



# Bi-weekly Democracy Report

01/08/2022

## Introduction

This report is a bi-weekly/periodic snapshot of all current narratives within South Africa's online conversation about democracy and forms part of the CABC's *Working For Democracy* project. This report (and all subsequent periodic reports) follows the CABC's landscape report entitled "*Democracy 2022: Lay of the Land*" in which five focus areas are being tracked within the broader conversation about our democracy. These focus areas include: the judiciary, democratic institutions (such as the IEC and Public Protector), the constitution, the ANC's elective conference in December 2022 as well as the RET network and corruption. These focus areas have been the most topical within the online conversations about democracy in 2022, garnering substantial public interest resulting in increased online discussion. This report has analysed online conversations from 11 July - 31 July 2022.

## Research Methodology

The CABC made use of social media analytic tools to collate the information presented in this report. The query upon which the Democracy\_2022 dashboard is based makes use of carefully curated keywords to capture as much of the conversation as possible. Keywords such as democracy, inequality, unemployment, social justice, human rights and freedom were used as a broad starting point. Each of the five focus areas have their own dashboards which consist of focus area specific keywords.

Content sources for the various dashboards include Twitter, Facebook, news publications and blogs. It is important to note that currently only South African content is being considered. For Twitter (the main content source) this means that only users who have selected South Africa as their location are being filtered through to the dashboard. According to *Datareportal's Digital 2022 report*, South Africa has 42.2 million internet users. Roughly 60% of South African internet users aged 16 to 64 use Twitter each month. Therefore the findings herein do not represent an exhaustive account of broader South African society and at best should be viewed as indicative of the nature of online conversations and narratives discussed. Twitter has outsized influence when compared to other social media platforms as most politicians have accounts and all media houses make extensive use of the platform, hence conversations on Twitter can and do move rapidly from Twitter to traditional media and other social media platforms. Hence, Twitter activity often serves as an early warning of what conversations and narratives may penetrate the broader societal ecosystem and become normative.

## Conversation volume and trends

During the reporting period, almost 357k mentions were created by more than 72k unique authors (figure 1). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 5 mentions. Total retweets stand at more than 205k, resulting in a retweet percentage of 57% for the conversation. This percentage is higher when compared to the previous bi-weekly report which had a retweet percentage of 48%. An increase in retweets is indicative of less individuals partaking in the conversation with their own thoughts, opting instead to retweet the views of others. A retweet percentage gives an indication as to how many original authors are contributing to the conversation and sharing their own ideas. Typically conversations with high retweet percentages represent a small number of unique authors who present only a handful of views on a particular topic. A high retweet percentage can cast doubt on the authenticity of a conversation as it could point to coordination by a group of tweeters to amplify specific content.

Mention volume for the conversation is dominated by individual accounts instead of organisational accounts like news houses or political parties (figure 2). The 13th of July represents a clear spike in the conversation. This coincides with President Cyril Ramaphosa's reaction to the National Assembly's section 194 inquiry on the suspended Public Protector, advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane. The contentious issue, and root cause of debate, is the fact that President Ramaphosa had suspended advocate Mkhwebane on 9 June 2022 whilst the Public Protector was investigating the CR17 campaign and its funding as well as Phala-Phala farm heist. The question being asked is, can a person who is being investigated, suspend the investigator?

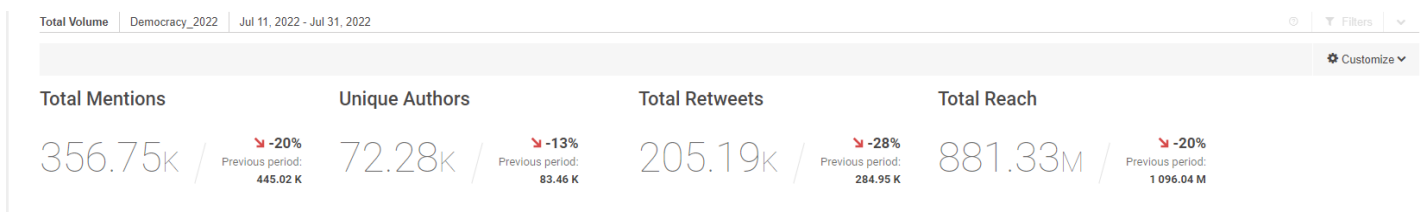


Figure 1: Total volume of Democracy conversation between 11 July and 31 July 2022.

