

PEACE AND SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA'S 2024 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Security Planning, Implementation, and Results

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Election security entails careful planning and coordination among a range of stakeholders throughout the electoral cycle to create and maintain a safe and secure environment in which elections can proceed. The security of an election is paramount to the integrity of, and trust in, the electoral process, institutions, conduct, and outcome. Since its first democratic elections of 1994, South Africa has developed a strong, tolerant political culture underpinned by confidence in a safe, secure, and orderly electoral environment. Elections and electoral campaigns have largely been politically and socially peaceful. However, targeted political violence and killings have increased, and the country contends with a high degree of persistent everyday violence that plays a seen and unseen role during electoral contests.

The aim of the chapter is to establish what peace and security issues dominated South Africa's 2024 national and provincial elections and how these were mitigated and managed, using an election security framework.¹ First, the chapter provides a conceptual overview of the election security framework, applying this to the South African context by outlining the institutions, processes, and actors within South Africa's election security architecture ('planning phase'). The chapter then provides an overview of peace and security issues in South Africa with specific emphasis on political violence in previous elections and the runup to the 2024 elections.

1 A core limitation of this chapter is that it relies on open-source publicly available briefings, interviews, and statements by the IEC and Security Clusters on peace and security issues during the 2024 elections. Specific intelligence and numbers (e.g. troop deployment, results of pattern analysis) remain classified.

Second, the chapter details what security issues manifested during the election period and how these security issues were mitigated and managed by state and non-state stakeholders within an election security framework in order to ensure a safe, peaceful, and orderly electoral environment ('implementation phase'). Third, the chapter highlights what security disputes and issues arose during the counting, tabulation, announcement, and post-election period of the election and how these were managed within the election security framework ('results phase').

The research finds that despite threats made to disrupt the elections with shutdowns, blockades, and anarchy in the pre-election phase, followed by claims of vote rigging and demands for a recount² in the post-election phase, the 2024 elections proceeded without large-scale violence or security incidents. Politically targeted killings, however, form part of the electoral (in)security landscape and show persistence. Further, insecurities and vulnerabilities rooted in everyday violence and crime manifested in direct and indirect ways during the electoral cycle. Going forward, the South African government and policing and law enforcement should implement crime-specific interventions in the runup to and during elections, so that everyday violence and politically targeted violence do not impede the electoral peace and security climate of the country.

ELECTION SECURITY FRAMEWORK

Election security is both normative and practical. Normatively, election security is underpinned by ensuring that four core principles and conditions are met during an election, namely, transparency, legality, impartiality, and inclusiveness.³ *Transparency* needs to be present in electoral institutions (i.e. the electoral commission), throughout the electoral process (inclusive of transparency in rules, laws, codes of conduct, and relaying of information in the public interest), and among stakeholders who are part of electoral institutions and the electoral process (i.e. the appointment and deployment of election, security, and law enforcement officials). *Legality* refers to the promulgation, observance, and implementation of the national laws of a country, inclusive of specified electoral laws. Elections are essentially rights-based events. An integral component of transparency and legality is *impartiality*; laws, institutions, processes, and officials must be de-

2 As claimed by Zuma when he stated: 'uMkhonto weSizwe is of the strong view that the 2024 elections were rigged and that the results announced by the IEC are not a true reflection of the will of the people' (Grootes, S 2024, 'Chaos is the Point: Zuma's Empty and Violent Rhetoric Aims to Hurt South Africa's Democracy'. 17 June. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-06-17-chaos-is-the-point-zumas-empty-and-violent-rhetoric-aims-to-hurt-south-africas-democracy/>)

3 Dunne, S 2006, 'ACE: Focus on elections and security', Ace Project, <https://www.aceproject.org/ero-en/topics/elections-security/Elections%20and%20Security%20Sean%20Dunne.pdf>

politicised and non-partisan and fulfil their mandates without favour or bias. The final principle and condition that must be met to attain election security is *inclusiveness*. Inclusiveness refers to the fair and equal representation and involvement of all constituencies across and during the election cycle (enlisting, participating, and contesting).⁴ Pursuit and respect of these intersectional and interdependent norms generates trust and confidence in the electoral process and thus security of the election.

Practically, election security must achieve the physical conditions of security: protecting and safeguarding voters and state, legal, and electoral institutions as well as processes, materials, systems, and infrastructure (referred to as ‘critical assets’). Critical assets are vulnerable to multiple risks and threats throughout the three phases of the electoral cycle (before, during, and after elections),⁵ as detailed in Figure 2. Risk to an election encompasses the not-always-benign possibility of something occurring that entails a loss within the electoral cycle. By contrast, a threat to an election is conceived of as something that is malicious and seeks to attack, exploit, damage, or destroy, in whole or part, the election. Some risks and threats occur throughout the electoral cycle (e.g. intra-party or inter-party violence or incitement to violence as a result of informational manipulation or hacking of the election database). Others are specific to a particular phase within the electoral cycle (e.g. theft and stuffing of ballot boxes during the counting or tabulation phase of the election period).

While many election security concerns are universal (i.e. freedom from fear, harm, intimidation throughout the electoral cycle, and the safety and security of the voter and ballot during the election), the security environment of an election is to a large degree determined by context-specific structural conditions that vary among states. Post-conflict or transitional states, for example, have different security considerations from those of authoritarian or hybrid regimes or ‘ideationally’ charged political environments (i.e. where there are pre-existing ethnic, racial, or religious tensions).⁶ Electoral system designs can also present a risk to an election. A winner takes all first-past-the-post (FPTP) design is particularly likely to result in a highly competitive electoral environment, which, if overlain with ideational tensions, can lead to violence or conflict, especially on the announcement of election results in the post-election phase.

In operationalising an election security framework, it is critical to conduct an electoral **security assessment** to determine and map out risks and threats and

4 Leterme, Y 2017, ‘Inclusive Politics for Sustainable Democracy’, *International IDEA*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmGWhYb8d0o>

5 The electoral cycle conceptualises what electoral activities take place at each stage of an election and who is tasked with their implementation.

6 Dunne, S 2006 [note 3].

to identify priority areas and hotspots for security intervention.⁷ Following this, determining who the stakeholders are and what activities need to be carried out by whom, and when, are core to the **security planning** of an election. Once security planning is complete, delegating duties to each stakeholder results in **security implementation** across the electoral cycle (see Figure 1).

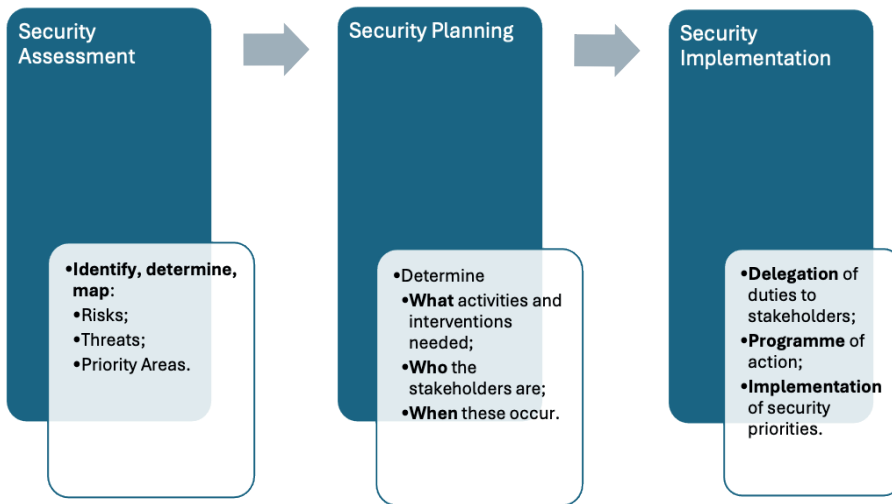


Figure 1: Election Security Framework

Source: Author's own depiction

Security implementation arrangements may include establishing joint command or operation centres, developing enhanced communication systems, hosting community security liaison forums, conducting specialised security training, implementing weapon-free zones, applying a cooling off period between campaigning and voting, and establishing an electoral code of conduct.⁸ Security implementation may be static (e.g. protection of voting stations, election warehouses), mobile (e.g. protection of election officials, mobile voting stations), and/or contingent (e.g. reserve capacities, resources, planning). The designation of security provisions during the elections falls normally to the police, with limitations or prohibitions placed on the military; however, this again depends on the country context.⁹ As with phases in the electoral cycle (see Figure 2), some security activities and duties occur throughout the cycle, while others are specific to a phase (as per Figure 1).

7 USAID 2010, 'Electoral Security Framework' https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAEA453.pdf

8 Dunne, S 2006 [note 3]

9 Dunne, S 2006 [note 3]



PRE-ELECTION PHASE RISKS:

- Chief Electoral Officer takes ill and dies in office;
- Voter registration database experiences technical delay;
- Incorrect information is promulgated;
- Natural disaster (e.g. flood) renders national key point unusable;
- Electoral system design (e.g. FPTP)

PRE-ELECTION PHASE THREATS:

- Chief Electoral Officer/ other key electoral or political official is assassinated;
- Voter registration database is hacked;
- Fake news is spread announcing different voter registration dates;
- National key point experiences are targeted, attacked, or damaged, rendering them unusable;
- Interactional violence occurs between or within political parties;
- Political demonstrations boycotting election.

ELECTION PERIOD RISKS:

- Voting station runs out of ballot papers;
- Connectivity issues prevent use of digital voting devices;
- Collision during transport of electoral officials or electoral materials.

ELECTION PERIOD THREATS:

- Ballot papers/boxes stuffing, tampering at voting station;
- Election materials (ballot boxes) taken from voting station;
- Voting station electricity connection is sabotaged or cut;
- Interactional violence between or within political parties;
- Act of terrorism.

POST-ELECTION PERIOD RISKS:

- Technology/software program of election results failure;
- Understaffing of ballot counting electoral officials;

POST-ELECTION PERIOD THREATS:

- Hacking of election results database to change outcome;
- Incumbent suffering election loss does not concede electoral outcome.
- Interactional violence between and/or within political parties;
- Act of terrorism.

