

TITLE: Inquiry into Marshalltown fire to start this month

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Article Summary

The inquiry into the Marshalltown fire, which killed 77 people, will begin on October 26 after facing delays in procuring services. The first phase of the inquiry aims to determine the cause of the fire and identify those responsible. Chairperson judge Sisi Khampepe announced that an extension may be requested as the inquiry is starting almost three weeks later than scheduled.

The second phase will focus on the prevalence of hijacked buildings in Johannesburg. The commission has made its rules regarding witnesses, evidence, and hearings public and will offer psychological services to victims. The public is encouraged to provide any information or evidence related to the fire.

Article Analysis

1. Does the article give a political economy contextual analysis of the event?

The article does not provide a political economy contextual analysis of the event. It focuses more on the logistics and delays faced by the commission of inquiry.

2. What according to the article, is/are the root cause/s of the event?

According to the article, the root cause of the event is the fire that burnt down the Usindiso building, resulting in 77 deaths. The article does not provide further details on the specific cause of the fire.

3. Does the article present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building?

The article does not present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organized criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building.

4. Does the article present evidence of NGOs (like SERI) engaging with organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building, on behalf of and in the interests of their clients (i.e. the tenants)?

The article does not present evidence of NGOs, like SERI, engaging with organized criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building on behalf of the tenants.

5. Does the article present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum?

The article does not present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of the hijacked building, as it focuses more on the commission of inquiry and its logistics.

6. Does the article emphasise the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI (and other NGOs) regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act?

The article does not emphasize the relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI regarding the interpretation of tenants' rights in terms of the law and the PIE Act.

Critical Analysis

This news article, titled "Inquiry into Marshalltown fire to start this month," provides updates on the commission of inquiry into the Usindiso building fire in Marshalltown, South Africa, which resulted in 77 deaths. The article is written by Penwell Dlamini and was published on October 17, 2023, in Sowetan Live.

Overall, the article appears to present the information in a straightforward manner without overt bias. However, some potential biases or subjective language can be identified in the article.

1. Choice of words: The use of the word "shocked" in the sentence "The loss of life from the fire on August 31 shocked the country" can be seen as subjective language that influences the reader's emotions. Instead of using a value-laden word like "shocked," a more neutral approach would be to state that the fire "caused widespread concern" or "captured national attention".
2. Positive portrayal of the government: The article mentions that President Cyril Ramaphosa visited the scene and that Gauteng premier Panyaza Lesufi announced the commission. While these facts are likely relevant to the story, their inclusion without any critical analysis or alternative perspectives may present a positive portrayal of the government's response. A more impartial approach would provide a wider range of viewpoints or subject the government's actions to critical scrutiny.
3. Lack of alternative perspectives: The article primarily reports the statements made by the chairperson of the commission, retired justice Sisi Khampepe. While it is important to include her comments, the article lacks any other sources or

perspectives that might contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. Providing additional viewpoints would enhance the article's impartiality.

It is important to note that without further analysis or context, these potential biases are relatively minor and may not significantly impact the overall impartiality of the article. However, to ensure comprehensive and unbiased reporting, including alternative perspectives and reducing subjective language would be beneficial.

Contradiction Analysis

One potential contradiction in the news article is the statement by Chairperson Judge Sisi Khampepe regarding the possibility of an extension being requested. In the article, it is mentioned that the inquiry is starting almost three weeks later than scheduled due to delays in procuring services, such as a venue. However, it is also stated that the commission is supposed to finish the first part of its work on November 30.

This raises the question of how the commission plans to complete its work on time if it has already lost almost three weeks of its hearing life. It seems contradictory to state that an extension may be requested while also maintaining that the first part of the work must be completed by a specific date.