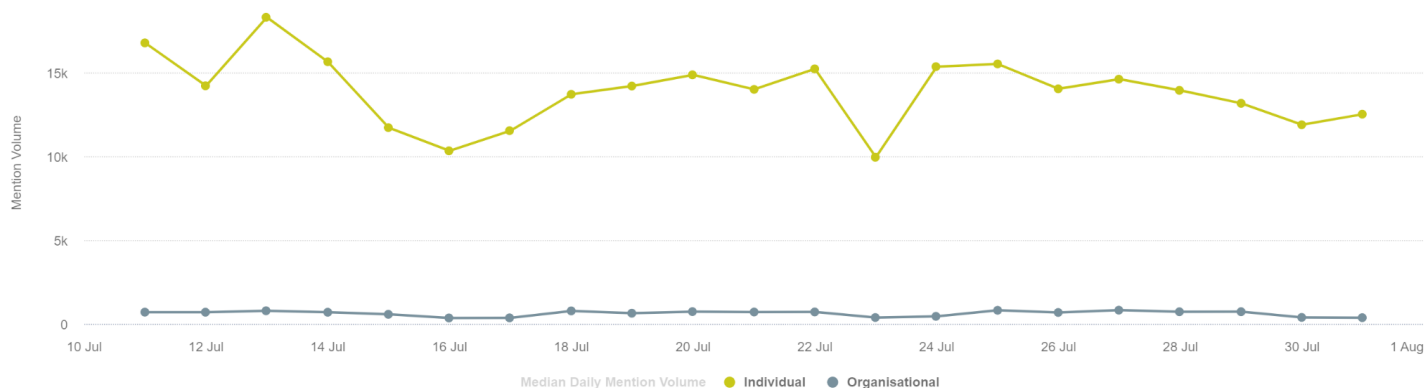


Figure 2: Mention volume by account type.

The number one trending topic and hashtag throughout this period was #BlackLivesMatter (figures 3 and 4), in some instances relating to Mandela Day celebrations on 18 July. It is also interesting to note that #BlackLivesMatter was often used alongside #CyrilMustResign, the latter being a trending hashtag at the beginning of the reporting period as seen in figure 3. Most importantly, however, it appears as though #BlackLivesMatter has inauthentic popularity over the reporting period, with multiple posts being shared and reshared from one main account. Other trending hashtags over the reporting period include #PhalaPhalaFarmGate, which has been a trending hashtag for the previous two biweekly reports. The longevity of this hashtag and the known anti-Ramaphosa sentiment associated with it is noteworthy as provincial ANC conferences continue to be held in the build up to the national conference in December. It is also interesting to note the reemergence of #CR17bankstatements once #CyrilMustResign has begun to fade (figure 3). This is most likely due to renewed interest in how president Ramaphosa funded his presidential campaign amidst his suspension of Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane.



Figure 3: Top 20 trending hashtags over the period.

