

*****@gmail.com

From: *****@gmail.com
Sent: Monday, 05 September 2022 14:34
To: hvanvuuren@opensecrets.org.za
Subject: a letter to the board from Aris Danikas
Attachments: letter to OC.docx - Attached

Greetings

Kindly receive my attached letter and hopefully you can correct errors pointed out within the report .

I remain available to answer any questions regarding my points raised within.

Best

Danikas

Disclaimer :

- 1. The content of this email is confidential and intended for the recipient specified in message only. It is strictly forbidden to share any part of this message with any third party, without a written consent of the sender. If you received this message by mistake, please reply to this message and follow with its deletion, so that we can ensure such a mistake does not occur in the future.*
- 2. This message has been sent as a part of discussion between Aristeidis Danikas and the addressee whose name is specified above. Should you receive this message by mistake, we would be most grateful if you informed us that the message has been sent to you. In this case, we also ask that you delete this message from your mailbox, and do not forward it or any part of it to anyone else. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.*

I am writing to your organisation because within a recent investigative report, titled Bad Cops, Bad Lawyers, you have mentioned me in a negative way, and you might not know that a set of facts has been publicly corrected. I believe that although your report is clearly well intentioned, when it comes to the Cato Manor case and my involvement in it, your researchers have been badly misled.

A few words about myself:

I currently hold an honorary research fellow position at the international NGO BluePrint for Freespeech, an organisation in support of free speech expression as well as advocating for human rights including for whistleblowers:

As responsible for Blueprint's African region, I had the honour of researching, recommending, and coordinating the recent international special recognition awards presented to South African whistleblowers, including the late Babita Deokaran.

<https://www.blueprintforfreespeech.net/en/news/memorial-service-honours-babita-deokaran-one-year-after-her-murder>

In 2016 I was also awarded by Blue Print a special recognition award in connection with my whistleblowing action regarding human rights violations that I witnessed of members of the Cato Manor police unit in South Africa. I received the award only after I was subjected to a thorough vetting process. This involved the NGO sending an expert to Greece to interview me, and sending another expert to South Africa to interview people there.

<https://www.blueprintforfreespeech.net/en/prize/recipient/2016/ari-danikas>

American National Whistleblower network, has also examined carefully my case and in June 2021 named me Whistleblower of the Week.

<https://whistleblowersblog.org/whistleblower-of-the-week/ari-danikas/>

My issue with your report

First, I want to make it clear that I don't dispute there were major problems in the way the Hawks and the NPA handled the Cato Manor case (I suffered from their unprofessional conduct myself).

I also want to make it clear that I am not commenting on the complicated politics in South Africa involving the police and prosecuting authorities, and I have no knowledge of the other cases that you write about.

I just want the facts about me reported accurately.

In respect to your recent investigative report, I would like to point out the following errors, inaccuracies, and material omissions and ask that you please correct them in your report:

1. On page 25, your report refers to correspondence between Sello Maema, the leading prosecutor in the Cato Manor case, and my attorney Julian Knight. The report states:

Maema, in an email to Danikas' lawyer, stated that he was concerned the Greek national had not made full disclosures in his statement and that the South African prosecuting authorities were unconvinced that Danikas' evidence would 'assist the state[s] case in any way'.

What your report fails to mention, is that this email was later retracted by the NPA. At a recorded meeting with Maema at the South African embassy with my attorneys present, he apologised for the

mistrust his email had caused and assured me of the value that the NPA attached to my testimony as a witness.

None of this is reflected in your report, even though it was published prominently in the Daily Maverick apology to me last year: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-05-27-daily-maverick-apologises-to-aristeidis-danikas-affords-him-right-of-reply/>

2. On page 26, your report states:

According to the de Kock report, Maema made another vital admission in an email dated 24 April 2019: a statement in English from Danikas had never been lawfully obtained. Instead, Danikas' signature had been 'superimposed' on the English version. In his email, Maema noted that the Greek national had refused to sign the English translation because it contained errors, according to the report.

This is factually incorrect and misleading.

Firstly, as far as I am aware, nowhere in the De Kock report does it state that my statement in English was "unlawfully obtained".

Let me say categorically that all the legal processes were followed in obtaining and translating my statement. I have all the paperwork to show the proper steps of the Mutual Legal Assistance process was followed. This process included the involvement of a magistrate in Greece and a court in South Africa appointing an official translator.

Secondly, it is factually incorrect to say my signature was "superimposed" on the English version of my translated statement because I supposedly refused to sign it. I can provide emails proving that I was never asked to sign any translation neither I refused to do so.

In saying this, the Open Secret report is repeating false claims made in the De Kock report about my interaction with the NPA officials, without checking with me first for verification of the facts.

It is important to mention that *after* the De Kock report came out, Blueprint called for an independent international inquiry into the killings and cover up that is not tainted by South African politics.

This is what Blueprint wrote:

Blueprint does not imply the guilt of any party at this time. The allegations brought against the squad should be dealt with in a transparent manner. Danikas' evidence will be critical in an investigation of members of the squad. The allegations of continued violence, sustained over time, against low-income black South Africans is serious enough to need an impartial judicial review led by a panel of eminent jurists, such as retired judges from an international court, who are completely independent of the complex party politics of South Africa.

