

Three groups take joint action against Bell Pottinger

Three public advocacy groups - Section27, the Helen Suzman Foundation and Save SA - are taking joint action over the probe into the conduct of controversial PR firm Bell Pottinger, which has been accused of fuelling racial tensions in SA on behalf of the Gupta family.



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The groups noted Bell Pottinger's "unequivocal and absolute apology" of last week, in relation to the work it had undertaken over the past year for the Gupta-owned Oakbay, and the fact that it has commissioned an international law firm to review the work done.

They have now sent a letter to Bell Pottinger with a request for access to the terms of reference and all information that will form the basis of the investigation, which is to be undertaken by the law firm Herbert Smith Freehills. This action follows the DA lodging a complaint with the UK regulatory body that the company violated the Public Relations and Communications Association's (PRCA) professional charter and code of conduct.

The PR firm was pressured into dropping the Guptas as clients after it emerged that terms such as "white monopoly capital" had derived from the UK-based consultants. Bell Pottinger has also been accused of being behind campaigns targeting journalists who have been critical of the Guptas.

The three organisations said in a statement on Tuesday that they intend "to make recommendations to the relevant UK regulatory bodies, in order to assist these bodies in coming to a proper understanding of the social, economic and potential legal implications of Bell Pottinger's conduct".

"These organisations are hopeful that, in light of the expressed commitment in its apology to accountability and transparency, Bell Pottinger will respond positively to their approach."

Source: BDpro

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