

SAHRC commences hearings into July unrest

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has this morning commenced the National Investigative Hearing into the July civil unrest.



A view shows damage inside a shopping mall following protests that have widened into looting, in Durban, South Africa 13 July 2021, in this screen grab taken from a video. Courtesy Kierran Allen/via Reuters

At least 300 people were left dead with at least R25bn in damages done to businesses and public infrastructure when the unrest rocked the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

“The unrest has indeed deepened unemployment, poverty and rampant socio-economic inequality within South Africa. The unrest accordingly exacerbated, amongst other things, inequality between certain communities, unemployment levels, poverty, hunger and food insecurity.

“Also, of concern to the Commission, are reports that as many communities took to the streets to protect their neighbourhoods and businesses, allegations surfaced of the excessive use of force, racial profiling, assaults, arson, and killings in some places,” the Commission said in a statement.

The hearings into the unrest will be held over the next three weeks.

The SAHRC said it will “inquire into, make findings, report on and make recommendations and/or directives” concerning:

- The causes of the July unrest, with particular focus on Gauteng Province and KwaZulu-Natal Province.
- The causes of the alleged racially motivated attacks and killings following the unrest.
- The causes of the apparent lapses in law enforcement by state security agencies, particularly the SAPS and the role of private security companies in the unrest.
- The social, economic, spatial and political factors prevalent in the various affected areas and the extent to which these played a role in the unrest.

The panel overseeing the hearings are include panel chairperson Commissioner André Gaum supported by Commissioner Chris Nissen as his deputy and Commissioner Philile Ntuli as the chief panellist.

The SAHRC said external experts will be co-opted or appointed by the panel if required.

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