

Press Release



SOUTH AFRICAN
INSTITUTE OF
RACE RELATIONS

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation
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Malema out but youth problem remains

The South African Institute of Race Relations said on Thursday afternoon that the socio-economic circumstances and inequalities that allowed Mr Julius Malema to become such a force in South African politics were still in evidence. Youth unemployment rates, for example, remain at over 50%. Only 60% of grade one pupils are likely to make it to matric. Approximately 30% of households get their biggest source of income from the State via welfare payments.

The Institute said that Mr Malema had been a product of this environment. According to the Institute, a country with South Africa's inequalities will always be a breeding ground for political radicalism. It would be a mistake therefore to interpret Mr Malema's suspension* as the end of political radicalism within the country. Inevitably, if the country is not able to sustain significantly higher levels of economic growth, new Malemas will come to the fore either inside or outside the ANC.

The Institute also said that Mr Malema had been useful in ensuring a new level of national focus on youth poverty and unemployment. While the policy solutions he proposed were unworkable, he was one of the early few ANC leaders to identify that South Africa's youth were an underrepresented political constituency. The ANC, the Institute said, had been complacent in the pre-Malema era and ignored the rising youth crisis in the country. It is possible, that with Mr Malema out of the way, the party may again fall into the same complacency.

The sentence handed down to Mr Malema, which the Institute described as 'unusually harsh', was probably the only mechanism that the ANC leadership had at their disposal to halt his political ascendancy. In the absence of such iron-fisted action it was plausible that Mr Malema might have led an overthrow of the current senior leadership of the party which would in turn have led to fundamental policy changes for South Africa.

*Mr Malema may appeal his sentence.

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