

MEDIA STATEMENT

City Power vindicated as Press Ombuds rules against News24 and orders an apology



17 September 2026

CITY POWER VINDICATED AS PRESS OMBUDS RULES AGAINST NEWS24 AND ITS JOURNALISTS

City Power welcomes the finding by the Acting Press Ombud following a complaint lodged against News24 and its journalists over an article published on 24 May 2026, headlined: “City Power spin doctor Mangena implicated in tender interference, dirty tricks campaign”.

“We welcome this finding as it upholds the integrity of journalism and reminds those tasked with holding public institutions accountable that this responsibility must be exercised in accordance with the principles of the Press Code,” said City Power Acting Chief Executive Officer Charles Tlouane.

In its ruling, the Press Ombud upheld key aspects of City Power’s complaint and directed News24 to publish an apology to City Power and its spokesperson, Isaac Mangena.

“The apology must be given appropriate prominence, published across the platforms where the original article appeared, and carry a headline containing the words ‘apology’ and ‘City Power’,” the Press Ombud said in a ruling released this week.

The ruling relates to statements in the 24 May article which the Press Ombud found had been presented as facts when they should have been presented as allegations. These included claims that Mangena was behind a coordinated disinformation campaign aimed at discrediting News24 journalist Khaya Koko.

The article also claimed that City Power officials, including officials in Mangena's Communications Department, were responsible for sending a story concerning suspended City Power General Manager Marvin Baepi and others, and their alleged relationship with Koko, to three national publications. That story related to a separate case of alleged extortion involving a former City Power contractor, which is believed to be under investigation by the Hawks.

The Press Ombud found that these statements breached Clauses 1.3 and 3.3 of the Press Code. Clause 1.3 requires the media to present only what may reasonably be true as fact and to identify opinions, allegations, rumours or suppositions clearly as such. Clause 3.3 requires the media to exercise care and consideration in matters involving dignity and reputation. The Press Ombud found that News24 failed to meet these requirements.

In relation to the alleged disinformation campaign, the Press Ombud found that no evidence had been provided to support News24 presenting as fact that Mangena was behind such a campaign. The Press Ombud similarly found no evidence supporting the claims that City Power officials were responsible for sending stories to other publications or that senior executives were involved in dangerous efforts to discredit one another.

Following the article that formed the subject of City Power's complaint, News24 published a further article on 19 June 2026 under the headline "Pastor Profit". Mangena's photograph was used as the main image alongside that of a pastor alleged to have been involved in tender corruption, while the reporting again alluded to the alleged disinformation campaign led by Mangena.

This later article did not form part of the complaint considered by the Press Ombud and is therefore not covered by the present ruling. City Power intends to pursue a separate complaint with the Press Ombud concerning that article.

City Power respects and supports the important role of the media in scrutinising public institutions and holding them accountable. The finding reinforces the responsibility of the media to distinguish clearly between allegations and established facts, and to exercise appropriate care where reporting affects the dignity and reputation of individuals and institutions.

City Power will continue to engage openly and constructively with the media, which remains a key stakeholder in its work, and remains committed to transparency and accountability.

ENDS

Issued by City Power Acting Chief Executive Officer

Mr Charles Tlouane

For the full Press Ombud Ruling, click here <https://presscouncilsa.org.za/2026/09/15/city-power-v-news24/>

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Claims around alleged extortion of a City Power contractor were disseminated to various media houses, including unsubstantiated allegations against a News24 investigative journalist as part of an apparent disinformation campaign.