



# Afrikaner

## STATISTICS

**Population:** Afrikaners constitute nearly three million out of approximately 49 million inhabitants of the Republic of South Africa, plus as many as half a million in diaspora.

**Language:** Afrikaans

**Religion:** Predominantly protestant (Calvinist)

## UNPO REPRESENTATION

Afrikaners are represented at the UNPO by Freedom Front Plus. They were admitted to the UNPO as a member in 2008.

# OVERVIEW

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The Afrikaners are descendants from European explorers who started to settle in South Africa during the seventeenth century. They speak their own language, Afrikaans, which is derived from Dutch. The Afrikaners originate from the first permanent settlement of Dutch colonists in 1652, though their development has also been influenced by the French Huguenots, fleeing from catholic France, and by German settlers. Contemporary cultural traits, such as the language, can easily be traced back to these original settlers, though the traditional way of life has largely been modified over time.

The majority of the Afrikaners live in the Republic of South Africa, though substantive numbers can also be found in other southern African countries. Already during the colonial period, considerable numbers left to farm in Kenya, yet it was mainly over the course of the past two decades that a significant flow of Afrikaners left their home country to settle elsewhere. Forming part of the greater capital flight of skilled labor out of South Africa, many educated Afrikaners have left towards the United Kingdom, Australia and other countries considered to offer more opportunities than South Africa.



# POLITICAL SITUATION

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After an extended period of Dutch control, the Cape Colony was taken over by the British in 1795. Before long, the Afrikaans-speaking population became discontent with the newly installed British rule, culminating into a large outflow of the *Boers* (the *Voortrekkers*) between 1824 and 1838. They trekked deep into the interior of nowadays South Africa, with the purpose of establishing independent republics far from the interfering reach of the British colonial authorities in the Cape. Two major Boer republics came into being: the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Here the Boers might have been left in peace on their farms, were it not for a fateful discovery in the Transvaal: gold.

The influx of gold diggers into the Transvaal led to tensions with the farmers and the *Volksraad* (People's Council) who feared that the foreigners would revoke their autonomy. The tensions eventually incited the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which the Boer republics lost, thereby leading to their final annexation by the British rulers. By 1910, the British decided to combine the Cape colony, the two newly acquired Boer republics, and the colony of Natal into the Union of South Africa.





Even though several of the country's homelands were nominally self-governed, South Africa's black majority was excluded from virtually all democratic participation in the governing of their state and country during the decades that followed. Segregation policies, to be traced back to 1905 when the British separated public schools along ethnic divisions, were soon to be complemented by discriminating legislation passed by the British controlled government. In 1923, the Pass Laws were adopted, initiating the enactment of Apartheid laws that would taint the country's history.

For several decades, a relative status quo was maintained, when in 1948 the freedoms of non-whites were further restricted as political parties led by Afrikaners gained control of the government.

The Apartheid system came to an end towards the end of the century through the efforts of State President F.W. de Klerk, Nelson Mandela and others. In 1992, a convincing "yes" in the organized referendum paved way to the democratic elections of 1994, which were to make Mandela the new president of South Africa.

In recent years, the Afrikaners have continued to play an active role in national politics, aiming to protect their culture and interests. They have continued to prominently put the issue of self-determination on South Africa's political agenda, as the annexation of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State by the British had left the Afrikaners without their desired autonomous region.

## UNPO PERSPECTIVE

The UNPO promotes the participation of the Freedom Front Plus within the democratic framework of South Africa, and recognizes the need of the Afrikaners to politically defend their linguistic and cultural rights. The UNPO further believes in the importance for all South African minorities, including the Afrikaners, to peacefully coexist in the ethnically varied context of South Africa, reiterating UNPO's condemnation of any discrimination and targeted violence that takes place against the Afrikaners or any of the other ethnic minorities in the country.

