

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

Media contact: Terence Corrigan, Project Manager, IRR Tel: 066 470 4456 Email: terence@sairr.org.za

Media enquiries: Michael Morris Tel: 066 302 1968 Email: michael@irr.org.za;
Kelebogile Leepile Tel: 011 482 7221 ext: 2018 Email: kelebogile@irr.org.za

No grounds for sanitising Apartheid's tragic and callous history – IRR

The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) has noted the content of a documentary on land reform produced by AfriForum, which seemingly sanitises the motives behind Apartheid and the brutality of its practices.

We wish to place on record that the IRR, founded in 1929 to oppose racial discrimination and work towards a non-racial future, unreservedly repudiates these sentiments.

Since our founding, we have chronicled and condemned all racial discrimination. We monitored and protested against the pass laws and segregation initiatives of the 1930s and 1940s. During the Apartheid era, we recorded the systematic injustices arising from the ideological fixations of the National Party government.

The abuse of human rights was an inherent and inevitable part of Apartheid. Forced removals, for example, uprooted millions of people from their land and homes, while influx control kept millions more penned up in the homelands and unable to seek a

pathway out of poverty. Pervasive racial discrimination was also a fundamental assault on people's dignity.

Even if the documentary's assertions about compensation having been paid and services having been provided to the victims of removals were universally accurate, these dispossessions were against the will of those affected. They were indeed 'forced'. This in itself was a profound violation of human rights.

It is true that the impulses behind Apartheid and the goal of 'separate development' were complex and not solely about race. Racial discrimination was nevertheless intrinsic to apartheid policies and practices and cannot be discounted or denied.

It is also profoundly misconceived to argue that the welfare of the African population was a major concern of apartheid's architects and implementers. Rather, the measures taken were intended to further a racial- and ethno-nationalist agenda, in which ideology commonly overwhelmed both practicality and humanity.

It is a tragic and callous history that we dare not forget, and that we should never repeat.

The inclusion in the documentary of an interview with one of our analysts should not be taken as an IRR endorsement of its wider content. We grant interviews and hold discussions on numerous platforms with groups of all persuasions – many of whom hold views sharply at odds with ours. This helps us advance our perspectives to people across the political spectrum – and is vital in finding solutions to South Africa's numerous problems.

We were happy to put our views forward in this interview, and stand by what we said. However, we had no editorial control over the documentary. Nor did we have any advance insight into its content.

In soft-soaping the evils of apartheid, AfriForum has failed to provide an accurate perspective on an extremely painful chapter in South Africa's history. This is disrespectful to the country and all its people – and especially to those with personal or family memories of the injustices they suffered. It harms us all.

This major defect in the documentary detracts from the often valuable work that AfriForum has done in defending the interests of farmers, pointing out the pitfalls in

Expropriation without Compensation, and making a strong case for the property rights vital to the prosperity of all.

Ends