



30 November 2023

Campaign statement

Election Watch, a collective commitment to safeguarding our constitutional democracy

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, organised labour, business, faith-based and community organisations, sectoral networks, academia, and the media, reaffirm our unwavering commitment to ensuring the success and integrity of the 2024 elections.

As the country approaches 30 years of freedom in 2024, we acknowledge the immense strides made in transforming South Africa from its apartheid past to a constitutional democracy.

It is with a sense of pride that we reflect on the ability of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa to successfully run six provincial and national government elections, as well as numerous local government and municipal by-elections, since 1994 with integrity and professionalism.

We also commend political parties who in the last 30 years have accepted electoral outcomes and who by and large, have not undermined electoral processes.

We must however, recognise that our democracy has been eroded through state capture, corruption and malfeasance, especially in the last 15 years. Putting political party and personal interests above that of the public has left South Africa in a state of crisis. The lack of government accountability has depleted public trust in our political system.

South Africa will be amongst 54 countries that will host elections in 2024. This election will be the most contested yet.

We are cognisant of the global context, where democracies in both developing and developed nations have come under immense strain. We have seen shifts towards right wing politics, coups, invasions and insurrection. Even established democracies like Brazil and the United States of America, have witnessed attempts in recent years to undermine the will of the people through doubt being cast on electoral results.

We therefore, collectively commit to a civil society driven campaign called 'Election Watch' that will centre the call for active citizenry to ensure the success and integrity of the 2024 elections. In doing so, we will encourage:

1. **Observing the elections:** We call on organisations and individuals to rigorously observe the electoral process, and join us in fielding as many observers as possible to be based at voting and polling stations across the country on election day. Based on our observation, we will pronounce broadly on the integrity of the elections, and help safeguard the sanctity of the democratic process.
2. **Creating a nationwide network:** We will form part of a nationwide network of organisations and individuals dedicated to democracy-building efforts, laying the groundwork for 'democracy volunteers' to embark on mass-scale observing from 2024, to the 2026 and 2029 elections.



3. **Countering disinformation:** We are committed to countering disinformation, inaccurate and fake news, populist rhetoric aimed at racial, ethnic and xenophobic incitement, political destabilisation and violence throughout the election cycle.
4. **Ensuring voter and democracy education:** We will educate citizens not only about the process of voting, but about the importance of it. We will strive to ensure that South Africans of voting age register to vote.
5. **Assessing candidate quality and party manifestos:** We will encourage the public to critically evaluate political party candidates standing for office and make informed decisions about voting them in; as well political party manifestos and potential coalition agreements.
6. **Monitoring political party funding and spending:** We urge political parties to be transparent about their funding sources and spending during the election period and beyond, and to comply with the Political Party Funding Act. We will call out the abuse of state resources for party electoral purposes.
7. **Commitment to long term electoral reform:** We are well-aware that our current electoral system and political culture minimises the opportunity for accountability of elected representatives. We will continue working towards reforming the electoral system and advocating for a new political culture so that politicians can be held more directly accountable by the public.

In embarking on the Election Watch campaign to observe, monitor and pronounce on the integrity of the 2024 elections, we will work collaboratively, convene regularly and employ a set of strategies. These include, establishing databases of organisations; building strategic partnerships; leveraging support from respected South Africans; holding provincial meetings; prioritising key regions for observation and monitoring work; organising high-impact programmes; running media campaigns; developing technological capacity; providing training; and forming part of the IEC's observer programme.

We call upon all who live in South Africa to support Election Watch and join us in becoming 'guardians of democracy'. In doing so, we can ensure that 2024 is marked, not only as the 30th year of freedom, but as the 'Year of the Active Citizen', where we can safeguard and renew our constitutional democracy.

To endorse this statement, click here: <https://bit.ly/3G8YM04>

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