

# SOUTH AFRICA: COMMISSION OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION (TRC)



## WHAT IS THE TRC?

The Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) is a *Restorative Justice* commission established by Democratic Civilian / African National Congress (ANC) as well as President Nelson Mandela. It aimed to reconcile the atrocities and systemic oppression resulting from Apartheid, a mandated racial segregation in South Africa that occurred between 1948 and 1990.

The TRC was initially created in December of 1995, following several international sanctions that sparked the transition from the Apartheid system towards the end of the Cold War. The final report of the TRC was completed in 2002.

## WHY WAS IT CREATED?

The TRC largely focuses on the events both surrounding and resulting from Apartheid, a historical legal system of racial segregation and oppression enforced by South African authorities. Within Apartheid, the government formally established and legalized racist measures and ideologies that had previously existed non-officially under colonial rule. This included denying Black South Africans of their civil and political rights and instilling segregated education, healthcare, and other various public services that all people are entitled to within their human rights. Resistance to such was met with police brutality, torture, authoritative repercussions, and other forms of political violence and systemic oppression.

## MANDATES OF THE TRC

*The main goals of the TRC were:*

- To uncover as much as possible of the truth about past gross violations of human rights, and explore the path of reconciliation and peacemaking through truth telling
- To allow for special hearings to be held that addressed certain sectors, institutions, and individual perpetrators
- To help restore the dignity of victims and afford perpetrators the opportunity to come to terms with their own past - the last point stirring some controversy, as it allowed for perpetrators to be potentially granted amnesty, so long as the truthfully confessed their crimes to the commission.

## OUTCOMES & LEGACIES

- Recommendations for a reparations program that addressed financial, symbolic, and community matters
- Archival and preservation of documents relating to the TRC
- Recommendations for social and political reforms in faith communities, businesses, the judiciary, prisons, the armed forces, health sector, media and educational institutions that encouraged the process of reconciliation
- Full endorsement of the TRC by the South African government, public apology to all victims on behalf of the state from President Nelson Mandela
- Government-established committee to monitor the progress and implementations of TRC recommendations - specifically with reparations and exhumations
- Development of a missing persons task force to locate and rebury victims
- Some prosecution for perpetrators- although many were acquitted

## STATISTICS

Number of Commissioners: **17**

Number of Women Commissioners: **8**

Total Number of Participants: **21 000**

Number of Cases Heard: **2000**

Total Years of Conflict: **approx. 34**

