



Press Statement

28 May 2023

Launching Congress of the Defend our Democracy Movement

Defend our Democracy officially launched as a civil society movement on 27 May 2023 in Johannesburg.

Defend our Democracy was established as a campaign two years ago with the support of a range of organisations and sectors in response to the deepening political and socio-economic crisis in the country.

Those present at the official launch congress on Saturday, included civil society groups, faith-based and community organisations, sectoral networks, and a number of activists.

Participants renewed their commitment to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and established Defend our Democracy as a progressive civil society movement. Through convening and movement building work, it aims to:

- Promote human right and enhance democratic values and processes embedded in the Constitution;
- Develop a societal front against corruption, state capture and political destabilisation in South Africa;
- Ensure accountability of political parties, government and public administration, and demand effective governance in the country; and
- Work to stimulate public interest in democracy and the practice of participatory democracy.

The congress resolved to adopt a programme of action centred around five key pillars that emerged from Defend our Democracy's inaugural Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change held last year. They include

- Electoral and political reform;
- Countering political destabilisation;
- Tackling corruption and state-capture;
- Democratic innovation linked to improving the quality of democracy, and
- Movement building centred around participatory democracy and civic activism.

Key initiatives the Defend our Democracy movement intends to undertake include a national campaign to ensure the integrity of the 2024 elections through encouraging organisations to register elections observers to monitor processes at voting stations across the country. The work of the campaign will also include tracking the implementation of the Zondo Commission's recommendations, amplifying the work of affiliated organisations around democracy building, and convening organisations and sectors on critical issues impacting democracy.



In committing to enabling a new politics aimed at invigorating people’s power, renewing and strengthening democracy, the launch Declaration read:

“Even as we declare that Defend Our Democracy will not contest elections, it no longer will accept the glib promises of career politicians and make-believe manifestoes of political parties. It will champion the hopes and aspirations of its constituent members and the people of South Africa and hold politicians and parties accountable for their actions.”

The launch adopted a constitution for the movement, and elected a new leadership core, who will form part of Defend our Democracy’s National Committee.

The new leadership includes:

Chairperson: Moss Ntlha

Deputy Chairperson: Neeshan Balton

Deputy Chairperson: Rekgotsofetse Chikane

General Secretary: Kristen Abrahams

Deputy Secretary: Finance: Fazel Randera

Deputy Secretary: Communications: Kathy Berman

Additional Members: Nicole Fritz, Cynthia Stimpel, and Malik Dasoo

Defend our Democracy will now, as a movement, through its new leadership and programme of action, continue with the work that it started two years ago as a campaign to counter the threats posed to democracy and to improve the quality of democracy in South Africa.

It does so as the country celebrates 40 years of the United Democratic Front, an umbrella organisation whose movement building work played a significant role in ending apartheid. The launch also comes a year before South Africa marks 30 years of democracy.

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