

Global Safety and Security Monthly Report

2024 South Africa elections

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2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Overview

✓ South Africa will hold national and provincial elections on May 29; the African National Congress (ANC) Party will likely secure more votes than other political parties ([GSI Guide](#)) but is unlikely to retain its parliamentary majority for the first time since 1994. Securing less than a majority would open up the prospect of coalition rule.

✓ Incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa, the leader of the ruling ANC will run for a second consecutive term. Key opposition parties are the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).



From left to right: Cyril Ramaphosa (ANC), John Steenhuisen (DA), and Julius Malema (EFF).

✓ On 16 April 2024, former President Jacob Zuma was confirmed as the candidate for the new *uMkhonto we Sizwe* or MK Party. The announcement came roughly a week after South Africa's electoral commission appealed a ruling that allowed Zuma to run for office despite past convictions.

- Early polls suggest the MK Party could achieve 13 percent of the national vote and 25 percent in Zuma's traditional stronghold of KwaZulu-Natal, potentially at the expense of the ANC. **If Zuma is barred from running, there is a risk of instability as his supporters have threatened riots.**

VOTER CONCERNS & ELECTORAL TIMELINE

Key Voter Concerns

✓ Over the last three decades, public confidence in the ANC and its leadership has eroded due to **economic inequalities**, high levels of **violent crime, corruption allegations**, and an ongoing **energy crisis**. The ANC-led government's failure to maintain and develop **critical infrastructure** has resulted in persistent power and water outages. Additionally, illegal **immigration** is a highly charged political issue. Xenophobic sentiment is rampant as communities pressure the government to tighten border controls. In 2019, riots targeting foreign nationals from other African countries resulted in deaths and destruction of property.

2024 Key Dates

APRIL 9

The Electoral Court of South Africa announces Zuma can run as an MK parliamentary candidate.

APRIL 16

Jacob Zuma replaces MK Party founder on the 2024 elections ballot.

MAY 29 (Wednesday)

General & Provincial Elections

JUNE

Results are expected to be announced **seven days** after the May 29 election.

The newly elected government to be in place two weeks after the election.



LOW DIRECT IMPACT ON AIRBNB EMPLOYEES

MAY 29: Airbnb has no office in South Africa, relatively few in-country employees but some travelers at the time of the election. Electoral violence has previously been rare; however, the forecast result may lead to increased unrest. Protests are possible near informal settlements, which employees are unlikely to visit. However, spillover could disrupt roads and delay traffic.

ELECTION SECURITY RISKS

Rallies and Election Events

- Though elections are generally peaceful, isolated incidents of violence, incendiary language, and misinformation could escalate tensions, with spillover into public spaces.
- Based on past elections, an increase in road traffic and heightened security near political events and polling stations are likely. Additionally, business disruptions are possible – May 29 is a public holiday, and employers are encouraged to adjust hours so staff can vote.
- Political demonstrations, rallies, and campaign events can occur throughout the country, most likely near state-owned offices, party headquarters, large venues, and government buildings.
- Police are experienced in managing events, but rallies may escalate into more significant acts of unrest or rioting if security services can not contain crowds.

Protests and Riots

- In 2019, election authorities reported a **stable election day**; however, 350 politically related riots were recorded in the weeks preceding and following the elections.
- In 2019, the largest election-related riot clusters occurred in parts of Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and Western Cape.
- Historically, protests and demonstrations occur more often near informal settlements and high population densities.
- Protests related to service delivery failures (water and power outages) are more likely to happen along major highways and lower-income areas, disrupting traffic.
- Protest participation could increase if opposition parties highlight controversial issues such as land expropriation without compensation.

Potential Triggers for Widespread Unrest

- While security forces are taking measures to prevent and control election-related violence, analysts have expressed concerns over the possibility of outbreaks of violence if the MK Party fails to secure a two-thirds majority or if Zuma is prevented from playing an active role in the new government.
- The MK Party has actively threatened riots similar to events during the “Free Zuma” campaign in 2021, which resulted in 300 deaths and ZAR 50 billion cost to the economy.



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OUTCOME SCENARIOS

MOST LIKELY National Coalition Government

- The ANC will likely win the most seats, but is unlikely to secure an absolutely majority. As a result, it may form a coalition government, reshaping South Africa's domestic and foreign policy agenda.
- An ANC-DA alliance would create a centrist-liberal government with broad policy continuity, although the DA has been more vocal than the ANC in criticizing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- An ANC-EFF government would likely see a push for more radical socialist policies such as land redistribution, and a foreign policy tilt towards Russia and away from the West.

POSSIBLE Multi-Party Charter

- The Multi-Party Charter for South Africa, under DA leadership, has formulated a coalition of parties that will collaborate if they secure more than 50 percent of the seats. The coalition has been predetermined, and it excludes the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) due to the party's extremist views and hateful rhetoric.

LESS LIKELY ANC Retains Absolute Majority

- It is unlikely the ANC will retain an absolute majority. Polls show a steady decline in ANC support for years.
- Parties could accuse the ANC of tampering with elections. The EFF is known to incite violence, while the MK has threatened violence if the MK Party does not secure two-thirds of the seats. Some social media platforms are working with South Africa's electoral commission to remove harmful content to mitigate threats of violence.



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