



US the PEOPLE

NATIONAL TASK TEAM

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17 JUNE 2021

Justice Dikgang Moseneke
Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
Tugela House
1303 Heuwel Avenue
Centurion
0157

By email to: freeandfair@elections.org.za

Dear Sir.

RE: Report on Ensuring Free and Fair Elections during COVID: US THE PEOPLE (US) WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Your letter dated 02 June 2021 refers.

Please receive this as an official submission of Us the People (US) to the Inquiry into Ensuring Free and Fair Local Government Elections During COVID-19 (“Inquiry”).

1. Conductivity of free and fair local government elections during October 2021
 - 1.1 With the amount of time available for the Independent Electoral Commission and political parties to prepare for the October elections, there is more than sufficient time for organisations to put measures in place and adopt practices that enable free and fair elections under the prevailing conditions. It is in the interest of democracy that efforts be



directed towards ensuring free and fair elections instead of exploring the impossibility of elections.

- 1.2 There is no doubt that any undermining of democracy would result in chaos throughout the country. Certainly, upholding democracy is more important than preventing the spread of an infectious disease as elections have always been held, even during periods when Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in the country. It is also important that the Electoral Commission maintain its independence in all processes of upholding democracy, including from the country's judiciary.

2. Following comprehensive research, Us the People do not recognise any constraints from COVID-19 prevention and combating measures to political party activity and campaigning towards local government elections.
 - 2.1 Political party activities entail programs that may be planned and executed within the measures announced by the government to prevent and combat COVID-19. The use of ICT and social media also enables political parties campaigns to reach a wide audience.
 - 2.2 In cases where political parties wish to convene gatherings of their supporters and potential voters, the IEC together with the department of health can deploy their officials to oversee the measures put in place by the particular party to comply with prevention and combating of COVID-19.
 - 2.3 Each party may also designate personnel for door-to-door activities that enable interaction with voters without the need for gathering in groups. The approval of IEC and local health officials may be sought prior to the undertaking of such activities should the necessity arise. It is the interest of any party to have their voters alive on the day of elections and as such, each party has sufficient time to explore and plan their campaigns considering the prevention of COVID-19.



3. Following comprehensive research, Us the People do not recognise constrains from COVID-19 prevention and combating measures to proper and effective monitoring of freeness and fairness of the local government elections.

3.1 The monitoring of elections does not involve activities that are distinct from daily activities in each of our professional and personal lives like shopping, office work, construction, manufacturing, educational activities, the use of public transport etc. As such activities have not been put to a halt as means to prevent or combat COVID-19, it would be unnecessarily bias to view the monitoring of elections as an activity that can be constrained by COVID-19 prevention and combating measures.

4. By-Elections during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1 Us the People has not participated in By-Elections, however the party has observed and noted that the areas where by-elections have been held have not suffered significant increases in COVID-19 cases, which may be considered higher than areas where elections have not been held.

5. Electoral Court Decisions on By-Elections

5.1 Even under COVID-19, the postponements of Elections by the Electoral Court have not been indefinite. It must therefore be considered that the significance of elections cannot be outweighed by COVID-19 prevention as the process of preventing COVID-19 involves activities and procedures that can be planned and prepared within reasonable time prior to the date of elections.



6. International Cases of Elections during COVID-19

6.1 Evidence from international cases where elections have been held following the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic do not suggest that elections have a significant impact on number of people infected by COVID-19. This may be because of measures put in place in the different countries to ensure that democracy is upheld, and such must be prioritized by the IEC.

7. Lastly, “Us the People” have no doubt that our participation in the Inquiry will be best appreciated in the form of oral submissions. Therefore, in addition to the substantial submissions above, I wish to submit, on behalf of the executives of Us the People, the urge to make oral submissions to the Inquiry accordingly.

Your consideration of the above submissions and swift response thereof will be highly appreciated and valuable in the delivery of the Inquiry’s assignment.

Sincerely Yours,



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National Task Team | Communications Office

Us the People