Figure 2: The Electoral Cycle

Source: ACE Electoral Knowledge Network 1998–2024

Election security is therefore made up of a complex series of interdependent parts which have knock-on effects throughout the electoral cycle. This is significant in the realisation of security and the generation of potential insecurity; for example, during the election phase, trust and confidence in the voters' roll is contingent upon an enabling environment for voter registration in the pre-electoral period. Inversely, a conflictual, intimidatory, disorderly pre-election phase – whereby voters are not able to freely and safely register to vote – will determine the final voters' roll on election day and shape the electoral outcome. This could lead to disputed and violent outcomes in the post-election phase. An election security framework is thus anticipatory, proactive, and flexible.

Using the concept of the electoral cycle, Figure 2 (adapted from ACE Electoral Knowledge Network) depicts what threats and risks there could be to an election in each phase of the electoral cycle.

SOUTH AFRICA'S ELECTION SECURITY PLANNING

South Africa's 2024 national and provincial elections were highly competitive and occurred within a politically charged environment.¹⁰ Seventy (70) new political parties surfaced alongside 11 independent candidates: this represents 14 903 candidates competing for 887 seats in the provincial and national legislatures.¹¹ The security of critical assets during the elections, in addition to ensuring a safe, calm, and peaceful electoral environment thus featured high on the agenda of the South African government, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and security actors.¹²

Security, law, and order are guided by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which serves as the founding legal document upon which all laws and legal, security, and electoral architecture are derived. Chapter 9 of the Constitution establishes state institutions which support the constitutional democracy of the country, such as the IEC of South Africa (Article 190). Chapter 11 establishes the powers and functions of the security services of the state in the attainment of national security (such as the police, defence force, and intelligence agencies), as well as the principles of national security for the Republic of South Africa, including the right to live in peace and be free from fear (Article 198 a). Chapter 3 is core to the operationalisation of South Africa's national security

10 European Union (EU) 2024 Election Expert Mission, *South Africa 2024: Final Report National and Provincial Elections 29 May 2024*, <https://www.eods.eu/library/EU%20EEM%20ZAF%202024%20FR.pdf>

11 South African Government Information Service 2024, 'Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Cluster Ministers outline state of security readiness for 2024 elections', <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/justice-crime-prevention-and-security-cluster-ministers-outline-state> and SA News 2024, 'Security Plan in Place for Upcoming Election', April 28, <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/security-plan-place-upcoming-elections>

12 SA Government Information Service 2024 [note 11]

and election security framework as it establishes principles of cooperative government and inter-governmental relations. Elections are specifically governed and regulated by the Electoral Act (1998), Electoral Amendment Bill (2024), and Electoral Code of Conduct (2024). Other additional legislation relevant to governing the security dimensions of elections includes the Riotous Assemblies Act (1956), Intimidation Act (1982), Criminal Matters Amendment Act (2015), Firearms Control Act (2000), Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act (2004), Critical Infrastructure Protection Act (2019), and the Cybercrime Act (2020).¹³

The main aim of the security services during an election is to create and maintain a safe and secure enabling environment in which the public can cast their votes and electoral actors may fulfil their duties. To this end, South Africa's election security framework leverages off its pre-existing national and provincial security frameworks in the form of the Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Cluster (JCPS). The JCPS is an organisational entity made up of and led by the South African Police Services (SAPS), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), and the State Security Agency (SSA). The JCPS cluster coordinates crime prevention, security, and justice across seven inter-departmental priority sub-committees¹⁴ drawn from the Departments of Justice, Home Affairs, Correctional Services, Finance, SAPS, SANDF, and the SSA.

Collectively, the JCPS cluster is mandated with providing safety and security to the South African public and the country's strategic installations, infrastructure, and national key points. The police services are the primary providers and responders of security in and outside of elections. In its pursuit of a safe and orderly electoral environment, the JCPS cluster also engages with other stakeholders such as Business Against Crime South Africa (BACSA), the private security industry (PSI), and community policing forums (CPFs) through joint public-private security initiatives (e.g. the E2 Initiative). Civil society organisations (CSOs) and multistakeholder CSO initiatives form an important component in generating a safe and orderly enabling electoral environment (e.g. Media Monitoring Africa, Africa Check, Defend Our Democracy). Figure 3 provides an overview of South Africa's JCPS.

13 South African Police Service Resource Centre Acts (n.d.), https://www.saps.gov.za/resource_centre/acts/acts.php

14 The seven sub-committees are (i) the National Joint Operational & Intelligence Structure (NatJoInts); (ii) National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee (NICOC); (iii) National Development Committee (NDC); (iv) the Integrated Justice System (IJS) Board; (v) the Border Control Coordinating Committee (BCOCC); (vi) the Anti-Corruption Task Team (ACTT); and (vii) the Strategy Task Team.

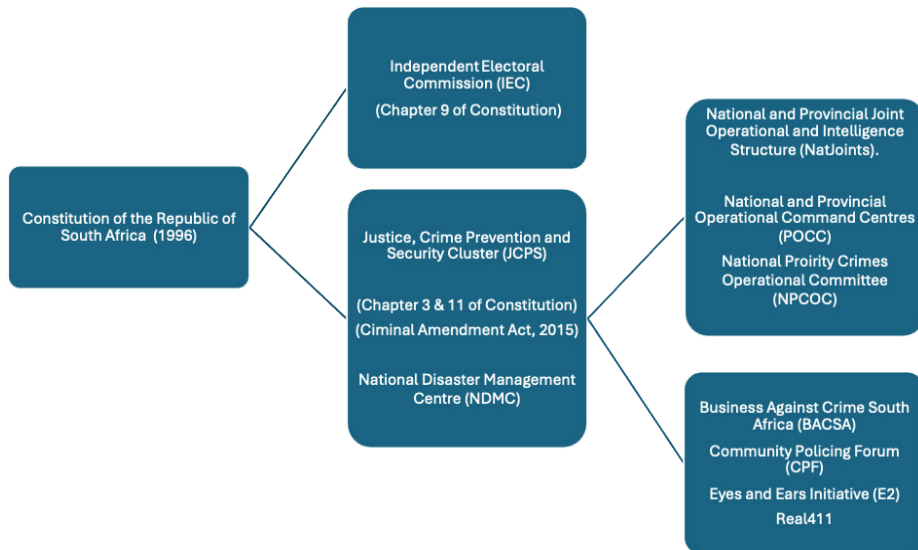


Figure 3: South Africa’s Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security (JCPS) Cluster (National Security Structure)

Source: Author’s own depiction

In the year leading up to the 2024 election, a National Priority Committee (NPC) was established within the JCPS to conduct election security assessments and identify security priority areas. The NPC, co-chaired by the IEC, SAPS, SANDF, and SSA, showed strong multistakeholder engagement, coordination, and collaboration.¹⁵ Nineteen security priority areas¹⁶ derived from the seven chapters and four schedules of the Electoral Act (1998) were identified by JCPS and NatJoints, as follows:

Phase 1: Pre-Election Security Priority Areas (May 2023–May 2024)

1. screening and registration of voters;
2. policing of gatherings;
3. policing of celebrations and demonstrations;
4. monitoring campaigning;
5. protection of national key points;
6. enforcement of Electoral Act;

¹⁵ South African Police Services 2024, Natjoints Media Briefing, 19 May 2024. <https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/msspeechdetail.php?nid=53296>

¹⁶ See for detailing of security priority areas by JCPS and NatJoints: South African Government Information Service 2024, ‘NatJoints on State of Readiness for Upcoming Elections’, <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/natjoints-state-readiness-upcoming-2024-elections-19-may-2024>

Phase 2: Election Period Security Priority Areas (22 May–9 June)

7. static deployment of SAPS at voting stations;
8. movement/escort of election voting materials;
9. movement/escort and protection of IEC and election officials;
10. security of election warehouses;
11. accompaniment of mobile voting stations;
12. control of firearms from entering voting stations;
13. assisting presiding officers with crowd control, removal of unbecoming behaviour, unruly voters, or anyone who threatens IEC officials or voters;
14. removal of political campaigning within boundaries of the voting station;
15. provision of security and safety of the voting station and other national key points;
16. enforcement of Electoral Act;

Phase 3: Post-Election Security Priority Areas (29 May–15 June)

17. provision of security and safety of the voting station and other national key points following announcement of results;
18. policing of celebrations, protests, and demonstrations (e.g. expanded public workers programme protests in Ethekewini, KwaZulu-Natal [KZN])¹⁷;
19. enforcement of Electoral Act (e.g. damage to property, defacement).

The pre-election NPC was dissolved on 19 May 2024, marking the end of the pre-electoral security assessment phase. In its place, a dedicated NatJoints election Coordination Centre (CC) was launched on 22 May focusing on election security planning, deployment, and implementation. This remained in place throughout the election period, until 9 June, when the final election results were announced and the final list of elected representatives was promulgated. According to NatJoints 2024,¹⁸ the CC serves ‘as a central point of contact for coordination of information and the reporting of incidents to ensure a swift, prompt and coordinated response. This is where all operations in relation to major events in the country including the National and Provincial General Elections’ are coordinated. Importantly, the NatJoints CC engaged in:

17 South African Government Information Service 2024, ‘Minister Dean MacPherson on Violent Protests by EPWP Workers’ <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/minister-dean-macpherson-violent-protests-epwp-workers-24-jul-2024>

18 SAPS 2024 [note 15]

- Threat and crime pattern analysis;
- Identification of voting and police stations that received threats;
- Identification of crime and violence hotspots;
- Identification of areas prone to service delivery issues and community protests.

Matuta (2024) argues that by leveraging off pre-existing national security arrangements, the IEC's approach to election security is one of risk management.¹⁹ Identifying, assessing, monitoring, and reporting on risks and threats, while implementing controls and mitigations on a day-to-day basis, mean that risk mitigation is achieved. As part of the risk mitigation approach, a range of non-state actors was included in the election security framework to provide specific expertise, skill, and capacity in digital, cyber, informational, and surveillance spheres.