3. On page 17, your report says that the Satchwell Inquiry had found that the Sunday Times newspaper had "invented" the stories it wrote about the Cato Manor unit.

This is not true. Nowhere in the Satchwell report does it say the stories were "invented". This is what the Satchwell report said about the Cato Manor stories:

Paragraph 8.206

The sources upon which the reporters relied in the Cato Manor stories have not been discredited and one of the prime sources, Mary de Haas, has publicly confirmed her information. More than 40 people

are dead and the Hawks and the NPA all conducted their own investigations resulting in prosecutions. These were not figments of the imagination of the journalists involved.

Paragraph 8.138

... the Panel would add that the opprobrium the stories attracted may have ensured the issue is not now revisited by any media, despite the compelling testimony of community members and human rights activists unconnected with the Sunday Times.

Cover up

It is regrettable for me as well as the South African public, that your researchers have either not seen or ignored a different version of the actions of the Cato Manor police unit, including those that I myself have witnessed.

For example, the highly respected political violence researcher, Mary de Haas, has written extensively on the subject. I have attached her latest piece, "The myth that black lives matter in South Africa: the triumph of apartheid policing and justice."

Here is some information about the credentials of Ms De Haas:

<https://www.ru.ac.za/latestnews/rhodesuniversitytohonourpoliticalviolenceresearcherandsocialjusticeadv.html>

I believe there has been a massive cover up of gross human rights abuses in South Africa regarding the Cato Manor unit. I previously dedicated nearly eight years of my life providing the authorities with a lot of evidence. For example:

- Spent cartridges, removed at a crime scene to cover up the use of excessive force.
- Bodies moved and crime scenes staged as well as tampered with.
- Racist profiling and torture of suspects at the office of the Cato Manor unit (video footage taken by me in secrecy).
- Video footage of Johan Booysen graphically narrating to me and my wife of how he and other members of the Cato Manor unit targeted and shot black pedestrians while on duty for their amusement.
- Graphic video footage of the Cato Manor unit's officer's casualty making fun of a dying suspect, while waiting for him to die, including Booysen himself.

None of this evidence has ever been tested in court because of politics and incompetence in the NPA, and their peculiar decision to limit their indictment to a time period that excluded my evidence.

I am concerned that the truth of what happened is being suppressed, and this is a great injustice to the underprivileged African people who were tortured and killed unlawfully, and I would like to see that made right.

I will be happy to make myself available to your researchers to go through my evidence of human rights abuses that have never been tested in court, so that they can make up their own minds, and hopefully contribute to the perpetrators being held to account and the families of people tortured and murdered finding justice.

Best Regards

Aris Danikas

From: Hennie van Vuuren <hvanvuuren@opensecrets.org.za>
Sent: Tuesday, September 20, 2022 6:17:27 PM
To: *****@gmail.com <*****@gmail.com>
Cc: Michael Marchant <mmarchant@opensecrets.org.za>
Subject: Re: a letter to the board from Aris Danikas

Dear Aris Danikas,

Thank you for your email and your feedback on the most recent Open Secrets investigative report *Bad Cops, Bad Lawyers*.

Open Secrets stands by its report, which is supported by the Mokgoro report, a High Court judgement, evidence at the Zondo Commission and the de Kock report. We note the concerns you have raised about the facts in our report, particularly as it relates to the Cato Manor case and your evidence as a witness.

While we appreciate the information you have brought to our attention, kindly note the following:

1. We have reviewed the Press Council finding in the dispute between yourself and the Daily Maverick. The Press Council did not make an explicit finding that the Daily Maverick's reporting on the Maema email should be corrected.
2. We have not identified evidence to indicate your signature was never superimposed on the English version of your statement. We draw your attention to Zondo Commission on State Capture, where lawyers representing Sello Maema and Sello Maema himself never denied that the signature was superimposed. They only suggested that the justice department was in possession of the statement at the time this took place. A fraudulently obtained signature would mean that the statement was unlawfully obtained. We undertake to amend our report to state that the NPA never requested you to sign the English version.
3. Thank you for bringing your concern about our reporting on the Satchwell Inquiry findings to our attention. We have made an amendment to our report.

All changes above should now be reflected in the report which is available on the Open Secrets website.

Many thanks,
Hennie

Are you missing a pronoun (Mr/ Ms) in this email? Open Secrets prefers gender neutrality in all our communication.

Hennie van Vuuren
Director
Open Secrets



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----- Original Message -----

On Monday, September 19th, 2022 at 8:11 AM, Hennie van Vuuren <hvanvuuren@opensecrets.org.za> wrote:

Dear Danikas,

Many thanks for your mail and apologies that I have been remiss in responding. I will ensure you receive a response within the next 48 hours.

Kindly contact me via email as I do not answer all twitter direct messages.

Many thanks,
Hennie

Are you missing a pronoun (Mr/ Ms) in this email? Open Secrets prefers gender neutrality in all our communication.

Hennie van Vuuren

Director

Open Secrets



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hvanvuuren@opensecrets.org.za
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----- Original Message -----

On Monday, September 5th, 2022 at 1:34 PM,
<*****@gmail.com> wrote:

Greetings

Kindly receive my attached letter and hopefully you can correct errors pointed out within the report .

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Best

Danikas

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