

Fact-checking Trump's video, images about South Africa during Oval Office meeting with Ramaphosa

Source:



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If Your Time is short

- President Donald Trump showed an image of violence in Congo, not South Africa.
- Trump played a video that featured a political party leader chanting a song which is generally translated in English as "kill the Boer," in reference to white farmers. A court ruled that the leader was not calling for farmers or white South Africans to be shot.
- Trump said footage showing white crosses along a roadside represented "burial sites" for "over a thousand of white farmers." They were part of a display in memory of two murdered farmers.

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A White House spokesperson pointed to [news reports](#) about farmer deaths over many years, a BBC story about [tens of thousands of South Africans](#) expressing interest in moving to the U.S. and [Malema's "kill the boer" chant](#) earlier this year.

Crosses were not burial sites

Pointing to footage of a long line of crosses on both sides of a country road packed with cars, Trump [said](#), "These are burial sites right here. Burial sites. Over a thousand of white farmers. And those cars are lined up to pay love on a Sunday morning. Each one of those white things you see is a cross. And there's approximately a thousand of them. They're all white farmers."

The footage in the video did not show burial sites; the crosses were part of a symbolic procession. Rob Hoatson, a farmer, told the [BBC](#) that the crosses were erected on the roadside in KwaZulu-Natal province as a memorial to neighbors who were killed in August 2020. In that incident, Glen and Vida Rafferty were [shot dead](#) in their farm house. The [couple was white](#).

"The procession continued up to the gates of the farm, where residents left flowers, posters, crosses and other tokens of respect," a local [news article](#) reported.

Thula Simpson, a University of Pretoria associate professor of history, said the procession was, "strictly speaking, a memorial of farm killings generally, and not explicitly related to the one racial category of victim. ... It was technically a non-racial commemoration."

In 2021, a [man pleaded guilty](#) and was sentenced for the murders. In 2022, [two other men](#) were sentenced in the case for murder, robbery and burglary. The primary motive for the majority of murders for many years has been robbery, [experts told us](#).

A day after Trump's meeting with Ramaphosa, White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt pointed to an [Associated Press](#) photograph of a different array of hundreds of white crosses on a hillside in Ysterberg near Polokwane, South Africa, photographed on May 15, 2025. The AP caption said that "each one" on the White Cross Monument marked "a white farmer who has been killed in a farm murder."

[AfriForum](#), an organization that represents Afrikaners, found there were about 50 farm murders each year in 2022 and 2023.



A view of crosses planted at the White Cross Monument on a hillside in Ysterberg near Polokwane, South Africa, May 15, 2025. (AP)

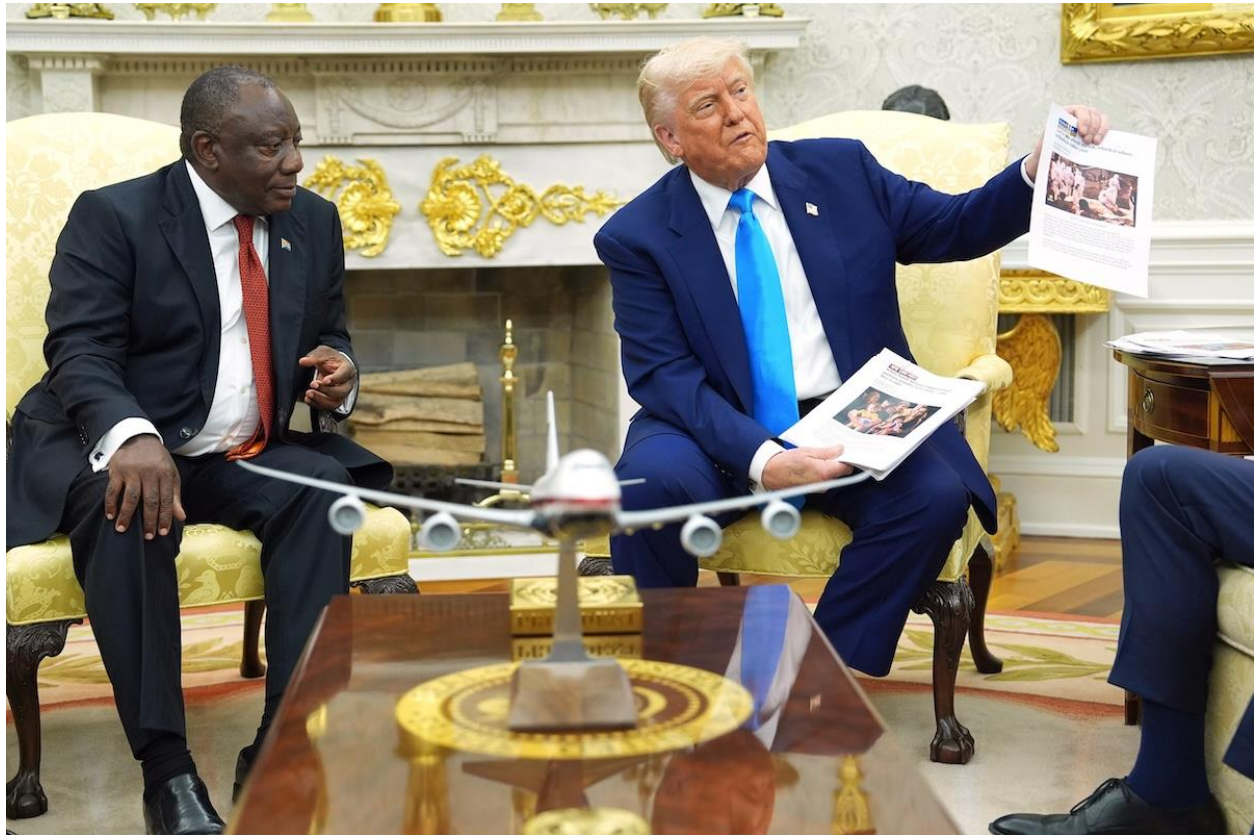
Trump showed article with image about the Congo

