

#VoteBeat Pre-Election Statement by Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) on the South Africa National and Provincial Elections, Slated for May 29, 2024.

Delivered in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Dated 28th May, 2024.

Our Aim As An Independent Actors of Good Governance:

To measure the overall #VoteBeat of South African electorates with regards to current electoral climate, urge active citizen participation in the upcoming South Africa National and Provincial Elections on May 29, 2024, and to highlight the importance of a free, fair, and transparent electoral process, while providing recommendations for ensuring election integrity and post-election accountability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As South Africa approaches a pivotal moment in its democratic journey with the National and Provincial Elections slated for tomorrow Wednesday May 29, 2024, Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) extends its earnest call for all citizens to actively participate in this vital civic duty given that South African voters will go to the polls to elect a 400-member National Assembly who will then elect the country's next president, as they have done every five years since 1994. We stand at a critical juncture where the collective voice and vote of the South African populace can shape the future trajectory of our nation. In the same vein, we wish to state that the overall #VoteBeat of the South Africans are calm, positive and energized ready to exercise their memorable civic duties given this marks 30 years of democracy.

Current Electoral Climate and Preparations by the IEC

From our ELECTION RADAR ROOM (ERA) lens, We have been duly informed that the South Africa Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has been diligently preparing for these elections, ensuring that the necessary frameworks are in place to facilitate a **free, fair, and transparent** electoral process. The IEC's efforts in updating voter rolls, increasing voter education, and ensuring the accessibility of polling stations are commendable steps toward enhancing electoral integrity including diaspora voting/participations. However, challenges remain, and continuous vigilance is essential to address any potential irregularities that may arise.

- **WHAT IS THE VOTING PROCESS?**

Voting stations will be open on Wednesday, May 29 from 0500 GMT to 1900 GMT and Voters will receive three ballots. The first **ballot is national** and will consist of a list of political parties vying for **200 seats in the National Assembly**. The second one is a "**province-to-national**" ballot, which will include parties and independent candidates seeking to represent each of South Africa's **nine provinces in the National Assembly**. Lawmakers elected with this second ballot will take up the other 200 seats in the assembly, with each province allocated a number of seats based on the size of its population. Lastly, the **third ballot** will be to elect members of the **provincial legislature** in each province, and will also include parties and independent candidates.

- **HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN VOTE?**

The Independent Electoral Commission says **27.79 million** people are registered to vote, up from 26.74 million in 2019 from the South Africa's population of around 62 million. From the previous records, About 66% of registered voters cast their ballot in 2019, down from 73% in 2014 showing a trajectory decline in Voter Turnout since the early years of South Africa's democracy with a possible reversal in this year election given the circumstance surrounding this particular election.

- **WHEN WILL WE KNOW THE RESULT?**

South Africa's electoral commission normally starts releasing partial results within hours of the polling stations closing and the national picture will emerge gradually over the following days. By law the commission has seven days in which to announce full results.

- **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

According to South Africa's constitution, it stipulates that the National Assembly must hold its first sitting no more than 14 days after the election result has been declared. At its first sitting, the National Assembly will hold a vote to elect one of its members to be the country's president with a 50% wins or more as the case may be.

Political Party Dynamics and Campaign Intrigues



The political landscape is marked by significant intrigue and competition among the various political parties as expected being that each political party will be allocated a number of seats in the National Assembly proportional to the number of votes it gets.

A total of 70 political parties, and 11 independent candidates will contest the 2024 national and provincial elections with the national ballot having 52 parties listed. Remarkably, the ruling ANC, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, as a sitting president is competing against the opposition parties.

As the party in power, given in the last election the ANC had 57.5% of votes, which translated into 230 seats that earned them the presidency, making them to be at the receiving end of political tantrums as they battle to remain in government. On the other hand, the opposition parties, notably the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and dozens of other parties are also galvanizing support, promising alternative solutions to the nation's challenges with a view to have their way into the seat of power. This has not only heated the polity but also birthed waves of political predictions awaiting substantiality.

Electorate Sentiment and Expectations

Voter sentiment is one of cautious optimism mixed with frustration. The electorate is acutely aware of the manifestoes by candidates, and would align with the candidate of their choice through the ballot. One common factor shared among the electorate, is a palpable desire for improvement in governance. To this end, It is crucial that voters channel their sentiments into constructive civic engagement by participating in the elections and making their voices heard through the ballot box.

Encouragement to Vote

We urge every eligible South African to exercise their right to vote. This election is an opportunity to hold leaders accountable and to steer the country towards a more equitable and prosperous future. Voting is not just a right; it is a responsibility. By voting, you contribute to the democratic process and help shape the policies and leadership that will impact our lives and those of future generations. Particularly, we call on the youth to troop out enmasse to cast their vote for their choice candidates leveraging on their collective strength.

Our Recommendations for Ensuring Election Integrity



Enhanced Monitoring and Reporting: We recommend that the IEC, in collaboration with civil society organizations, intensifies its monitoring efforts to promptly identify and address any incidents of malpractice or electoral fraud, and take appropriate sanctions.

Security Measures: Adequate security provisions must be made to ensure the safety of voters, election officials, and polling stations. This will help to foster a conducive environment for free and fair voting.

Technology and Transparency: The IEC should leverage and consolidate on technology to enhance transparency in vote counting and result dissemination. Real-time updates and verifiable results will boost public confidence in the electoral process.

Post-Election Accountability: We call for the establishment of mechanisms to hold elected officials accountable for their campaign promises. This can include periodic reviews and public forums where leaders report back to their constituents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the May 29 elections are a decisive moment for South Africa. Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) believes in the power of a **united, informed, and active citizenry**. We encourage all South Africans to go out and vote, to participate in the democratic process, and to contribute to building a better future for all.

We say **#NoDisenfranchisement** Of Any Electorate // We say **#NoToViolence**

We say **#YesToPWDsInclusion** // We say **#YesToDemocracy**

Thank you.



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*God Bless Democracy !
God Bless the Republic of South Africa (RSA) !!
And God Bless Africa !!!*