Other Stakeholders:

Business Against Crime, Community Policing Forums, and 'Eyes and Ears'

Throughout the electoral cycle, an additional arm in election security assessment, planning, and deployment included non-state stakeholders. Key players here included BACSA,²⁰ the PSI, and CPFs. The Eyes and Ears (E2) Initiative, set up during the 2019 local elections, is a collaborative initiative formed between the SAPS and PSI to coordinate operational responses to crime and violence during elections; it has remained in effect outside of elections, given its value. Through the E2 Initiative, the network of over 350 private security companies assists the SAPS with day-to-day intelligence and information gathering at the local community level, relaying information on criminality, violence, disruption, and/or intimidation to the command centre for action by SAPS.²¹ In this way representatives of the E2 Initiative also sit in the national and provincial operational command centres (POCCs) of the SAPS. During the elections, the E2

19 Matuta, N 2023, 'Protecting Electoral Integrity: The Case of South Africa', <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/protecting-electoral-integrity-the-case-of-south-africa.pdf>

20 Business Against Crime South Africa (BACSA) was formed as a division of Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) in 1996 in response to former President Nelson Mandela's appealing to businesses to join the fight against crime.

21 During the July 2021 riots, E2 disseminated information on the ground via the POCCs to the SAPS and other authorities. E2 also played a critical role in coordination during the 2022 KZN floods. In the runup to the 2024 election, E2 played its network on high alert and standby following the 23 March 2024 National Shutdown threat that circulated on social media engaging in high visibility patrols, drone, CCTV and aerial helicopter surveillance. *Protection Web* 2024, 'Election 2024: More Than 350 Private Security Companies Enlisted to Assist Police', <https://www.protectionweb.co.za/election-2024/elections-2024-more-than-350-private-security-companies-enlisted-to-assist-police/>

Initiative served as an early-warning mechanism and an extension of the crime, justice, intelligence, and policing infrastructure, as well as a responder mechanism during elections. In the runup to the 2024 election, the executive project manager of BACSA Fouché Burgers stated that during the election, the E2 Initiative would

focus on being better eyes and ears for police, with our geographically broadened footprint of the private security industry across the country, and of course with technology such as helicopters and cameras. We will feed the police with situational information, what's happening on the ground constantly, to make sure they are able to respond quicker.²²

Methods of E2 intelligence-gathering included road patrols, drone surveillance, and CCTV cameras, as well as live-feed aerial helicopter streaming.²³ The CPFs also fed into the E2 Initiative by observing the security environment at the local community level and gathering and reporting intelligence on security incidents to E2 ProvJoints command centres.

Cybersecurity of the IEC electoral system and digital infrastructure (e.g. website, voter registration database, voting results, tabulation database, electronic voting devices) was critical throughout the electoral process. On average, South African government entities – including the IEC – experience over 1000 cyber-attacks a week.²⁴ The Presidency, SAPS, the African National Congress (ANC), and Transnet websites have previously been targeted and hacked. The IEC and JCPS worked with dedicated IT providers to conduct security readiness assessments of information and digital systems ahead of the elections and ensured the integrity of electoral systems and infrastructure throughout the election period.

Other Stakeholders:

Civil Society Organisations – Real 411, Fact Check Coalition, and the Voluntary Cooperation Framework

'Informational manipulation' includes the spreading of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news as well as the incitement to violence utilising digital and social media platforms. It has been termed the new battlefield during

²² Protection Web 2024 [note 21]

²³ Naledi Molele interviewed Roelof Viljoen of BACSA, *Newzroom Africa*, 2 May 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9W0Xnktedk>

²⁴ 'Check Point Responds to Increased Institutional Vulnerability During 2024 Election Period', 2024, <https://novuspressbulletin.co.za/blog/check-point-responds-to-increased-institutional-vulnerability-during-2024-election-period>

elections.²⁵ Artificial intelligence has further amplified informational threats through the artificial replication of public-figure voice and videos that often convey misinformation, disinformation, and/or fake news. Informational manipulation represented a significant security challenge to the IEC and JCPS given its diffuse, remote, and virtual nature. Furthermore, traditional static security arrangements and deployments were not fit for purpose in this realm.²⁶ In response, the IEC collaborated with stakeholders to engage in

- (i) enhanced detection and fact-checking;
- (ii) transparency and user education;
- (iii) implementation of regulatory and policy frameworks.²⁷

This included establishing a Digital Disinformation Complaints (DCC) process and disinformation reporting platform, Real 411, with stakeholders such as Media Monitoring Africa (MMA). The Real 411 platform was an anonymous mechanism to report informational manipulation incidents. Submissions were investigated as per the Electoral Code of Conduct and Section 89 (2) of the Electoral Act of 1998, which states that

- a. No person may publish any false information with the intention of
- b. disrupting or preventing an election;
- c. creating hostility or fear in order to influence the conduct or outcome of an election; or
- d. influencing the outcome or conduct of an election (Electoral Act, 1998).²⁸

The DCC process was further strengthened by the Electoral Commissioners Directorate of Electoral Offences, established in 2016, to investigate breaches to the Code of Conduct and Electoral Act: disinformation falls firmly within this mandate. Another important collaboration to meet the informational security needs of the election was a Voluntary Cooperation Framework signed between the IEC and social media powerhouses such as Meta, Google, and Tik Tok. Under this framework, social media partners committed to remove content, issue advisory warnings, and delist users where digital harms and disinformation were spread on

25 Media Monitoring Africa 2024, 'Disinformation destroys democracy', <https://elections.real411.org.za/learn>

26 Ngubane, S 2024, 'Countering disinformation in South Africa's elections: the role of social media platforms', <https://www.gcis.gov.za/gcis.gov.za/countering-disinformation-in-south-africa-s-elections-the-role-of-social-media-platforms>

27 Ngubane 2024 [note 26]

28 Electoral Act of South Africa, 1998.

their platforms.²⁹ Further stakeholder support initiatives to ‘cut through the noise’³⁰ and prevent, monitor, and respond to informational manipulation included the creation of a fact-checking coalition of civil society and media actors. This coalition tracked and monitored claims made by political parties and actors during the election; the aim was to ‘provide voters with reliable, non-partisan information on key issues, and equip the public with the skills they need to identify election misinformation’.³¹

To assist with informational tracking, monitoring, and mitigation efforts, the South Africa National Editors Forum (SANEF) established eight informational risks across four categories, each with a priority assessment ranging from A to C (A = dedicated personnel required to act; B = proactive monitoring required by stakeholders; C = plan required to be in place should risk arise). The risks were as follows (see Table 1 below):

Table 1: Informational Risks During the 2024 Elections

Priority	Type of Risk	Broad Preparation	Communicate to Public
A	Journalist attacked	Dedicate staff to act	✓
A	Incitement via social media	Dedicate staff to act	✓
B	Silencing voice by intimidation	Monitor	✓
B	Hacking and impersonation of IEC social media presence	Monitor	✓
B	Manipulated media	Monitor	✓
B	Attacks on electoral integrity	Monitor	✓
C	Disinformation on election	Backup plan	✓
	Other risks	Keep on radar	✓

Source: SANEF 2024³²

29 IEC 2024, <https://www.elections.org.za/content/About-Us/News/Electoral-Commission-partners-with-social-media-giants-to-combat-disinformation-in-2024-National-and-Provincial-Elections/>

30 Africa Check 2024, ‘Africa Check, South African media and Google create election fact-checking coalition’, <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/blog/press-release-africa-check-south-african-media-google-create-coalition-fact>; SANEF 2024, <https://elections.sanef.org.za/2024/04/16/africa-checks-election-information-hub/>. Actors included Africa Check, AFP Fact Check, Daily Maverick, Mail & Guardian, Caxton Media, SABC News, Tuks FM, 107.2 FM, and Section 27.

31 Africa Check 2024, ‘Africa Check’s Election Information Hub’, <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/blog/press-release-africa-check-south-african-media-google-create-coalition-fact>

32 SANEF 2024, ‘South Africa’s 2024 elections: mitigating online risks to freedom of expression and access to information’, <https://sanef.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SANEF-Mitigating-Online-Risks-for-the-2024-Elections.pdf>

The control of information security was thus a central issue and consideration for the IEC and JCPS cluster. Through partnerships with CSOs, media coalitions, and social media entities, the JCPS and IEC were able to develop and identify (security assessment), demarcate (security planning), and bring (security implementation) informational security into the election security framework.

Peace and Security Issues in South Africa: A Violent Country, at Peace

‘Blood, bodies, and bullets have become a way of life.’³³

An election security framework was firmly in place for South Africa’s 2024 national and provincial elections. However, as established in the conceptual section above, structural conditions and context play a determining role in the peace and security of an election. In the case of South Africa, high rates of crime and violence are structural conditions which influence its national security environment.

South Africa has variously been labelled as the ‘crime capital of the world’³⁴ and as ‘under siege from violent criminals’.³⁵ A report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime ranked South Africa seventh globally in terms of the highest crime rates.³⁶ On average, every day the country endures 75–84 murders,³⁷ 110 reported rapes,³⁸ 66 hijackings,³⁹ 588 common assaults,⁴⁰ 51 kidnappings,⁴¹ and 453 residential burglaries with ‘aggravating circumstances’.⁴²

33 YusufAbramjee cited in Hill, G 2023, ‘A Searing Debate of Soaring Crime as A Celebrated Murderer Walks Free’, *Washington Post*. 6 December. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/2023/dec/6/searing-debate-of-soaring-crime-as-celebrated-murd/>

34 Altbeker, A 2005, ‘Is South Africa Really the World’s Crime Capital?’ *SA Crime Quarterly*. No. 11. <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC47545>.

