



# AZAPO

AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

**FROM:** AZAPO President  
Nelvis Qekema

**TO:** Prof Francis Peterson  
University of the Free State Vice Chancellor

**DATE:** 28 September 2023

**SUBJECT: AFRIFORUM COMPLAINT AGAINST DR MZILENI**

Dear Prof Peterson,

On behalf of AZAPO, I write to you to share our extreme disquiet about what seems to be the harassment of the University of Free State's (UFS) sociology lecturer Dr Pedro Mzileni by AfriForum. As a result of this harassment, we now understand that Dr Mzileni is under investigation by the university and the Free State offices of the South African Human Rights Commission. Be that as it may, we trust that the university will see through political manoeuvres that seek to pour fuel on an already volatile race relations in South Africa – our Azania.

In the same breath, AZAPO herewith throws its weight behind the university's academic staff in their support of their besieged colleague, Dr Mzileni.

Our reading of the AfriForum's letter of complaint has left us with no option but to conclude that it represents the spreading of the tentacles of white racism into the realm of democracy where Black people were supposed to breathe a sigh of relief against white supremacy and neo-colonialism. We say this knowing full well that, at the advent of democracy, white racism coagulated into institutionalised racism, while settler-colonialism took refuge in decoloniality. White people could perpetuate their racism against Black people because they (white people) retained economic power, the ownership of the means of production and the wealth itself. On the contrary, the Black people remained hopelessly condemned to landlessness, structural poverty and chronic indignity.

It is against this background that there are recorded cases of Black people being shot dead on the white farms whose owners escaped justice on the racist defence that they thought their victims were animals. Not so long ago, white racists:

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- tortured a Black worker Nelson Chisale and murdered him by throwing him to a pride of lions (2005).
- forced a Black worker Victor Mlotshwa into a coffin and threatened to set it alight (2014).
- described Black beachgoers as “monkeys’ (2016).
- forcefully fed a Black worker Joseph Mona faeces (2017).
- claimed that Black men “rape, steal and kill”; and that Black women must be rounded up “and cut out their uterus and ovaries [so] that they cannot procreate” (2022).

Sir, you know the myriad of racist incidents the university had to investigate and deal with. For that, we commend you. However, the anti-Black attacks include the 2008 disgusting incident where white students forced Black parents to eat food that was urinated on. One has to wonder where was the AfriForum when these anti-Black attacks took place? They hardly raised a finger probably because they had an interest in those racist incidents. They are betrayed by the massive ill-begotten resources they spend in court cases to slave-masterly force Black people never to sing their struggle songs because they remind white supremacists of their guilt.

AZAPO doesn't know what Dr Mzileni taught in his class last month. However, it amounts to dangerous historical amnesia for AfriForum to accuse Dr Mzileni's lecture as being “a divisive rhetoric, which made repeated references to apartheid and racial disparities, [and] seemed intent on stoking the flames of racial division and animosity”. Instead of being annoyed by Dr Mzileni's references to historical and obtaining facts like the perpetuation of “apartheid and racial disparities”, AfriForum should be contributing towards just land reform and wealth redistribution, and ensure, as Bantu Biko said, that “we bestow on South Africa the greatest possible gift – a more human face”.

If Dr Mzileni made any reference to “land thieves”, AZAPO submits that such an assertion would be too mild because something worse than the stealing of the indigenous people's land took place. Our land was robbed at gun point. It took genocide against the Black people and enslavement to enforce their land dispossession. We submit further that AfriForum is interfering with the right to academic freedom, of which the university should under no circumstances find itself being party to the violation of that sacrosanct right. As Biko warned, “Not only have they [whites] kicked the Black but they also told him how to react to the kick”.

Regards,

(signed)

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AZAPO President

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Cc: Dr Engela Van Staden, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academics and Teaching  
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