



## **Freedom Day – 27 April**

### **“Freedom Must Deliver – Not Just Be Remembered.”**

On 27 April 1994, millions of South Africans woke up before dawn to cast their ballot papers for the very first time in their lives. It was a day of triumph, marking the end of decades of exclusion under apartheid and the beginning of a new democratic dispensation. For those who had been denied the right to vote, Freedom Day symbolized relief, dignity, and the fulfilment of a long struggle for equality. It was the moment when South Africa stepped into the light of democracy, with citizens finally able to choose a president of their own.

Today, 32 years later, Freedom Day remains one of the most significant milestones in our nation’s history. It is a day of celebration, but also of reflection. While we commemorate the sacrifices that brought us freedom, we must confront the reality that many of the promises of democracy remain unfulfilled.

South Africa continues to grapple with high crime levels, which erode public safety and weaken trust in institutions meant to protect citizens. The unemployment rate remains stubbornly high, leaving millions without opportunities and hope. Our society is still deeply unequal, with wealth and privilege concentrated in the hands of a few, while the majority struggle to access basic services. The housing crisis persists, with many poor and working-class families living in inadequate conditions, waiting for the dignity of decent shelter.

Perhaps most troubling is the scourge of corruption, which undermines governance, diverts resources from the people, and corrodes the very foundations of democracy. Alongside these systemic failures, South Africans face daily challenges that make it difficult to celebrate Freedom Day without acknowledging the unfinished work of building a just and equal society.

If these challenges are not addressed, Freedom Day will risk becoming a day of speeches and rhetoric rather than a genuine celebration in which all South Africans benefit from the new dispensation.

Defend Our Democracy celebrates Freedom Day but also calls on society and government to confront these pressing issues head-on. True freedom is not only about casting a ballot; it is about living in a society where justice, opportunity, and dignity are accessible to all.

As we commemorate this day, let us recommit ourselves to defending democracy, fighting corruption, addressing inequality, and building a South Africa where freedom is not just a memory of 1994, but a lived reality for every citizen.