

16 March 2023

Press statement

No to the shutdown!

We, the undersigned organisations, express our opposition to the forced national shutdown being planned by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) on 20 March 2023.

Every person in South Africa has the Constitutional right of choice, association, movement, safety and freedom of expression, and the responsibility to similarly uphold the rights of others in this regard. Therefore, any attempt at preventing those who may not support the shutdown from going to work, to school or to university, infringes on their Constitutional rights.

Insisting that roads will be shut down and that no trucks, trains or buses will move, and hinting that businesses that remain open could be looted are subtle forms of intimidation that must be called out.

We challenge the notion that a forcible shutdown is an accepted norm of protest. There is a clear distinction between the Constitutional right to protest or to canvass support for a stayaway, and the fear mongering and forced shutdown of the country.

South Africa is already in crisis, as evidenced by the daily loadshedding, poor service delivery, poverty, unemployment, hunger, continued state capture and corruption, and malfeasance. Actions that only seek to deepen the crisis for narrow party-political gains can never be the solution.

We need not think too far back to the July 2021 insurrection, to be reminded of whose interests anarchy serves. Destabilisation benefits those who wish to avoid accountability, and those who are against upholding the rule of law. It is no wonder that some individuals who were seemingly supportive of the July 2021 chaos, are now backing the EFF's call to shut the country down.

We call on law enforcement to act against any form of intimidation and violence that may unfold before, during and after the shutdown. Law enforcement must ensure that highways are not blocked, and the rights of the ordinary public are protected.

The president of the country, premiers across all provinces and mayors of towns and cities must act to prevent possible violence, destruction to property and looting. Public representatives should be providing leadership, and calling out all forms of intimidation. While we await the outcome of the City of Cape Town's interdict against the shutdown, government at all levels must prepare to counter potential violence that may unfold.

We don't want to hear after the fact from the state's security cluster that they were caught unawares, as had been the case in July 2021. We hope that the relevant ministries and state institutions are well prepared to ensure that law and order is maintained.

We also call on communities to be alert. Residents must organise themselves in conjunction with police and Community Policing Forums to ensure that people remain safe and to maintain peace.

That democratic change and renewal is urgently needed in South Africa is beyond doubt. The choice of whether this will be through constitutional and democratic means or mass destruction is what the shutdown compels us to deal with.

Endorsed by:

#UniteBehind
#StandUpSA
Accountability Lab South Africa
Active Citizens Movement
Ahmed Kathrada Foundation
Anglican Church
Asakhe Foundation
Botsotso
Cape Town Ulama Board
Centre for Good Governance and Social Justice
Civic Movement for Change NPC
Congress of Business Economics
Community Action Committee and Strikers Patrol Group
Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC)
Defend our Democracy
Gordon's Bay Islamic Society
Helen Suzman Foundation
Insimbi
June and Andrew Mlangeni Foundation
LenzPolitics
Lombard Insurance Company
Legal Resources Centre
National Foundations Dialogue Initiative (NFDI)
Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA)
Phoenix Ubuntu Group
Phoenix Settlement Trust and Gandhi Development Trust
Progressive Tamil Movement
Solidarity
Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM)
Right to Know Campaign
South African Christian Leaders Initiative (SACLI)
South African Conversations
South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID)
Strategic Dialogue Group
SynNovation Solutions
The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA)
Women's Cultural Group

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