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EFF INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALIST

Veteran journalist, Karima Brown, recently mistakenly posted a message on an EFF media WhatsApp group, advising journalists to “keep an eye out” for a “Breakfast with the Elderly” planned for Wednesday, 6 March. EFF leader, Julius Malema, responded angrily that Brown was not a journalist and implied that she must be “a mole” working for a security agency or for the ANC. After he had published her telephone number in a Tweet, some of his followers viciously abused Brown - calling her “an Indian whore and b****”, and threatening her with rape and death, and her family with violence.

The attack on Brown follows similar EFF attacks on other journalists, including Ranjeni Munusamy, Max du Preez and News24 editor, Adriaan Basson.

Although Malema subsequently condemned any statements from his supporters calling for violence against Brown, he did not apologise for publishing her telephone number or for his earlier remarks that she was a “mole” and not a journalist. The Foundation calls on the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the Commission for Gender Equality and the police to respond to charges laid against the party by Brown on 6 March. In addition, Brown intends to lay charges with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Electoral Court, of intimidation, violence and enabling abuse.

The IEC has a special responsibility to ensure that political leaders and parties scrupulously observe the letter and principles of the *Electoral Code of Conduct* during election campaigns. The Code aims to create, “*conditions that are conducive to free and fair elections and that create a climate of tolerance, free political campaigning and open public debate*”.

The rules of the *Electoral Code of Conduct* require every registered party and every candidate to “*respect the role of the media before, during and after an election...*” and to “*take all reasonable steps to ensure that journalists are not subjected to harassment, intimidation, hazard, threat or physical assault by any of their representatives or supporters*”. It also calls on parties to “*respect the right of women to communicate freely with parties and candidates*”. It makes it clear that parties have a responsibility to ensure that not only they and their leaders - but also their supporters - comply with the Code.

The IEC is armed with extensive powers to enforce the Code - including the ability to impose fines of up to R200 000, to order a party to forfeit its electoral deposit - or in the most extreme cases - to deregister political parties - thus preventing them from participating in elections.

The Foundation urges the IEC to take immediate action against the EFF. Failure to act risks serious harm to the Commission's integrity as an independent body tasked with ensuring a



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free and fair election on 8 May 2019. The health of our constitutional democracy is on the line if the *Electoral Code of Conduct* is not firmly and impartially enforced.

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