35 Sadike, M 2024, ‘Five Cities Among Top 20 Most Crime Ridden In the World’. *IOL*. 3 April, <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/five-sa-cities-among-top-20-most-crime-ridden-in-the-world-9c0ce0e9-e657-4e04-b784-1a4ad961464b>

36 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime 2023, ‘The Global Organized Crime Index 2023’, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ocindex-2023/>

37 *BusinessTech* 2024, 16 February, ‘84 people murdered every day in South Africa- these are the most dangerous areas’, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/752495/84-people-murdered-every-day-in-south-africa-these-are-the-most-dangerous-areas/>

38 Gouws, A 2024, 4 August, ‘Rape is endemic in South Africa. Why the ANC government keeps missing the mark’, <https://theconversation.com/rape-is-endemic-in-south-africa-why-the-anc-government-keeps-missing-the-mark-188235>

39 Legodi, K 2024, 3 August, ‘Spike in hijackings leads to rise in enhanced security’, <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/spike-in-hijackings-leads-to-rise-in-enhanced-security/>

40 *BusinessTech* 2024, 25 February, ‘Worst areas for break-ins and home robberies in South Africa’, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/753413/11-worst-areas-for-break-ins-and-home-robberies-in-south-africa/>

41 *BusinessTech* 2024, 7 March, ‘This type of crime has quadrupled in South Africa and everyone is at risk’, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/758223/this-type-of-crime-has-quadrupled-in-south-africa-and-everyone-is-at-risk/>

42 *BusinessTech* 2024 [notes 40, 41]

According to the 2023 State of Security Report, 76% of South Africans have been victims of at least one type of crime during their lifetimes.⁴³ An Afrobarometer survey showed that 75% of South Africans felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods, and 65% felt unsafe in their own homes.⁴⁴ Trust in the police and law enforcement agencies is consequently low: 61% of Afrobarometer respondents believed that police were corrupt, while 76% believed the police engaged in illegal activities some of the time.⁴⁵ Given that only 15% of murder cases are solved (from investigation to prosecution, conviction, and incarceration), trust in the criminal justice system is also correspondingly low⁴⁶; only 36% of respondents trusted the police.⁴⁷ A survey by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) found that South Africans' overall trust in state institutions had declined from 63% in 2007 to 32% in 2023.⁴⁸ Further, 85% of South Africans believed the country was 'heading in the wrong direction.'⁴⁹

Violence and criminality are deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of South Africa. High rates of violence and criminality are, it is argued, connected to high rates of unemployment, disproportionate wealth inequality, easy access to firearms, well-orchestrated criminal syndicates, under-resourced national policing, historical legacies of violence, and high rates of frustration and psycho-social aggression resultant within this context.⁵⁰ Taylor argues that 'violence has to be understood in terms of a matrix of integrated issues that are rooted in what is a systemic problem (underlying all events and cases), in which the forces of law and order are also implicated.'⁵¹

South Africa thus sits strangely – as a 'country at peace' since the formal ending of apartheid in 1994, but with sustained 'everyday violence' akin to living in a 'war zone'.⁵² 'Blood, bodies, and bullets' feature not as an appendage to socio-

43 Automobile Association of South Africa 2023, 30 May, 'Only 31% of citizens feel safe in South Africa' <https://aa.co.za/only-31-of-citizens-feel-safe-in-south-africa/#:~:text=The%20majority%20of%20South%20Africans,a%20crime%20in%20South%20Africa>.

44 Mpako, A & Ndumo, S 2024, 'South Africans' view of police marred by pervasive corruption, lack of professionalism', <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad836-south-africans-view-of-police-marred-by-pervasive-corruption-lack-of-professionalism/>

45 Mpako & Ndumo 2024 [note 44]

46 Faull, A & Bruce, S 2023, 'Reducing murder must be a top SA government priority', <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/reducing-murder-must-be-a-top-sa-government-priority>

47 Institute for Justice and Reconciliation 2024, 'Trust in the Government and its institutions. What support for a GNU governing coalition in South Africa?' <https://www.ijr.org.za/2024/07/trust-in-the-government-and-its-institutions-what-support-for-a-gnu-governing-coalition-in-south-africa/>

48 IJR 2024 [note 47]

49 IJR 2024 [note 47]

50 Taylor, R 2002, 'Justice Denied: Political Violence in Kwa Zulu Natal After 1994', *Violence and Transition*, vol. 6, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr). <https://csvr.org.za/docs/politicalviolence/justicedenied.pdf>

51 Taylor, R 2002 [note 50], p.4.

52 South African Police Minister Bheki Cele cited in 'South Africa Crime: Can the Country Be Compared to a War Zone?' 2018, BBC, 18 September. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45547975>

economic and political life in South Africa, but as integral to socio-economic and political life. These realities play out in direct and indirect ways during elections.

Political Violence 1994–2024

Local or municipal and national elections in South Africa have consistently been lauded as ‘overall peaceful’.⁵³ However, political violence has continued to occur in each successive election since 1994 (see Figure 4). In April 1994, the month of South Africa’s first democratic election, the Human Rights Committee (HRC) recorded 487 politically motivated deaths, followed by 195 in the month after the election.⁵⁴ While this number has decreased considerably (e.g. between 2000 and 2023 there were 488 politically motivated assassinations in total⁵⁵), violence has continued to be a feature of political life and contestation. Political ‘hits’ on local councillors, ward officials, party agents, and government administrators in contested ‘no-go’ areas, regions, districts, and wards have become a standard feature that accompanies elections. For example, the assassination of former (and expelled) ANC member Sifiso Nkabinde in January 1999 in Richmond, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) was followed by the killing of 11 ANC supporters on the same day.⁵⁶ These events set the tone in the runup to South Africa’s second national election in 1999. Former paramilitary forces were implicated in these assassinations.⁵⁷ A further 20 people were killed in the same year, including seven Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leaders and six ANC leaders.⁵⁸ In subsequent elections, targeted political hits have persisted, often showing a gradual rise:

- In national elections there were seven hits in 2004; 17 in 2009; 14 in 2014; and 42 in 2019. There were also ten hits in the first

53 African Union Electoral Observation Mission to the 29 May 2024 General Elections in the Republic of South Africa, 2024, ‘Final Report’, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44062-doc-Final_Report_General_Elections_-_South_Africa_2024.pdf and SADC 2024, ‘Preliminary Statement by His Excellency Mr. Enock Kavindele, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Zambia and Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2024 National and Provincial Elections of the Republic of South Africa’, <https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/SEOM%20RELEASE%20PRELIMINARY%20STATEMENT%20FOR%20RSA%202024%20ELECTION.doc.pdf>

54 Coleman, M 1998, ‘Post-Election Political Violence’, in *A Crime Against Humanity - Analysing the Repression of the Apartheid State*, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/post-election-political-violence>

55 Matamba, R & Thobela, C 2024, ‘The politics of murder: Criminal governance and targeted killings in South Africa’, *The Global Initiative Against Organised Crime (GI-TOC)*, Geneva. <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-politics-of-murder-criminal-governance-and-targeted-killings-in-south-africa/>

56 Taylor 2002 [note 50]

57 Taylor, R 2002, ‘SANDF Intelligence linked politicians to hit squad activity between the ANC and IFP. R200 000 had been paid for the hit on Nkabinde’, *Violence and Transition*, vol. 6, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR); see also Taylor R 2002 [note 50].

58 Taylor 2002 [note 50]

four months of 2024, with another 31 recorded in 2023 in the runup to the 2024 election.⁵⁹

- In the **local and municipal elections** of 2000, there were 16 hits; 13 in 2006; 19 in 2011; 27 in 2016; and 30 in 2021.⁶⁰

Political killings tend to be higher during local or municipal elections (56%) than national elections (44%) and occur mainly in the pre-election period⁶¹ (see Figure 4). These spikes are the result of the fierce competition for local government positions and access to municipal finances, which often comes to a head during municipal elections as changes in control are anticipated and sometimes averted through hits.⁶²

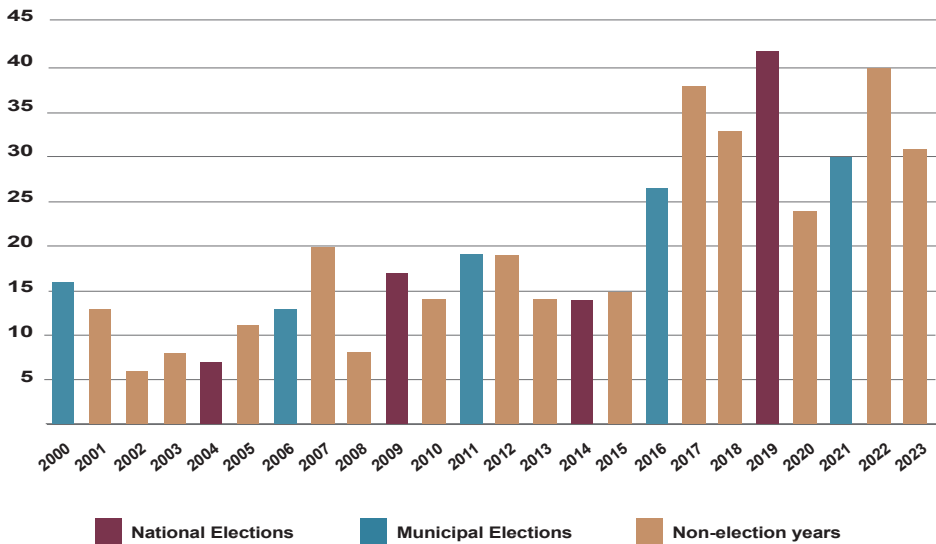


Figure 4: Political Assassinations 2000–2023

Source: Matamba & Thobela 2024

59 Comins, L 2024, <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-05-21-sas-elections-have-been-marred-by-political-killings-report-says/>; Comins, L 2024, <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-05-31-kwazulu-natal-police-faced-over-900-protests-and-civil-unrest-in-lead-up-to-elections/>; Matamba & Thobela [note 55]

60 Comins 2024 [note 59]

61 Comins 2024 [note 59]

62 Corruption Watch 2024, 'Politically motivated killings increase in SA in election years', <https://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/report-politically-motivated-killings-increase-in-sa-in-election-years/>

Matamba and Thobela argue that assassinations must be read ‘as part of a system of collaborative criminal governance, involving local politicians and government administrators colluding with criminal actors to eliminate rivals’.⁶³ A study by Deetleefs and Serwat on the Armed Conflict Location Event Dataset (ACLED) supports this view; the authors state that ‘increasing criminal activity and the proliferation of small arms are among the main drivers of this violence.’⁶⁴ This ‘political–criminal violence matrix’ will continue to persist in future elections if (i) political, security, and criminal actors are allowed to act with impunity; and (ii) violence is viewed as a permissible tool with which to eliminate political rivals, remove tender-contractor competitors, target municipal or government workers, and silence critics.⁶⁵ There is a strong inverse correlation between provinces and areas with high levels of political violence and low levels of state security, policing, law, and order. Everyday violence, criminal disorder, and lawlessness are thus central to the perpetuation and sustenance of political violence. This is an area that the South African government must deal with urgently in future electoral contests.

