



NATIONAL FREEDOM PARTY
National Assembly Caucus Office
V472 Fourth Floor, Old Assembly Building, Parliament Street
Cape Town, 8000

16 June 2021

Attention:
Former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke
Tugela House, Floor 1
1303 Heuwel Road
Centurion
0157

RE: Viability of a free and fair local government election in October

Dear Former Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke,

It is with grave concern that the National Freedom Party (NFP) wishes to elucidate the state of the nation ahead of the scheduled Local Government Elections and calls on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to urgently consider the viability of hosting free and fair elections amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

South Africa has recently been recording increasing numbers of positive cases of Covid-19; thus, the President of the Republic, Cyril Ramaphosa through consultation with the National Coronavirus Command Council moved the country from National Alert Level Two to National Alert Level Three.

Former DCJ, we have an estimated 791 Covid-19 deaths are being recorded daily with over 167 000 excess deaths in the country due to the Coronavirus.

With our slow vaccination rollout, only 0.8% of the population is vaccinated so far with many of them only having received their first dosage. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that we will come anywhere close to the anticipated vaccine rollout. Due to the lack of capacity in the country, in addition to the limited supply and financial constraints as the Minister of Finance has only allocated limited resources over a two-year term.

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As you are aware of the dynamics of politics in South Africa, political parties, public representatives and leaders of political parties are expected to campaign vigorously, which includes but not limited to door to door campaigns, massive rallies and gatherings in all parts of the country.

You may also be aware of the NICD repeatedly raising concerns about gatherings, which appear to be super-spreaders. South Africa is not as fortunate as many of our counterparts in different parts of the world who have had advanced technology for a long time including much higher literacy rate in their countries resulting in them having an edge over the large vulnerable population of South Africa, which rules out any form of hybrid campaigns or voting.

We also know that elections whilst had on one or two days, the process of which commences at least a year before where political parties would have to ensure that branches, which many political parties have expiring yearly have to be re-inaugurated. Potential candidates have to be elected by the people in the respective wards. To do this, it means we have to invite members from those respective wards, which means people would have to be transported to the venues thereby resulting in large gatherings. Political parties may not even have the resources to ensure that Covid-19 restrictions and regulations are adhered to at all times during the transportation of the people to the venues hosting the gatherings.

As you may be aware, for well over 15 months political parties were not able to be in touch with the electorate as they have done before due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The NICD having reported that the third wave has already started in provinces like Gauteng, Free State, North West and numbers beginning to rise in the Western Cape and other provinces; this cannot be ignored.

Now, with an estimated 791 Covid-19 related deaths and new infections rising by an estimated 15 000 daily, which we all know is not an accurate assessment due to the challenges faced by the National Department of Health in South Africa. This indicates that should we continue with the Local Government Elections, it poses a serious risk to the greater population in South Africa and almost certainly the cause of many more infections and deaths in the country.

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Added to the above is the financial constraints that our people face who are expected to go to voting stations, who are expected to participate in this democratic process of electing their leaders; certainly, they would not be able to do so as many of them have lost their jobs and the social relief grants have been stopped.

The purpose of a Local Government Election is to identify and elect public representatives to serve the best interest of the people that they serve. The question is, under such difficult circumstances is it possible for the very large population of South Africa who appears to be vulnerable will be able to exercise their Constitutional right to participate in a free and fair election. The response is an emphatic NO!

In light of the above, we, the National Freedom Party urge you to reconsider the announcement of an election in October 2021. It is our view that it would make financial sense and very limited disruption if local, provincial and national elections are held simultaneously. The disruption every three years will be eliminated; however, we believe that as a result of Constitutional obligations certain processes will have to unfold if any attempt is made to bring all elections at the same time. Should this not be possible, given the current situation, then it is the view of the National Freedom Party that Local Government Elections be postponed to early 2022. This will afford South African time to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Health experts have repeatedly advised that the third wave, which is now sweeping through South Africa, could be devastating and further expect the 4th wave, early in December of this year. It is in our view that, it is in the best interest of our country and people to save lives, this election be postponed to at least 2022 or be held simultaneously with provincial and national elections.

We hope that this matter will receive your appropriate consideration to protect our people.

Thank you

Honourable AM Shaik-Emam
Leader of National Freedom Party Parliamentary Caucus
National Assembly
South Africa

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