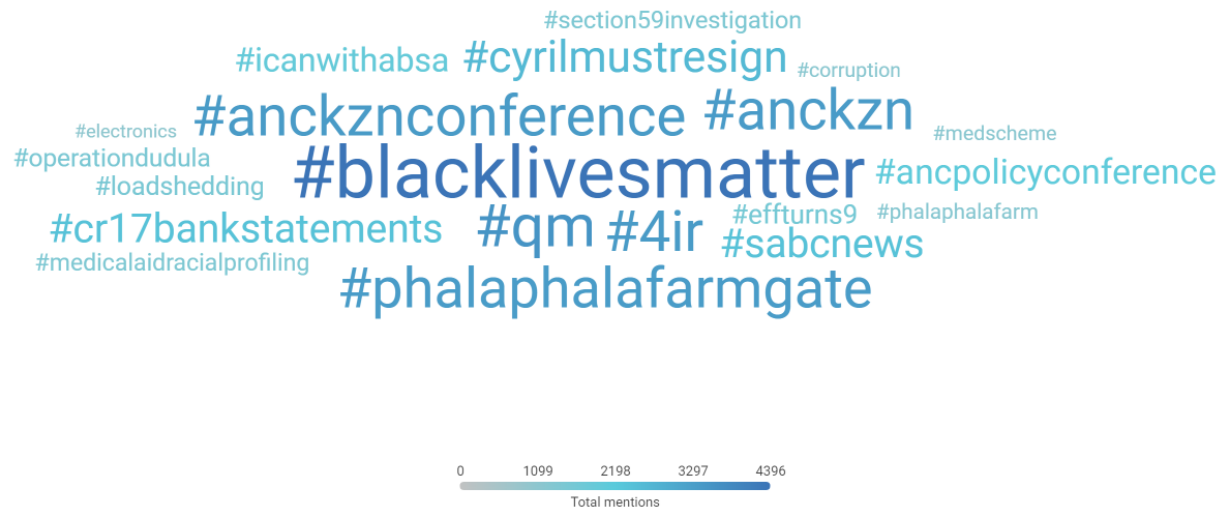


Figure 4: Top 20 hashtags according to total mentions.



<https://twitter.com/Alima1000/status/1548005413756358657>



Man's NOT Barry Roux  
@AdvoBarryRoux

...

Indeed Cyril Ramaphosa should relinquish power, his leadership has been nothing but a nightmare to south Africans he turned out to be the worst president in democratic South Africa as nothing is functioning under him. [#CyrilMustResign](#)

7:29 AM - Jul 14, 2022 - Twitter for iPhone

211 Retweets 9 Quote Tweets 808 Likes



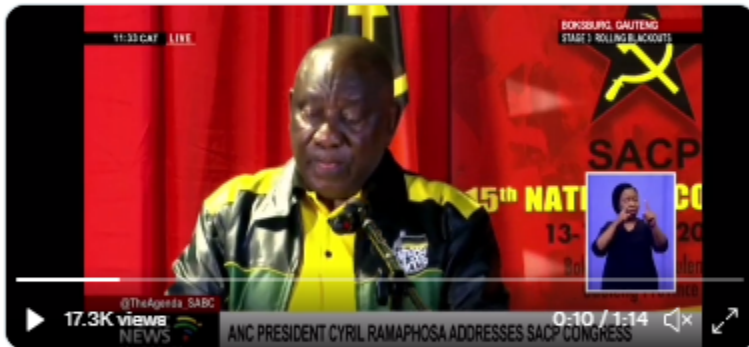
<https://twitter.com/AdvoBarryRoux/status/1547453131252015104>



Battalion 54  
@54Battalion

...

South Africa Mr [#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#) says he won't allow you to bully him, he'll continue doing his job fighting State Capture and Corruption. [#CyrilMustResign](#)



