

Victimisation of refugees "unbearable"

The victimisation of African refugees in South Africa is unbearable, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRLRC) said on World Refugee Day on Monday.

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JOHANNESBURG - The victimisation of African refugees in South Africa is unbearable, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRLRC) said on World Refugee Day on Monday.

"The Commission... is concerned by the ongoing violent victimisation of African refugees across the country particularly in Limpopo where [a] victim was killed by community members," said the commission's chief executive officer Solomon Moreroa.

He was referring to an attack on foreign nationals in Polokwane, Limpopo, two weeks ago that left one Zimbabwean dead and displaced others.

"This unbearable and unprecedented conduct comes in direct contrast with the commemoration of the World Refugee Day on which human rights of refugees are globally observed."

He said the "continued humiliation of African working refugees" contradicted the spirit of ubuntu as enshrined in South Africa's Constitution of 1996.

"We urge the community leadership... to assist in deepening peace, friendship, tolerance, respect for human dignity, and communal cohesion among all people."

The Commission, he said, advanced the Constitution's values that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity and non-racialism and non-sexism".

[« Back](#)

Start with maids and nannies

COMMENT

MICHEL LAFON



Most youngsters are exposed to an African language at home. Why only make it compulsory when they go to university?

The Star
DEBATE

HIGHER Education Minister Blade Nzimande's proposal for an African language to become compulsory at universities, if it is not just another attempt at backbiting at whites, signals the intention to formally acknowledge the linguistic and cultural diversity of the South African society.

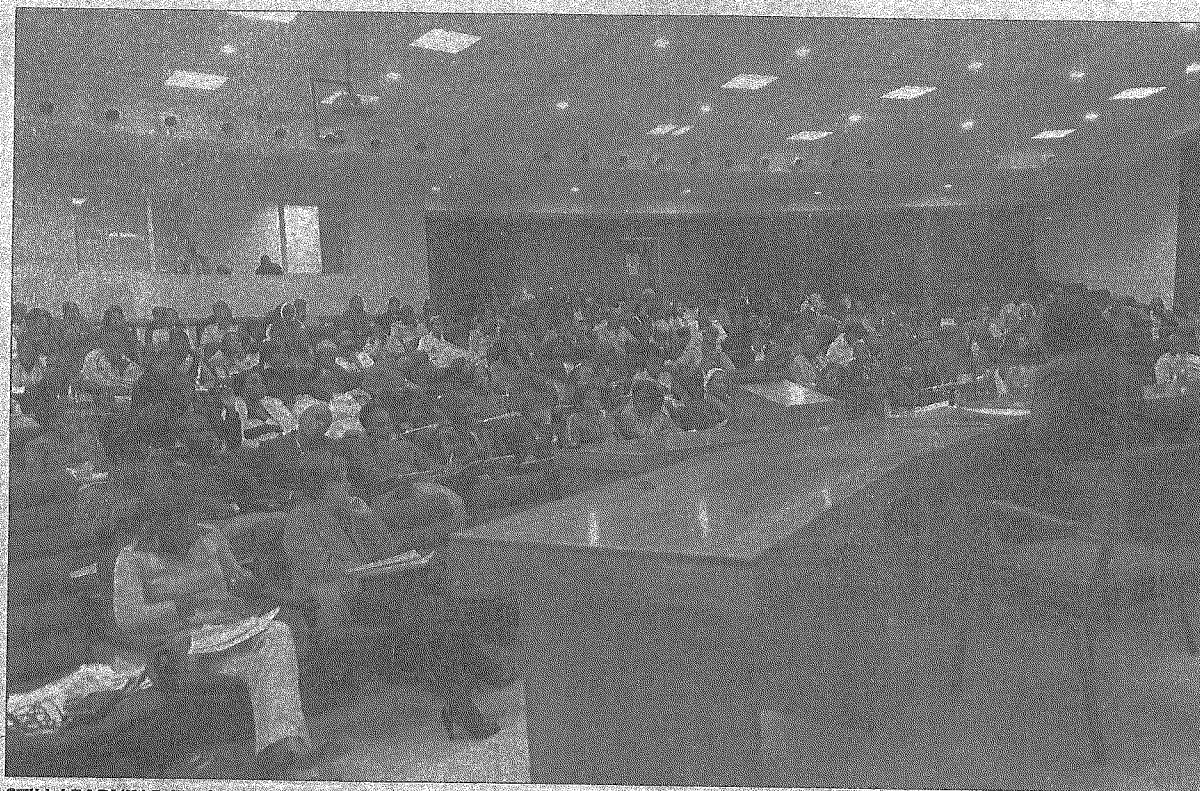
Such a move is long overdue. However, tertiary education is rather a late start for language learning.

If teaching of African languages is to be taken seriously, if it is to go beyond *dumela, sawubona, molo* and *thobela*, if it is to foster both oral and written communication skills, it requires time and energy and genuine interest on the part of the learners. African languages are difficult for adult non-native speakers.

Conversely to German or even French, they offer no linguistic similarities to English or Afrikaans-speakers.

Already challenged by the novelty of the academic context where they are left on their own to study (or not) and often having to find their own grounds in life for the first time, students are unlikely to take this new task with the seriousness and dedication it requires. If it does become compulsory – which the offended protests the proposal raised make rather unlikely – they will do the minimum to get by.

This is not to say that the minister's proposal should not be considered. Quite the contrary. But it should first come with the



STILL LEARNING: Tertiary education is rather a late start for language learning, says the writer about Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande's proposal for African languages to become compulsory at universities.

PICTURE: ETIENNE CREUX

charges to clicks and tones, and their new role as language monitor would go a long way to improve their status.

ers and SAL for non-native speakers) will achieve that aim. Such a measure would be much less controversial, and more efficient,

same school when it is multiracial or through regular exchanges between schools, whereby learners from say an urban ex-model C

could be taught in this medium, making universities truly multilingual and stimulating in turn the "intellectualisation" of the