited and biased version of the problems.

In addition to not enabling readers to understand their issues better, the *Daily Sun* does not provide more positive avenues for channelling their dissatisfaction and addressing their concerns, such as giving names and telephone numbers of government agencies and officials, or showing successful stories about people filing a complaint.

This level of xenophobic reporting, as well as, fundamentally unfair reporting is particularly alarming in light of:

- the continued and unjustifiable usage of negative and discriminatory stereotypes being perpetuated in the *Daily Sun's* reporting of non-nationals;
- the repetitive usage of "alien" logo's and symbols, such as "Alien terror" and "War on aliens";
- the biased and limited representation of government and government agencies;
- the failure of the *Daily Sun* to clearly condemn the violence, except until most of it had been contained;
- the failure of the *Daily Sun* to offer any nonviolent alternatives, or additional information to help prevent violence and to condone mob justice; and,
- the *Daily Sun's* large market in urban areas with a demography that is closely aligned with that of the areas where the violence has taken place.

It is clear, that even if only some of these concerns were clearly present that it would be impossible to suggest that the coverage of non-nationals by the *Daily Sun* during this period was fair, balanced, accurate or non discriminatory. It is clear therefore that the *Daily Sun* has contravened the following fundamental clauses of the Press Code:

1.1 The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.

1.2 News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:

1.2.1 Distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nobel prize winner Desmond Tutu recently pleaded for an end to the violence, "This is not how we behave. These are our sisters and brothers. Please, please stop,"

MMP is deeply concerned that the *Daily Sun* took so long to call for an end to the violence, and that this call came after the violence had been largely contained. Moreover, the *Daily Sun* has not sufficiently condemned the attacks in their coverage, and in perpetuating stereotypes about non-nationals and government have condoned the violence.

Accordingly the MMP request that:

- The *Daily Sun* apologise to all its readers, and publish a front page apology to all non-nationals in South Africa. Such an apology is necessary as a first step to moving beyond discrimination and helping to restore the dignity of those impacted by the violence;
- Further, that the *Daily Sun* publish an editorial and adopt an editorial position of condemning violence and actively seek out stories which highlight or serve to highlight finding alternative means to resolving tensions and disputes.
- MMP request that the *Daily Sun* accept and adopt an ethical code which it publicises and invites participation from its readers in developing. Such a code would need to include specific clauses aimed at preventing similar stereotypical reporting in the in the future.
- MMP would like to invite other CoRMSA partners to provide in-depth information and training skills on reporting on non-nationals and the issues that affect them, so as to encourage better understanding and discourage xenophobia and stereotypes.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

William Bird
For and on behalf of the Media Monitoring Project

Endorsed by

Lawyers for Human Rights

Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy (ARESTA)

Jesuit Refugee Service