SECURITY ISSUES IN THE 2024 PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Successful security planning of an election is vital to the realisation of free and fair elections. Security planning, inclusive of risk, threat, and priority identification and assessment, requires significant forecasting and provisions. Two contrasting scenarios emerged vis-à-vis the likelihood of violence in the 2024 election: one of high violence, and one of no violence. Ironically, both predications hung on the repercussions and lessons learnt from the same event: July 2021. Fidelity Services Group assessed that ‘the risk for intimidation, malicious damage to property, arson, barricading of roads, looting, hijacking of trucks as well as clashes between members/supporters of the MK Party, opposing political parties and with authorities is high, should demonstrations take place’.⁶⁶ In contrast, Major General Mninimzi Sizani of the SANDF affirmed that, ‘All I can reiterate here is that we are not a country at war. We are a country that is having an enduring peace. SANDF has prepared and will be prepared to deploy when required by

63 Matamba & Thobela [note 55]

64 Deetleefs, S & Serwat, L 2023, ‘Local Government as a Battleground for Political Violence’ <https://acleddata.com/2023/06/22/special-issue-on-the-targeting-of-local-officials-south-africa/>

65 Matamba & Thobela [note 55]

66 Du Plessis C 2024, ‘South Africa elections: Concerns about riots ahead of the vote’, *The Africa Report*, <https://www.theafricareport.com/349608/south-africa-elections-concerns-about-riots-ahead-of-the-vote/>

the police'.⁶⁷ Five core security threats were identified as presenting the biggest threat to the election. These were:

1. community or service delivery protests;
2. political demonstrations and the threat of interactional violence between political parties and political party supporters centred on former president Jacob Zuma's candidacy ineligibility;
3. taxi and truck 'shutdowns';
4. 'informational manipulation'⁶⁸: disinformation, misinformation, and inflammatory rhetoric; and
5. political assassinations.

1. Community and Service Delivery Protests

Community and service delivery protests are common in South Africa (see Figure 5), some of which turn violent. These protests are driven by a complex interplay of political and socio-economic grievances, political mobilisation and instrumentalisation, and 'opportunity windows' – such as local or municipal elections, national elections, court hearings, and historical anniversaries and commemorations.⁶⁹

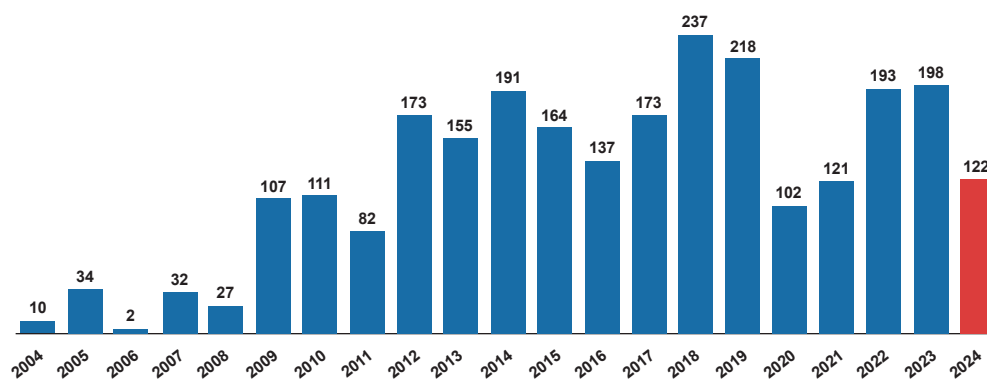


Figure 5: Service Delivery Protests, 2004–2024⁷⁰

Source: Municipal IQ, Municipal Hotspots Monitor 2024

67 Sithole H, 2024, 'NatJoints sets up 24 hours election security coordination center', <https://elections.sabc.co.za/elections2024/news/natjoints-sets-up-24-hour-election-security-coordination-centre/>

68 EU 2024 [note 10], p.4

69 Institute for Security Studies 2024, 'South Africa's polls unlikely to result in widespread public violence', <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africa-s-polls-unlikely-to-result-in-widespread-public-violence>

70 Data for 2024 reflects only the first quarter (January–April).

In the runup to the 2024 elections, community protests erupted in several areas across the country and resulted in blocked roads, burning tyres, and trench-digging, all of which curtailed access to certain areas and venues. Damage to property including the burning of schools and trucks and the defacing of election posters. In KZN alone, police contended with 900 civil unrest and protest actions in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, 211 of which turned violent and 68 of which were directly tied to the poll.⁷¹ This was evident for example in Phoenix, KZN, over water service delivery issues (January 2024); in Mahikeng, North West, over public works and service delivery issues (January and April 2024); in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, over housing and service delivery issues (May 2024); in Rustenberg, North West, over ongoing service delivery issues (lack of water and electricity, May 2024); and in various districts in Gauteng (Melusi, Soweto, Braamfontein) by communities and civil society groups over ‘crumbling infrastructure’ (April and May 2024).⁷²

The potential for community and service delivery protests to escalate into nationwide violence and become instrumentalised politically ranked high as a security concern, in light of the recent ‘marker and lesson’ event of July 2021. From 9–18 July 2021, a wave of civil unrest, riots, violence and looting spread across the country, situated in prevailing socio-economic conditions, spurred and fuelled by a politically orchestrated informational manipulation campaign. More than 350 people died as a result of the unrest.⁷³ A key lesson of the July 2021 riots was that ‘the violence and destruction were symptomatic of unresolved systemic conditions, including post-COVID-19 economic recovery, high unemployment, lawlessness, discrimination, socio-economic divides, and issues within the security sector’.⁷⁴

Worryingly, the 2021 riots revealed severe intelligence failures and significant coordination weaknesses within the Joint Intelligence and Security Agencies Bodies (e.g. JCPS, ProvJoints, NatJoints) as well as deficiencies in security

71 Comins, L 2024, ‘Kwa Zulu Natal police faced over 900 protests and civil unrest in the lead up to elections’, <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-05-31-kwazulu-natal-police-faced-over-900-protests-and-civil-unrest-in-lead-up-to-elections/>

72 Zigebe, Y 2024, ‘Free to protest, but why are South Africans burning down the house whilst dodging rubber bullets?’ <https://udm.org.za/free-to-protest-but-why-are-south-africans-burning-down-the-house-while-dodging-rubber-bullets/>; ‘Rustenburg residents block R24 in protest against poor service delivery’, 2024, <https://www.platinumweekly.co.za/article.php?id=8267&categoryID=5>; Chaane, T 2024, ‘Motorists beware: Major Pretoria routes affected by demonstrations on Monday, police to monitor situations’, <https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2024/05/19/motorists-beware-major-pretoria-routes-affected-by-demonstrations-police-to-monitor-situations/>

73 SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) 2024, ‘July’s People: The National Investigative Hearing Report into the July 2021 Unrest in Gauteng and Kwa Zulu Natal’, https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/JULY%20UNREST%20REPORT%20FINAL_29%20JAN%202024.pdf

74 SAHRC 2024 [note 73]

resources, budgets, preparedness, expertise, and capacity.⁷⁵ Thus, July 2021 served as a ‘wake-up call’ to law enforcement agencies. Based on this history, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) predicted that while community and service delivery protests by ‘disgruntled communities’ was a concern for the 2024 election, July 2021 had drastically refocused and tightened policing, private security, business, community, and law enforcement communication and coordination systems. The likelihood of election violence was thus reduced by proactive preventative action and intervention.⁷⁶

2. Political Demonstrations and the Threat of Interactional Political Violence

The July 2021 riots were also, importantly, rooted in the conviction and imprisonment of former president Jacob Zuma for a contempt of court order.⁷⁷ At the time of Zuma’s imprisonment, Mzwanele Manyi, spokesperson of the Jacob Zuma Foundation, said ‘there will be no peace in South Africa as long as Zuma is jailed under conditions which are unjust’.⁷⁸ Political demonstrations centred on Zuma’s conviction turned into unrest and looting on two levels. On one level, the unrest was opportunistic, generalised, and disordered; on another, the attacks on government facilities, businesses and key infrastructure were highly orchestrated and showed strong political instrumentalisation. For example:

the blocking of the N3 and the N2, the calculated destruction of factories and warehouses, the organised disconnection of security and fire alarm systems, the attack on government communication facilities at the Durban Port, and the bombing and removal of ATM’s – together cannot be viewed as mutually distinct. These events point to a significant investment in the execution of the July unrest.⁷⁹

In the runup to the 2024 elections, a new political party – uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) – was formed with former president Jacob Zuma as its leader. The IEC and Constitutional Court ruled that Zuma was ineligible to serve as a candidate because of his conviction. On 10 May 2024, over 100 000 MK and Zuma supporters demonstrated outside of the Constitutional Court.⁸⁰ Political demonstrations centring on Zuma’s ineligibility to compete garnered fresh fears of ‘another

75 SAHRC 2024 [note 73]

76 ISS 2024 [note 69]

77 SAHRC 2024 [note 73]

78 Tau, P 2021, ‘KZN burns for Zuma’, <https://www.news24.com/citypress/politics/kzn-burns-for-zuma-20210710-2>

79 SAHRC 2024 [note 73], p. 11.

80 Goba, T 2024, ‘Some MK party supporters accuse IEC of bias in Zuma case’, <https://www.ewn.co.za/2024/05/10/some-mk-party-supporters-accuse-iec-of-bias-in-zuma-case>

2021' in the runup to or during or in the aftermath of the 2024 elections. Political protests, demonstrations, and threats, particularly from the MK Party and its supporters, received ongoing and strong attention by the JCPS, ProvJoints, and NatJoints. Related to this, the threat of factional and interactional violence between political party supporters also featured high in security and intelligence analysis and monitoring of 'hotspot' areas (i.e. areas where political contestation and violence has historically been high; Al Jazeera 2024). In this regard, the experience of July 2021 resulted in predictions of increased political violence stemming from political demonstrations and factional political violence.

