

# Press Release

For immediate release

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South African Institute of Race Relations  
*The power of ideas*

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## **Destruction of DA billboard deplorable – IRR**

**Statement by Gareth van Onselen,  
Head of Politics and Governance at the SA Institute of Race Relations**

The destruction today of the Democratic Alliance billboard listing the names of the victims of Life Esidimeni and those who fell at Marikana is disgraceful and should be condemned.

The views of the families who lost loved ones are important – but no view gives anyone the right to supersede the constitution and destroy or suppress the views of others through physical force and violence. The DA is perfectly within its rights to highlight or commemorate these two incidents in any way it sees fit.

As for the ANC, which appears once again to have helped fuel this spasm of intolerance for the country's constitution and the rights it contains, shame on it. The battle of ideas is exactly that, a fight in the abstract. It is not a physical confrontation. And if you cannot produce superior arguments, then you need to either admit defeat or find a better, more compelling position.

The incident is reminiscent of the way in which the “Zuma Must Fall” banner in Cape Town was destroyed in 2016 – another anti-constitutional spasm which, at its zenith,

saw ANC MP Bongani Mkongi write on his Facebook profile of those in the building to which the banner was fixed: "They must burn to death as it is life to them to keep it that way."

Likewise, the Brett Murray painting, The Spear, which was vandalised and defaced following much ANC unhappiness.

President Cyril Ramaphosa should condemn those responsible for today's act of cowardice, politically affiliated or otherwise, for two reasons. First, to set a precedent of what will and will not be tolerated ahead of the elections. Second, to set a marker down between his administration and the intolerant, toxic and anti-freedom environment that defined the administration of his predecessor, Jacob Zuma.

Those responsible for vandalising the DA's billboard today should be arrested, charged and prosecuted.

**Ends**