

# We are ready, say IEC, cops

## ELECTORAL COMMISSION: RECORD OF HOLDING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS UNDISPUTED

» 'One or two incidents at flashpoints not unexpected.'

**Brian Sokutu**

**W**ith more than 27 million registered voters expected to throng to polling stations to cast their votes today, leading political analysts have shrugged off pockets of violence in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal as not posing any threat to the polls – the seventh since 1994.

Describing criticism levelled at the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) by the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party as “a ploy to lay the foundation for complaints after the polls”, political expert Melanie Verwoerd expressed confidence that the country was set “for yet another free and fair general election”.

While unable to furnish *The Citizen* with statistics on how many SA Police Service (Saps) officials, vehicles or aircraft had been deployed to quell any outbreaks of violence at potential flashpoints, Saps national spokesperson Brigadier Athlenda Mathe was bullish about additional public order policing (POP) members being dispatched to KZN and the Eastern Cape to bolster law enforcement agencies.

National police commissioner



**ACTION STATIONS.** The leaderboard at the results operations centre at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand overwhelms Hall 5, which was already a hive of activity yesterday. Picture: Nigel Sibanda

General Fannie Masemola this week addressed more than 700 POP members destined for KZN and the Eastern Cape.

The IEC, which has accredited a record 160 organisations and 5 000 observers to monitor the elections, yesterday reiterated its readiness for the watershed polls.

Verwoerd said she was “pretty confident that the election will go well”.

“In past general elections, we have always seen little flashpoints – one or two incidents, which is

not unexpected. These require being handled on a case-by-case basis.

“I do not foresee anything on a large scale happening. It will largely be a free, fair and peaceful election,” Verwoerd said.

Responding to fierce criticism by the MK party, Verwoerd said: “There can be no real question on the IEC’s credibility.

“The IEC has always proven itself in presiding over free and fair elections, capable of handling the polls.

“The MK accusations about the IEC are merely about laying the foundation to complain after the elections, laying the blame on the commission – something that should be resisted.”

Inclusive Society Institute chief executive Daryl Swanepoel said: “With security forces deployed all over the country, we can expect things to go quite smoothly.

“I don’t think we should expect major upheavals to dampen people’s spirits during voting, despite

a hotspot here and there.”

He slated the MK’s criticism of the IEC as “misplaced”.

“If you look at MK’s track record since January, they are clearly trying to undermine the credibility of the IEC, meaning they may not perform well as they suggest. The two-thirds majority they want is not going to happen.

“Painting the IEC for ‘lack of credibility’ is expected to form the basis of their argument going forward. We have faith in the IEC delivering [but are] not ruling out a few hiccups.”

The differences between previous polls and these elections are more parties, independent candidates and three ballot papers.

Independent political analyst Sandile Swana said the polls were “secured by Saps and on track”.

Hall 5 of Gallagher Convention Centre, the headquarters of the IEC nerve centre for 2024 polls, vote counting and the venue for the announcement of the results, was a hive of activity yesterday.

With party leaders set to visit the centre after casting their votes, security forces are likely to step up security around the venue. – [brians@citizen.co.za](mailto:brians@citizen.co.za)

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**Daryl Swanepoel**  
Inclusive Society Institute