

When is whistleblowing morally permissible?

Although contested if Edmund Burke was the first person to say it, his words are appropriate for this article: "When bad men combine, good men must organize". However, good men cannot just blow the whistle as they like, they have to act with a moral conscience, and should be guided by moral guidelines that are in their own best interest, that of the general public and the institution. We need to develop the ability to make informed moral decisions (moral governance) in Namibia. We need to make sure that our actions as whistleblowers are *morally permissible, justifiable and required* before blowing the whistle outside our institutions. In this article, we focus on actions that are morally permissible and justifiable.

THREE CONDITIONS

External whistleblowing is *morally permissible* under the following three conditions: Firstly, if the institution through its product or policy will exercise serious and considerable harm to employees and/or to the public, whether by the user of the product, a bystander, or the general public. For example, if a property developer erect multi-story buildings that only contain half the required steel as speci-



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fied by building standards, and bribe the architect, the mechanical engineer and the property inspector of the municipality to look the other way.

Secondly, if employees identify a serious threat to the user of a product or to the general public, they should report it to their immediate supervisor. If this second condition is met, only then is whistleblowing *morally justifiable*.

Thirdly, if the immediate supervisor "does nothing effectively about the concern or complaint", the employee should exhaust all internal procedures and alternatives within the institution (De George).

In the article that will follow, we will answer the question: when is whistleblowing morally required?

References

Burke, E. n.d.

De George, R.T. 1999. *Business Ethics*.

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The Republic in 22 April 2016