



Press statement

27 April 2024

30 Years of Democracy - A Call to Recommit to Active Citizenship

As the country marks its 30th year of freedom on 27 April 2024, Defend our Democracy calls on South Africans to recommit to active citizenry.

With this being an election year, we appeal to members of the public and civil society organisations, to exercise their oversight role by becoming election observers. In doing so, citizens can help ensure that we continue to host free and fair elections, as has been the case since 1994.

This year's elections are likely to be the most contested yet. In light of this, Defend our Democracy's Election Watch campaign intends to field observers at voting stations across various parts of the country. The campaign is politically non-partisan.

Having received accreditation from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), we are making a final appeal to members of the public to join the Election Watch campaign as observers. Those interested can register their details as volunteers on the Election Watch campaign portal: <https://election-watch.azurewebsites.net> . The deadline for registration is 1pm on 1 May 2024.

Since the launch of the campaign in November last year, Defend our Democracy has conducted a series of workshops across all nine provinces. Residents and local civil society organisations who attended the workshops expressed an appreciation for the positive developments as a result of democracy, but also shared their frustration, and in some instances, outrage, at the lack of service delivery, as well as corruption, unemployment and a growing sense of distrust in politics and politicians.

Their sentiments were in keeping with indicators from the Afrobarometer's 2023 research which suggests that although 70% of South Africans are dissatisfied with the way in which democracy is working in the country, 65% believe that elections are the best way to choose the country's leadership.

As South Africa join some 64 other countries going to the polls this year, we appeal to the public to not only read party manifestos, but to critically evaluate party candidates and continue holding those in power - including potential coalition governments - accountable post elections.

We call on political parties to conduct their campaigns within the ambit of the Electoral Code of Conduct, and to desist from unwarranted attacks aimed at the IEC, as well as messaging that undermines the credibility of the country's electoral processes.



As we head to May 2024, Defend our Democracy will embark on a series of training sessions for its Election Watch observers. We also intend to finalise plans around observer deployment in various provinces, and pilot the app that has been developed to allow observers to send through live feedback on election day.

As we critically evaluate the last 30 years of democracy, let us recommit to active citizenry, starting off with signing up to become election observers. For more information, visit www.defendourdemocracy.co.za

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