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## South Africa Challenges U.S. Report on Rural Safety

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South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has formally rejected key findings from the 2024 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report, which raised concerns about safety in rural and farming communities and alleged abuses targeting racial minorities.

The U.S. report, released earlier this month, highlighted issues related to land expropriation and claimed that violence in rural areas disproportionately affected Afrikaners and other racial minority groups. It cited incidents of unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, and

inflammatory rhetoric directed at these populations. DIRCO described the assessment as “inaccurate and deeply flawed,” emphasizing that it relied on selective sources and did not account for official crime statistics or government interventions.

According to data from the South African Police Service, six murders were recorded in farming communities between January and March 2025. Victims included three farm employees, one farm dweller, and two farmers. DIRCO emphasized that these figures indicate rural violence affects a broad spectrum of residents rather than targeting any particular racial group.

The department also highlighted the National Rural Safety Strategy, which aims to improve security in farming and rural communities. By March 2025, the initiative had been implemented in 893 of 900 designated police stations, representing a 99% rollout. The program coordinates with traditional leaders, agricultural organizations such as Agri-SA and the African Farmers Association of South Africa, farm worker unions, and civil society groups to enhance local law enforcement capacity.

In addition, DIRCO pointed to the “Eyes and Ears” (E2) program, which partners with private security providers and Business Against Crime South Africa to support policing and emergency response in rural areas. Officials say these programs have strengthened the government’s ability to detect and prevent criminal activity while providing rapid support to communities at risk.

While reaffirming its commitment to engage in constructive dialogue with the United States on human rights, South Africa insisted that future reports must be grounded in accurate data and reflect the full context of the country’s rural safety initiatives. DIRCO stressed that land reform policies are intended to address historical inequalities while safeguarding the rights of all citizens.

The department’s response underscores ongoing tensions over international assessments of human rights and highlights South Africa’s efforts to demonstrate that rural safety measures are inclusive, systematic, and effective.