## AFRIKAANS

Quite a few English words stem from Afrikaans. Here are several examples:

### Wildebeest

literally 'wild animal'

### Springbok

literally 'jumping antelope'

### Apartheid

literally 'separateness'

### Spoor

literally 'tracks'

## UNPO PERSPECTIVE



# UNPO MEMBER PESPECTIVE



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### UNPO MEMBER PERSPECTIVE

The Freedom Front Plus has been active in South African politics at all levels, aiming to defend the political, cultural and economic rights of the Afrikaners. The eventual objective of the party is to work towards self-determination for the Afrikaners within the South African constitution. In their view this constitution should be interpreted in such a way that it would provide for regional autonomy of all groups that wish self-government. The Freedom Front Plus further claims community rights.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Early History

The Afrikaners are descendants from settlers arriving at the Cape of Good Hope during the period of administration by the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC), from 1652 to 1795.

The Dutch first settled at the Cape in 1652, intending to build a strategic rest point for ships from the Dutch East India Company on their way from Europe to Asia. Despite these plans, a permanent settlement emerged, to grow steadily as more settlers came in. The Huguenots increased the community's size, as they fled from France in 1688, escaping persecution from the Roman Catholic Church. As the years passed, the population of what today comprises the Afrikaners would incorporate settlers from different European nationalities, although the Dutch admittedly remained the most numerous.

The distance and relative isolation of the Cape from the Netherlands caused a gradual transformation of the Dutch language spoken by the settlers. Over time, sufficiently significant changes in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation started to appear, hence giving birth to a new language, to be called Afrikaans. Even though the official language of most formal institutions remained Dutch for many years to come, Afrikaans came to be the common language of the people.

The Cape was administrated by the Dutch East India Company for nearly 150 years, when, by 1795, the Dutch were forced to hand over their African settlement to British control. This led to great resentment amongst the local population. One of the early unpopular measures by the British was the revoking of Dutch as the official language of the area, to be followed in 1824 by an even more resented policy: freeing the slaves. A large number of Afrikaners were Boers, farmers, of whom many held slaves. The discontent amongst the Boers, further fueled by increasing population pressures in the southern cone of Africa, led to the Great Trek. By 1835, the Boers were heading north- and eastwards in large numbers, establishing independent Afrikaner states in different parts of the region.





The *Voortrekkers* ("those who trek ahead") were the founders of the republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, allowing the Afrikaners to run their own affairs without British influence. The establishment of the new republics did not go without a struggle however, especially once the Zulus started resisting the influx of settlers. The Zulu leader, Dingane, killed one of the most prominent *Voortrekkers*, Pieter Retief, provoking a bloody avengement against the Zulus by the Boers in the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Even though the Afrikaners came out victorious from this conflict, they would be less successful in combating the British several decades later.

When gold was discovered in the Transvaal, tensions soon began to arise. Gold seekers, often British, frustrated the Boers. Before long, friction led to conflict, which then ignited the **Anglo-Boer War** (1899-1902). The British, must more resourceful and numerous than the Afrikaners, won this costly and deadly conflict. The Afrikaners were left without a self-ruled republic, yet the war had created a stronger nation than had existed before, as it brought the Afrikaners from different parts together. The two Afrikaner republics were annexed to the British controlled Cape colonies, and the convention for a Union of South Africa was called. At this convention, to which no black representatives were invited, a new constitution was ratified and the Union of South Africa was created, in which the equal participation of all blacks and coloureds in society was constitutionally prohibited.



### Recent History

Through most of the twentieth century, the Afrikaners held a powerful position in South African politics. The National Party, founded in 1914, was ruled by Afrikaners, and played a major role in the development of the Apartheid system. Over time, Afrikaans became the official language of many organizations, including the South African Police. In later years, the Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, and other similar legislation, would expand the racist nature of South African politics and society. Towards the end of the century, the system of Apartheid started to crumble, as described before, and through international pressures and efforts by national politicians, democratic elections were held again in 1994. In this year, the Freedom Front Plus (FFP) was founded as a political party by General Constand Vil-

joen to represent the Afrikaners in the elections. They would become the fourth largest party of the country. Dr. Pieter Mulder, elected to parliament in 1994, has been the leader of the FFP since 2001.