3. Taxi, Transport, and Truck Shutdowns

Protests by the taxi and transport industry throughout April and May 2024 were highly disruptive and altered the security environment in which elections were to take place.⁸¹ This was particularly in the Amathole District and Buffalo City of the Eastern Cape, in relation to the non-payment of scholar transport, as well as taxi violence between Uncedo Taxi Alliance and Border Alliance in Mthatha and Maclear. In Mthatha, a city shutdown by taxi associations resulted in no movement into the city: workers could not reach their places of employment, scholars could not attend school or sit exams, and people had limited access to the airport.⁸² Given that truck drivers were linked to the start of the 2021 July riots (e.g. barricading of the N3, N2, and N7 roads),⁸³ such actions ahead of the elections were treated as a serious security incident and threat. A member of one taxi alliance threatened that there would be 'no vehicle on the road. And voting and elections won't take place'.⁸⁴

In Durban, on 24 May, a few days before the election, taxi protest action similarly brought the city to a standstill due to blockades on the N2 and N3.⁸⁵ Messaging of 'blockades' and 'shutdowns' was further amplified and spread by the African Truck Drivers Federation South Africa (ATDF-SA), who utilised social media to announce a total shutdown of major routes and highways in Gauteng, scheduled for Monday 20 May.⁸⁶ Routes identified included the R21,

81 South African Government Information Service 2024, 'Eastern Cape on suspension of protest action led by scholar transport operators', <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/eastern-cape-suspension-protest-action-led-scholar-transport-operators-02-may>

82 Ngcukana, L 2024, 'Eastern Cape taxi operators threaten election shutdown', <https://sundayworld.co.za/elections-2024/eastern-cape-taxi-operators-threaten-election-shutdown/>

83 Du Plessis, C 2024, 'South Africa elections concerns about riots ahead of the vote', <https://www.theafricareport.com/349608/south-africa-elections-concerns-about-riots-ahead-of-the-vote/>

84 Ngcukana 2024 [note 82]

85 Ryan, C 2024, 'A tense week for SA as riot warnings issued ahead of elections', <https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/a-tense-week-for-sa-as-riot-warnings-issued-ahead-of-election/>

86 Citizen 2024, 'Motorists beware: Major Pretoria routes affected by demonstrations on Monday, police to monitor situations', 2024, <https://www.citizen.co.za/rekord/news-headlines/2024/05/19/motorists-beware-major-pretoria-routes-affected-by-demonstrations-police-to-monitor-situations/>

R25, R562, M57, and M18, in addition to arterial roads. Tactics would include using bricks, stones, sticks, and burning of tyres to barricade roads. Preliminary investigations revealed that these taxi and truck protest actions were politicised and opportunistic, using the election period as a window of opportunity to link discontent to political action. Given that taxi and truck violence were already underway in the runup to election, the likelihood of it escalating nationwide and transforming into wider civil unrest was assessed as high. Minister of Police at the time, Bheki Cele, commented on this threat as follows: 'Almost everybody was very much scared it might spread and stop easy movement of elections. On the first day of elections 107 [polling] stations could not open there, but law enforcement dealt with that one quickly'.⁸⁷

The JCPS and ProvJoints responded decisively with a security crackdown against protesting taxi and truck members, resulting in the impounding of vehicles as well as the seizure of firearms.⁸⁸

4. Informational Manipulation and Inflammatory Rhetoric

Informational manipulation was rife in the runup to the election, often accompanied by inflammatory rhetoric. One prominent and ongoing campaign of disinformation was against the IEC, both Commissioner Janet Love and Chief Electoral Officer Sy Mamabolo. Disinformation centred on accusations of bribery, vote buying, and rigging, including

- So-called 'evidence' of 'vote rigging' at IEC election warehouse sites in Chesterville and Hammarsdale, KZN. MK Party supporters posted and circulated videos of election materials arriving at the IEC warehouses, overlaid with a narrative of rigging.
- Access to these sites was unauthorised and thus also represented a physical breach to election security.⁸⁹
- Social media posts of President Ramaphosa 'buying' the election from the IEC and its commissioners to the figure of R60 million.⁹⁰
- Social media posts of Janet Love showing bias and favour towards the ANC due to her being a long-standing member of the ANC.⁹¹

87 Majadibodu, S 2024, '50 arrested: Minister Cele commends the police's vigilance during three day election period', <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/50-arrested-minister-cele-commends-the-polices-vigilance-during-three-day-election-period-17d4e548-5946-49f9-8f9c-d2ff42405a24>

88 Protection Web 2024. 'More than 350 private security companies enlisted to assist police', <https://www.protectionweb.co.za/election-2024/elections-2024-more-than-350-private-security-companies-enlisted-to-assist-police/>; Moffatt, C et al. 2024, South Africa 2024 elections tracker, *Good Governance Africa*, <https://gga.org/south-africa-2024-elections-tracker/>

89 Moffatt, C et al. 2024 [note 88]

90 EISA 2024, '2024 Weekly Election Brief No 2: Disinformation and election', <https://www.eisa.org/disinformation-and-elections/>

91 EISA 2024 [note 90]

- Nano-influencing to create echo chambers re-tweeting the X content and hashtag of #DontStealOurVote, which included accusations of 'hidden caches of ballots' by the DA.⁹²
- A WhatsApp monetary scam by someone impersonating the IEC chief electoral officer, Sy Mamabolo, claiming to be able to sway the election outcome.⁹³

The use of deepfake to sway public opinion also formed part of informational campaigns. This included deepfakes of former US president Donald Trump 'endorsing' the MK Party⁹⁴ and American rapper Eminem 'endorsing' the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).⁹⁵ An incitement to violence made by MK youth leader Bonginkosi Khanyile was accompanied by disinformation, misinformation, and fake news campaigns. He claimed that

- 'there will be no elections without MK and [former president Jacob] Zuma...';⁹⁶
- 'if they remove MK and remove Zuma as the face of the campaign, there won't be elections in South Africa...';⁹⁷
- 'disqualify Zuma and you will see what is going to happen';⁹⁸ and
- 'you failed to stop the 2021 unrest, you think you can stop MK? ... Cyril has no capacity ... unleash all police officers, we will meet toe to toe'.⁹⁹

The threat of informational manipulation was consistent throughout the electoral period, and the IEC and NatJoints utilised the legal, electoral, and security frame-

92 Davis, R 2024, 'Disinformation Nation: A concerted campaign to destabilise SA post elections', <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-06-02-disinformation-nation-a-concerted-campaign-to-destabilise-sa-post-elections/>

93 South African Government Information Service 2024, 'Electoral Commission warns of impostor posing as CEO Sy Mamabolo', <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/electoral-commission-warns-impostor-posing-ceo-sy-mamabolo-19-may-2024>

94 Allen, K 2024, 'Elections must be strongly prepared for flurry of online influence and disinformation', <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-03-18-sas-2024-elections-must-be-strongly-prepared-for-flurry-of-online-influence-and-disinformation/>

95 Cosser, K 2024, 'Will the real Slim Shady please stand up? Eminem video endorsing South African opposition party EFF and bashing the ruling ANC is a deepfake', *Africa Check*, <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/meta-programme-fact-checks/will-real-slim-shady-please-stand-eminem-video-endorsing>

96 Tshikalange, S 2024, 'MK party's Bonginkosi Khanyile removed as youth leader', <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-04-10-mk-partys-bonginkosi-khanyile-removed-as-youth-leader/>

97 Kgosana, R 2024, 'Hawks arrest former MK Party youth leader Bonginkosi Khanyile for inciting public violence', *SowetanLive*, <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2024-08-17-hawks-arrest-former-mk-party-youth-leader-bonginkosi-khanyile-for-inciting-public-violence/>

98 DJ Sibu, YouTube 2024, https://www.youtube.com/shorts/PIARE_YvAJk

99 *Newslive SA*, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kXlv5FBRdQ> 13 March.

works of the country to deal with perpetrators who could be identified. Because of repeated incitement, Bonginkosi Khanyile was charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act (1956) with conspiracy to commit public violence. He had previously been tried for incitement to violence over the July 2021 riots and Fees Must Fall protests in 2018.

5. Political Assassinations

As discussed previously in the chapter, in the first four months in the runup to the 2024 provincial and national election, ten political hits were documented. By election day, 29 May 2024, 12 councillors had been killed.¹⁰⁰ Given the high incidence of political hits (42) in 2019 and the current tense electoral climate (evident in the rise of MK, the Zuma ineligibility case, taxi and transport violence, and community and protest action), political assassinations presented a significant ‘tinder threat’ throughout the electoral environment.¹⁰¹ However, given its targeted nature, it did not threaten widespread escalation into community and service delivery protests, political demonstrations, or taxi and truck violence.

In addition to the security threats discussed above, unforeseen risks unfolded in the runup to the elections. On 11 March 2024, the Information Regulator of South Africa received notification of two security compromises when an IEC election official leaked the party candidate list of the incumbent ANC and the new opposition party MK into the public domain.¹⁰² This unauthorised disclosure constituted a breach of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) as well as an election informational breach; it risked the integrity, credibility, and impartiality of the IEC in the election.¹⁰³ While serious, the matter did not result in further security incidents and was contained and resolved speedily.

