

EDITORS/REPORTERS

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**MEDIA STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE CRL RIGHTS COMMISSION, CELEBRATING FREEDOM DAY IN THE
CONTEXT OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES**

Today, South Africa not only commemorates Freedom Day, but also reflects on the profound journey of our nation—a journey marked by sacrifice, resilience, and the unwavering pursuit of dignity, equality, and justice. This day calls upon all of us to honour the legacy of those who stood firm against oppression and abuse, whose courage paved the way for the democratic South Africa we cherish today.

Freedom in our context is not merely political—it is deeply human. It is the freedom to believe, to speak, to express, to belong. It is the right to practice one’s religion without fear, to celebrate one’s culture with pride, and to speak one’s language with dignity. These are the pillars that the CRL Rights Commission is constitutionally mandated to protect and promote.

South Africa stands as a living tapestry—richly woven with diverse cultures, religions, and languages. Each thread contributes to the beauty and strength of the whole. Yet, like any tapestry, its resilience depends on how well these threads are interwoven. If one thread is weakened or excluded, the entire fabric is compromised.

A nation is like a choir—each voice carries its own tone, language, and rhythm. True harmony is not achieved when one voice dominates, but when all voices are heard, respected, and blended in unity.

In this spirit, the Commission calls on all South Africans to deepen understanding and embrace tolerance in the context of cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity. In a world often fractured by division and misunderstanding, we must choose dialogue over discord, empathy over exclusion, and unity over intolerance. Interfaith engagement is not optional; it is essential. It is through meaningful dialogues that we can dismantle stereotypes, address abuses in their various manifestations, even in sacred spaces, build trust, and affirm our shared humanity.

Importantly, as a nation, we must confront the realities facing our linguistic landscape. Language is more than a tool of communication; it is the vessel of identity, memory, and heritage. The marginalisation of indigenous languages and the erosion of linguistic diversity remain pressing challenges. We must collectively commit to promoting multilingualism, preserving endangered languages, and ensuring that every South African can access services and opportunities in the language of their choice.

The Commission affirms that, by honouring our past as a nation, we must also take responsibility for our present and future. The freedom we enjoy today was not given lightly; it was earned through the sacrifices of countless leaders and ordinary citizens alike.

As poignantly expressed in the words of former President Nelson Mandela, “Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.”

May this Freedom Day inspire renewed commitment to building a South Africa where every culture is honoured, every religion is respected, and every language is valued.

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