## CURRENT ISSUES

## KEY QUESTIONS



### CURRENT ISSUES

According to the Freedom Front Plus, the Afrikaner people are experiencing an increasing violation of their cultural, economic and political rights. Especially the latter is considered to be under severe strain, as it is not being reported properly in the media, and as the government pretends to listen, but effectively ignores the Afrikaners. The South African Constitution provides for the right to a cultural life of one's choice (S.30), for general cultural, religious and linguistic rights (S.31) and for the right to self-determination (S.235). Despite this, the FFP is of the opinion that these provisions are void, and in practice are nothing more than mere sections in the Constitution.

In 2001 a draft bill on a language policy for the government was drafted after long discussions and many consultations. Today there is still no bill on the language policy in Parliament. According to the Minister of Arts and Culture, the bill is still being circulated between government departments.

Article 6(5) of the Constitution established the Pan South African Language Board to protect all South African languages. For the past thirteen years the board effectively argued that it could not do what the constitution expects of it to do because it has no real powers. After many promises in committees and in Parliament by the government to address the board's concerns, nothing has happened.

### KEY QUESTIONS

#### **What are some of the linguistic and cultural issues?**

The South African Parliament has been working for many years on legislation concerning language rights. They have further worked to set up a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities. Problematically enough, however, parliamentary debates have not resulted in any significant action to be taken. Bills are circulating between departments for many years and end results are minimal.

More than 50% of the schools that used Afrikaans as the medium of instruction have been dismantled since 1994. One of only a few remaining Afrikaans medium state-controlled schools in South Africa, the Ermelo High School, was recently forced to change its language policy to that of dual-medium. This was done for less than 20 English-speaking learners who were forced on the school. This happened despite the fact that a number of English-medium schools in that area were available and under-utilised. The FFP wants the Pan South African Language Board to be given more power and it wants the government to take a decision on the language bill that has been circulating in parliament for years.

In recent years, place names with Afrikaner-historical connections (Potchefstroom and Louis Trichardt, for example) are being changed. The local community of the town Louis Trichardt in the northern part of South Africa recently had to approach the Supreme Court of Appeal to overturn a decision by the government to change the name of the town without prior consultation. The Court upheld the appeal of the local community of Louis Trichardt. The government is currently discussing the possibility to change the name of Pretoria, the country's executive capital city, to Tshwane.





## Are there any human rights issues?

Afrikaners in general, and the Afrikaner farmers in particular, are at times the target of ethnic violence. The South African murder rate is extremely high at 48 murders per 100,000 of the population, compared to 2 murders per 100,000 in Europe, for example. If Afrikaner farmers are taken as a statistical population, the murder rate is 287 per 100,000. This is a grave situation, with more than 2,000 Afrikaner farmers having already been murdered in the last 13 years.

## CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

### Language

Although Afrikaans and Dutch are mutually intelligible up until today, the former has undergone a highly interesting transformation ever since the Dutch settlers came to the Cape. Unlike the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands, the language of the settlers was strongly influenced by languages spoken by slaves, as well as by the languages of other settlers and of distinct indigenous peoples. Over the years, Portuguese, English and Zulu, amongst others, have had profound impacts on the pronunciation and the morphology of the language. Vocabulary and syntax would change at a slower pace, and have remained very close to Dutch over time. Today, Afrikaans is one of the eleven official languages of South Africa.

### Religion

Religion has played an important role for the Afrikaners throughout history. Up until today, a large portion of the population attends church on a regular basis and is member of a Calvinist church. In recent years, the influence of religion on the life of the Afrikaners has been waning slowly, yet it remains of great importance to many.



## FAMOUS AFRIKANERS

**Andries Pretorius**  
Voortrekker leader

**C.J. Langenhoven**  
Promoter of the Afrikaans language

**Paul Kruger**  
Last president of the Transvaal Republic

**Jacques Kallis**  
Famous South African cricket player

## CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT







#### RELEVANT LINKS:

Freedom Front Plus:

<http://www.vryheidsfront.co.za/>

Afrikaans language and culture organization:

<http://www.atkv.org.za/>

Afrikaner youth movement *Die Voortrekkers*:

<http://www.voortrekkers.org.za/>

Afrikanerbond

<http://www.afrikanerbond.org.za/>



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*Last updated October 2009*