Everyday crime and violence also featured and impacted on the work of the IEC in the pre-election phase. Two IEC offices were broken into in Houghton (Gauteng) and Caledon (Western Cape), and laptops, scanners, and projectors were stolen.¹⁰⁴ These incidents revealed that while a pre-established election security framework is critical to achieving a safe and orderly electoral

100 Comins, L 2024, ‘SA’s elections have been marred by political killings report says’, <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-05-21-sas-elections-have-been-marred-by-political-killings-report-says/>

101 Final data on the total number of targeted political killings during the 2024 election period and its aftermath was still pending at the time of writing.

102 Michalsons 2024, ‘IEC Security Compromise: a case study on notifying the regulator’, <https://www.michalsons.com/blog/iec-security-compromise-a-case-study-on-notifying-the-regulator/72847>

103 SABC News 2024, ‘Elections: IEC investigating threats of intimidation ahead of polls’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQaA77f0tWE>

104 Matlhabe, G, 2024, ‘Natjoints to forge ahead with zero tolerance stance to elections disruptions and violence’, <https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/other/natjoints-to-forge-ahead-with-zero-tolerance-stance-to-elections-disruptions-and-violence/ar-BB1mFsHh?apiversion=v2&noservercache=1&domshim=1&renderwebcomponents=1&wco=1&batchservertelemetry=1&noservertelemetry=1>

environment, this framework must also be responsive to risks and threats. The next section of the paper details how security actors executed the security plan during the election and what security incidents unfolded on election day.

ELECTION SECURITY IMPLEMENTATION ON ELECTION DAY

'This country will be turned into civil war ... there will be riots like you have never seen ... there will be anarchy.'¹⁰⁵

Based on the threat and crime patterns analysis conducted by ProvJoints and NatJoints in the security planning phase, 25 000 SANDF soldiers were deployed to hotspot areas and 500 high-risk voting stations in the runup to elections and on election day.¹⁰⁶ One specific deployment based on the threat and crime pattern analysis led to the deployment of the 14 SA Infantry Battalion to Mthatha Airport.¹⁰⁷ While threats of civil war and anarchy did not materialise on election day, a number of security incidents unfolded at the provincial and voting district level that impacted upon the electoral environment and bear consideration. These included the following events:

- Residual boycotts over service delivery issues (water and electricity, housing, poor roads, sewerage) persisted in hotspot areas such as Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, eThekweni and uMziwabuntu in KZN, Sebokeng in Gauteng, and Shaleng and Rustenberg in the North West. In these areas, IEC officials were escorted to voting stations and static deployments were provided at voting stations.
- Protest action delayed 32 voting stations from opening in the Eastern Cape, with five stations (Buhlambo, Winnie-Madikizela, Port St Johns, Nyandeni, and Mavundleni) prevented from opening at all.¹⁰⁸

105 Threats made by MK KZN leader Visvin Reddy, 6 March 2024. Visvin Reddy was charged under the Electoral Act for incitement to violence. *NewsLive SA*, 6 March 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jNzrGz0xWY>

106 Heineken, L 2024, 'Military not a magic bullet: South Africa needs to do more for long term peace', <https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2021-07-27-military-not-a-magic-bullet-south-africa-needs-to-do-more-for-long-term-peace/>

107 DefenceWeb, 2024, 'Soldiers and police put the lid on Eastern Cape violence ahead of election day', <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/civil-security/soldiers-and-police-put-the-lid-on-eastern-cape-violence-ahead-of-election-day/>

108 Zweni, Z 2024, 'Protesters keep 5 Eastern Cape voting stations closed' <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2024-05-29-protesters-keep-five-eastern-cape-voting-stations-closed/>

- Some voting stations across the country were delayed from opening due to 'glitchy' connectivity issues and malfunctioning of voter management devices (VMDs); the voters' roll not arriving on time or arriving incomplete; electricity outages; and IEC staff not being properly trained, with some reportedly receiving training on the day. This resulted in delays and long queues leading to heightened tensions and in some cases verbal abuse and assault of IEC staff as well as pushing, shoving, and scuffles within the queue.¹⁰⁹ One instance of sexual assault was reported.
- Electricity outages at voting stations generated safety issues for those queuing in the dark in the early morning and early evening, given the everyday crime and violence issues in the country. Research ICT Africa noted that 'Electricity disruptions not only hinder the operational aspects of the voting process, but also contribute to the perceived safety of the voter environment'.¹¹⁰
- On election day, 130 people were arrested for attempting to incite violence at polling stations or within communities across the country, or attempting to prevent voting from taking place.¹¹¹
- Across provinces, arrests were made for malicious damage to property, defacement of election posters, removal of election posters, possession of firearms, public disorder (e.g. playing loud music close to the voting station), publishing pictures of marked ballot papers, attempts to vote twice, and sabotage to voting stations. In one case the electricity cables feeding into the voting station had been sabotaged.¹¹²
- Of particular concern were security incidents that resulted from within electoral and security institutions, such as 'interference' of election materials by an IEC area manager and two SAPS officers

109 Mitchley, A 2004, 'From tearing down posters to taking photos of ballot papers: Almost 60 election offenders arrested', <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/from-tearing-down-posters-to-taking-photos-of-ballot-papers-almost-60-election-offenders-arrested-20240530>; and Mitchley, A et al. 2004, 'Disruptions at polling stations either thwarted or delayed voting', <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/disruptions-at-polling-stations-either-thwarted-or-delayed-voting-20240529>

110 Timcke, S & Schroder, Z, 2024 'Observing the 2024 Elections' <https://researchictafrica.net/research/observing-the-2024-elections/>

111 Seelatsa, M 2024, '2024 elections: Eastern Cape police arrest 17 suspects for blocking people from voting', <https://www.citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/elections/2024-elections-eastern-cape-police-arrest-17-suspects-for-blocking-people-from-voting/>; SABC News 2024, 'Police Minister confirms hundreds nabbed for election related crimes', <https://elections.sabc.co.za/elections2024/news/police-minister-confirms-hundreds-nabbed-for-election-related-crimes/>

112 McCain, N & Solomons, L 2024, 'Endless queues, a protest and a shooting: Cape Town voters head to the polls', <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/endless-queues-a-protest-and-a-shooting-cape-town-voters-head-to-the-polls-20240529>

as well as an off-duty police official wearing political party regalia within the voting station areas.¹¹³ Additionally, discoveries of empty ballot boxes discarded on an empty field in Limpopo demonstrated that irregularities in process posed a high risk to the security of the elections, as they undermined the normative principles of an election security framework (impartiality, transparency, legality). More importantly, they undermined voter trust and confidence in the integrity of the process and outcome.

- For the immobile, elderly, and people with disabilities (blind and deaf), personal security and integrity issues arose, such as the physical (mis)handling of their bodies by IEC staff and officials to facilitate their access into the voting station or to a voting booth.¹¹⁴ Given the frustrated climate, this physical handling and touching was at times rushed, rough, and insensitive.

No consolidated data or reporting on ‘everyday’ crime and violence on election day has been released to date, though ad-hoc SAPS reporting indicates the wider situational security environment in which elections took place. This included four murders in KZN unrelated to the election and a fatal shooting near a voting station in the Western Cape.¹¹⁵ One source of local crime and violent incident reporting on election day can be found through the incidence reports of private suburban and community security companies. Although too varied to capture here, these paint a picture of continued and unabated criminality in the country on election day. However, these security incidents were not sufficient to shape or derail the security environment of elections on election day, with observers noting that, overall, ‘the country was calm and peaceful in the pre-election, election day, and the immediate post-election period’.¹¹⁶

113 Mitchley, A 2004, ‘From tearing down posters to taking photos of ballot papers, almost 60 election offenders arrested’, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/from-tearing-down-posters-to-taking-photos-of-ballot-papers-almost-60-election-offenders-arrested-20240530>; Kgobotlo, B 2024, ‘IEC’s KZN area manager arrested for ballot box interference’, <https://sundayworld.co.za/elections-2024/iecs-kzn-area-manager-arrested-for-ballot-box-interference/>; Tsotetsi, K 2024, ‘IEC confirms arrests for election tampering allegations’, <https://elections.sabc.co.za/elections2024/news/iec-confirms-arrests-for-election-tampering-allegations/>

114 Wits Election Observer Report 2024, ‘Final IEC Election Observer Report’, University of the Witwatersrand. [Private report not in the public domain at the time of writing; author was involved in WEOG and contributed to the report and holds a copy.]

115 McCain & Solomons 2024 [note 112] and Comins 2024 [note 100]

116 SADC/Kavindele 2024 [note 53]

ELECTION SECURITY RESULTS

'Noone must declare tomorrow. People will be provoking us.'¹¹⁷

'The machines were being done things that's wrong.'¹¹⁸

Electoral observers noted concerns about IEC competency: the lack of sustained and visible SAPS presence and crowd control, together with the malfunctioning of VMDs and shortage of voting materials and long queues, caused some voters to abandon voting. However, observers did not believe these inefficiencies were sufficient to play a role in shaping the final electoral outcome. Because of these inefficiencies, some political parties and supporters rejected the electoral outcome, arguing that there were 'too many mistakes' amounting to 'irregularity' and calling for a recount.¹¹⁹ The situation was further inflamed by IEC counting errors: some voting stations' numbers for the national ballot did not match the actual ballot, and/or where voters had voted for a specific party, no votes for that party were recorded at the voting station.¹²⁰ In one case, a party received 300 votes on the national and regional ballot but zero on the provincial ballot.¹²¹

A total of 579 objections were lodged with the IEC, including a petition signed by parties such as MK, the EFF, the United Democratic Front (UDM), Freedom Front (FF), and Build One South Africa (BOSA), calling for a recount.¹²² The most looming security threat in the post-electoral period was that of political unrest and demonstrations rooted in a growing mistrust of the electoral process, specifically in the counting and tabulation of results.¹²³ Furthermore, the threat that the unrest and violence could spiral, as per July 2021, due to political instrumentalisation by 'anti-democratic forces'¹²⁴ featured high in the post-election