During the press conference, Trump held a stack of printed news articles that he [said](#) showed "death of people. Death, death, death, horrible death, death."

"Pick any one of them," Trump said. "White South Africans are fleeing because of the violence and racist laws. And this is all, I mean, I'll give these to you."

One of the articles he held up had the headline "Let's talk about Africa, which is where tribalism takes you" by [American Thinker](#).

The article had a video screengrab showing what appears to be [body bags and Red Cross workers](#) in Congo.



When President Donald Trump met South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa in the Oval Office on May 21, 2025, he held up a screengrab from an incident in Congo, not South Africa. (AP)

Video showed clips of Economic Freedom Fighters party leader and "kill the Boer" song

The four-minute [video](#) mostly contained clips of Malema, the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, or EFF, a party he founded in [2013](#). Malema served as president of the youth league of the African National Congress — South Africa's governing party — until he was expelled.

The clips are authentic and not all recent. "They have proudly proclaimed these are their views," said Simpson of the University of Pretoria.

The video's opening clip shows Malema speaking in the National Assembly — South Africa's parliament — to then-deputy speaker [Lechesa Tsenoli in 2018](#).

"There is nothing you can do, there is nothing this parliament can do, with or without you," Malema said, adding, "People are going to occupy land, it will require no permission from you, the president, no one."

The video also shows clips of Malema addressing a large rally and making violent statements, including singing a song titled, "Dubula ibhunu," which is generally translated in English as "kill the Boer" in reference to white farmers. The song has roots in the anti-apartheid movement. More than a decade ago, a court ruled that the song was hate speech, and in 2012, the African National Congress promised to [stop singing it](#).

Malema went to court to defend his right to sing the song, and in 2024, the South Africa Supreme Court of Appeal [ruled](#) that, when taken in full context, singing the song is not prohibited hate speech. The court concluded that a "reasonably well-informed person" would understand that when a protest song is sung "even by politicians, the words are not meant to be understood literally, nor is the gesture of shooting to be understood as a call to arms or violence."

The court ruled that Malema was not calling for farmers or white South Africans to be shot but was rather "using an historic struggle song, with the performance gestures that go with it, as a provocative means of advancing his party's political agenda." AfriForum had sued Malema and his political party over the song.

"Despite the song's rich struggle history, it's impossible to argue it produces anything positive for people's feelings of safety and belonging when iterated in the present," said Nechama Brodie, a journalist who wrote a [book](#) on farm murders and has [fact-checked the topic](#). "But these clips are also quite old. Malema basically sings it in an attempt for political relevance, which is increasingly fading."

The Economic Freedom Fighters won more than 3 million votes in the May 2024 national elections, or [9.52% of the votes](#) cast. That marked a decline from the 2019 election, and subsequent polls show its popularity has fallen further, Simpson said.



Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema arrives at a final election rally in Polokwane, South Africa, May 25, 2024. (AP)

Trump's focus on Malema ignores that he is in the opposition, not an ally of Ramaphosa. His Economic Freedom Fighters won [9.52% of the votes](#) cast in the May 2024 national elections. That marked a decline from the 2019 election, when the party took 10.8%.

In the national government, Malema's party belongs to the opposition, though in the municipal governments of Pretoria and Johannesburg, his party is allied with the African National Congress.

Ramaphosa "still espouses the non-racial ideology of Mandela" and governs in coalition with the Democratic Alliance, a white-led, multiracial party, said Evan Lieberman, a professor of political science and contemporary Africa at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The fact that Malema was kicked out of Ramaphosa's party is an "important indicator of his outsider status."