

Press Release



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World Jewish Congress welcomes South African court ruling on anti-Semitic radio broadcasts

NEW YORK – The World Jewish Congress today welcomed a ruling by South Africa's Constitutional Court upholding sanctions imposed by the country's broadcasting watchdog, BMCC, against a Muslim radio station that had repeatedly propagated the denial of the Holocaust and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC), the owner of *Radio 786*, suffered a major setback when the Constitutional Court dismissed on all counts its application to strike down certain provisions in law. The application was the latest attempt by the IUC to prevent the implementation of sanctions imposed by the BMCC against *Radio 786* following a complaint by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD) against a station.

Mervyn Smith, who heads SAJBOD's legal team in the matter, said that the case was not about constitutional technicalities but about the refusal of *Radio 786* to publicly acknowledge that the contents of the programme it had broadcast were offensive to the Jewish community and to apologise accordingly. "What this is really all about is the refusal by *Radio 786* to accept that six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis and that denial of the Holocaust is deeply offensive to Jews. Were this not the case, then what has prevented the radio station from simply apologizing to the Jewish community and acknowledging the truth?" Smith said.

The SAJBOD complaint dates back to May 1998, when *Radio 786* broadcast an interview with the Islamic scholar Yakub Zaki who denied the Holocaust and blamed Jews for being behind some of the worst disasters in modern history. In 2006 the BMCC ruled in favour of the South African Jewish umbrella organization and ordered *Radio 786* to desist from the broadcasting of hate speech and in particular from "the advocacy of hatred against the Jewish people, including the impairment of their dignity". *Radio 786* was further directed to publicize the ruling as well as its full judgment and sanction order through its news broadcasts, website and in-house news letter and magazine.

Michael Schneider, Secretary-General of the World Jewish Congress, said the court ruling was an important victory for democracy and the rule of law in South Africa. "We welcome the decision by the Constitutional Court because it sends a clear signal to the media that it has to act responsibly and must not propagate hatred on air." Schneider praised the South African Jewish Board of Deputies for persisting in their legal struggle against the radio station.

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The World Jewish Congress is the international organization representing Jewish communities in over 80 countries around the world. The WJC serves as the diplomatic arm of the Jewish people to world governments and international organizations. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies is an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress.

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