117 Utterance by Zuma 2024, as cited in Haffajee, F 2024, 'Chaos in the point: Zuma threatens IEC and daughter Duduzile attacks its commissioner Janet Love', <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-06-02-chaos-is-the-point-zuma-threatens-iec-and-daughter-duduzile-attacks-its-commissioner-janet-love/>

118 Utterance by Zuma 2024, as cited in SABC News, 1 June 2024, 'Nobody must declare results tomorrow, don't rush us, Zuma', <https://elections.sabc.co.za/elections2024/live-blog/nobody-must-declare-results-tomorrow-dont-rush-us-zuma/>

119 Moichela, K 2024, 'IEC to declare election results on Sunday despite threats from Zuma' <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/live-blog-breaking-news-iec-to-declare-election-results-on-sunday-despite-threats-from-zuma-4948885d-ea76-4aca-a155-70d9efdbcd86>

120 Davis 2024 [note 92]

121 Davis 2024 [note 92]

122 Moichela 2024 [note 119]

123 Maeko, T 2024, 'KZN on high alert for post-election violence' <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-05-28-kzn-on-high-alert-for-post-election-violence/>; Harper, P 2024, 'More public order police deployed to Kwa Zulu Natal amid post-election tensions' <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-06-05-more-public-order-police-deployed-to-kwazulu-natal-amid-post-election-tensions>

124 Davis 2024 [note 92]

threat analysis – particularly in hotspot areas. As a result, 300 members of the Public Order Policing Unit were deployed to KZN to bolster the ProvJoints policing operations. The Zulu king, Misuzulu kaZwelithini, played an important role alongside these units, calling for calm, peaceful conduct and for the acceptance of the election results.¹²⁵

Informational manipulation continued to grow in the post-election phase, framing inefficiency as irregularity. Julius Malema, leader of the EFF, suggested that IEC delays on voting day were deliberate and intended to shape the final electoral outcome; further, that the counting debacle by the IEC was a plot to tamper with ballot boxes.¹²⁶ Malema's allegations gained traction when the IEC results board and website crashed, going offline for over an hour.¹²⁷ The MK Party were also vocal in their rejection and boycott of the election results, claiming outright that the election had been 'rigged'.¹²⁸ MK spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndhlela stated that, 'You can't fool us. We know exactly what was happening. There is an IT entity which was appointed in Cape Town, that interfered during that two hour period. We can confirm it. They were rigging the system'.¹²⁹

A concerted fake news campaign, leveraging from rigging claims and a growing climate of distrust, purported that the Oppenheimer and Rupert families – labelled 'white monopoly capital' – had paid the ANC R150 million to form an ANC–DA coalition.¹³⁰ The story had a by-line imprimatur of the *Mail & Guardian* to lend authenticity and credibility. Though the story did not result in wide acceptance, sowing doubt was the strategy, led by the MK and Radical Economic Transformation (RET) camps, on which calls to action were built¹³¹. Ongoing attacks against the IEC continued, in particular against Janet Love, with Duduzile Zuma of the MK Party demanding that Love be arrested for vote rigging.¹³² Alongside this, posts claiming that the MK Party had won the majority of ballots from overseas voters deepened the narrative of the election being 'stolen' by the IEC. This discrediting strategy and narrative against the IEC laid

125 Harper 2024 [note 123]

126 Ngcobo, K 2024, 'Delays at polling stations may be tactic to extend voting by a day, says Malema' <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2024-05-29-delays-at-polling-stations-may-be-tactic-to-extend-voting-by-a-day-says-malema/>

127 SABC News 2024, 'Umkhonto we Sizwe party rejects poll results, vows to approach court', <https://elections.sabc.co.za/elections2024/news/umkhonto-wesizwe-party-rejects-poll-results-vows-to-approach-court/>

128 Harper, P 2024, 'MK party says it will reject election outcome without recount', <https://mg.co.za/politics/2024-06-01-mk-party-says-it-will-reject-election-outcome-without-recount/>

129 Moichela 2024 [note 119]

130 Davis 2024 [note 92]

131 Haffajee 2024 [note 117]

132 Harper 2024 [note 128]

the basis for incitement, as demonstrated when MK spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndhlela threatened: 'At the right time we will call on our people to demonstrate their dissatisfaction against all these injustices'.¹³³

A number of political parties did engage in protest action outside IEC offices, the IEC results and operations centre, regional high courts, and Parliament. Protests and demonstrations were peaceful and contained by a strong police presence.¹³⁴ The final election results were announced by the IEC on 2 June, and the final list of elected representatives was handed over on 6 June.¹³⁵ This marked the end of the 2024 electoral cycle. Despite the conclusion of the cycle, security structures remained in place and on high alert until mid-June, in line with the first sitting of Parliament and convening of the Government of National Unity (GNU) on 14 and 15 June 2024. No further security threats emanated in the post-electoral period, resulting in an overall broadly peaceful conclusion to the 2024 national and provincial elections.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

'In order for an election to be inclusive, participatory and competitive – and ultimately, to reflect the will of the people – it is essential that electoral contestants can campaign; citizens can cast informed, secret ballots without fear of retribution; officials can effectively administer the process; and civil society, media and parties can engage and observe, free from fear and harm.'¹³⁶

Election security matters. A successful election security framework can help people mitigate, manage, and confine the risks and threats posed to an election. It is helpful for predicting (security assessment), planning (security planning), and proactively acting (security implementation) in order to ensure that a safe and orderly electoral environment is delivered throughout the electoral cycle. While some security concerns are universal, structural conditions within a country strongly influence the risks and threats as well as security priorities of a

133 *Punch* 2024, 'South Africa's Zuma vows protests, says 2024 elections rigged', https://punchng.com/south-africas-zuma-vows-protests-says-2024-elections-rigged/#google_vignette

134 Crisis24, 2024, 'South Africa ongoing opposition protest in central Durban' <https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2024/07/south-africa-ongoing-opposition-protest-in-central-durban-july-17>

135 Electoral Commission of South Africa 2024, 'Handover of Final List of Elected Representatives for National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures - Remarks by Chairperson Mosotho Moepya', <https://www.elections.org.za/pw/News-And-Media/News-List/News/News-Article/Handover-of-Final-List-of-Elected-Representatives-for-National-Assembly-and-Provincial-Legislatures---Remarks-by-Chairperson-Mosotho-Moepya?a=AISDGvpz75ps1usOfX7oiq5kZQbN79TDVUamEckav6c=>

136 Open Election Data Initiative, n.d., <https://openelectiondata.net/en/guide/key-categories/security/>

country. South Africa's high rate of everyday violence and crime represents not only an impediment to the full democratic consolidation of the country but also shapes the security environment during elections. Political violence in the form of politically targeted hits is of particular concern, showing ascendancy during the democratic period of the country. Political hits are not an isolated phenomenon; they are embedded in the so-called everyday violence, criminality, and lawlessness of the country.

To mitigate, manage, and contain the multivariate security risks and threats posed to the country, the South African government has developed coordinated national and provincial law, order, intelligence, and security structures in the form of the JCPS, ProvJoints, and NatJoints. These structures have consistently been put to the test, showing limitations (e.g. July 2021 nationwide riots and looting) and strengths (e.g. preventing nationwide taxi and truck shutdowns in 2024).

Despite South Africa's 2024 national and provincial elections being politically charged and highly competitive,¹³⁷ the elections proceeded overwhelmingly in a non-violent manner. The strong coordination, collaboration, partnerships, and initiatives amongst state and non-state stakeholders through ProvJoints, NatJoints, E2, Real24, and Election Watch (to name a few) played a determining role in the 2024 elections being calm and peaceful. Domestic, regional, and international observer missions were unanimous in noting the inclusive, calm, and peaceful electoral environment. However, they also noted isolated and intermittent security incidents.¹³⁸ To further enable secure elections, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations to the IEC

- (i) Incorporate and sensitise notions of consent into IEC staff training, particularly around physical touching and handling of persons who require physical assistance, those who vocalise vulnerabilities, and those who experience assault (e.g. close inappropriate proximity in queuing, sexual assault, verbal assault).
- (ii) Develop and implement gender and minority security-specific protections at voting stations and an enabling environment on voting day (e.g. separate queues for women before sunrise or after dark; mobile voting booths outside the station for those who are infirm, where access is cumbersome or difficult, and/or to prevent the physical handling of persons).
- (iii) Incorporate backup power sources as part of essential voting materials.

137 EU 2024 [note 10]

138 EU 2024 [note 10]; SADC/Kavindele 2024 [note 53]; and Wits Election Observer/WEOG 2024 [note 114]

Recommendations for the SAPS and IEC

- (iv) Increase the number of SAPS and IEC officials at voting stations inclusive of dedicated queue controllers.
- (v) Conduct ongoing sensitising training of the SAPS and IEC officials regarding consent, vulnerability, trauma, and victim support.

Recommendations for the Government, SAPS, and criminal justice system

- (vi) Mainstream the problem – and prevention – of targeted political killings by (re)establishing, building upon, and extending the work of the Moerane Inter-Ministerial Commission on Political Violence. Widen the lens to include nationwide occurrences of political killings, politicised protests, politicised violence, the politicisation of state tenders and contracts, political disinformation and misinformation, and the inter-connections of these dimensions thereof into a consolidated incident and action-orientated database.
- (vii) Draw on the findings of such a commission to identify and prosecute individuals, including politicians, who are implicated in the political-criminal violence network.

Recommendation to the Government, SAPS, criminal justice system, and IEC

- (viii) Implement the Electoral Code of Conduct vis-à-vis incitement of political violence by fining political parties in breach and cancelling the party's votes and registration in the area.

Recommendation to the Government and SAPS

- (ix) Tackle 'everyday violence', which represents a barrier not only to voter turnout and participation during elections but also to everyday democracy, democratic consolidation, and democratic participation.

Recommendation to the IEC and JCPS cluster

- (x) Reconduct 'state of readiness' audits of voting stations, accompanied by representatives from gender and minorities stakeholder entities (such as Blind SA, Disability South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice, Women for Change, and Age in Action). Incorporate security-specific protections identified by these entities.