2:59 PM - Jul 15, 2022 - Twitter for Android

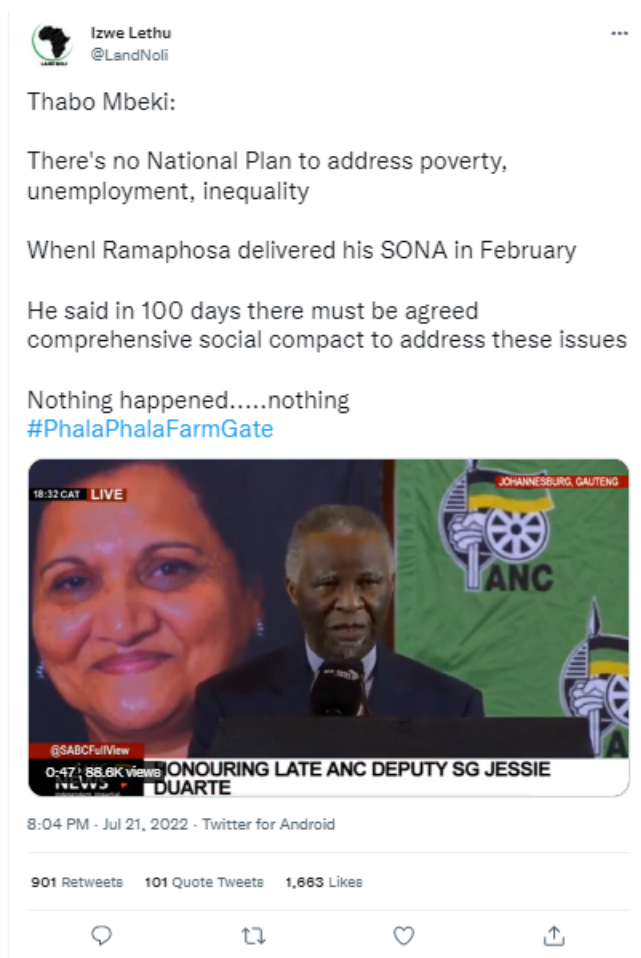
189 Retweets 84 Quote Tweets 377 Likes



<https://twitter.com/54Battalion/status/1547928845105242112>



<https://twitter.com/azania1023/status/1548359389962113028>



<https://twitter.com/LandNoli/status/1550179845161771008>





TK\_Nala  
@NalaThokozane

...

Ramaphosa:- I will not be deterred [by Arthur Fraser revelations], I will continue with doing my work.

His work:

- ⚡ Selling SAA
- ⚡ Eskom 2.0
- ⚡ High Fuel Prices
- ⚡ High Unemployment
- ⚡ High Sovereign Debt
- ⚡ Junk Status

Kwanele 🤔

#PhalaPhalaFarmGate  
#CR17BankStatements



12:30 PM - Jul 16, 2022 - Twitter for iPhone

253 Retweets 18 Quote Tweets 486 Likes



<https://twitter.com/NalaThokozane/status/1548253802330918914>



The biggest talking point over the reporting period was the recently held ANC Kwazulu Natal (KZN) provincial conference (from 22 July to 24 July). Two associated hashtags trended throughout and after the conference, namely #anckznconference and #anckzn. It is no secret that KZN is the ANC's largest province in terms of numbers and is also home to the Zuma-supporting RET forces. The conference culminated in the election of Siboniso Duma as the new ANC KZN Chairperson ahead of incumbent Sihle Zikalala, who would have backed Cyril Ramaphosa for ANC president re-election. Duma will now lead the province to the ANC's national conference and his election is a warning sign to Ramaphosa that he may not have KZN's support come December. The emergence and subsequent dominance of the Taliban faction within the ANC KZN conference is noteworthy. This faction is characterised by being youthful, having strong ties with provincial business forums, being pro-Zuma and unhappy with the current Ramaphosa-led national ANC leadership. In essence the Taliban faction is an extension/front of Zandile Gumede, the former executive mayor of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, who is currently under trial for corruption linked to the irregularities around a Durban solid waste tender worth over R320 million. The Taliban faction made a clean sweep of the ANC KZN leadership positions. The newly elected provincial secretary Bheki Mtolo made the Taliban faction's stance on the step aside rule clear when he said that it should be scrapped entirely and indicated that this stance would be taken to ANC's policy conference held between 29 and 31 July. The birth of yet another faction within the ANC is concerning but not surprising, as divisions between its members continue to grow with each conference. What the difference is between the RET and Taliban factions within the ANC remains to be seen.

The aforementioned ANC policy conference revolved around the renewal of the liberation movement, dealing with corruption and service delivery to the people of South Africa. A key take away from the conference was the fact that the movement's step aside policy, which calls for members who are currently facing criminal charges to step aside from their positions or to be suspended, still stands despite some members wanting it to be scrapped. The fact that the ANC is standing by its step aside rule is evidence that President Cyril Ramaphosa still has a strong position within the party despite its many factions.



Xubera Institute for Research and Development  
@xuberaird

...

The RET has no candidate that is contesting for the chairpersonship @ANCKZN

@MYANC @PresJGZuma @CyrilRamaphosa  
#CR17BankStatements Home Affairs  
Reserve Bank Mpofu Sihle Zikalala BREAKING NEWS



5:19 PM · Jul 21, 2022 · Twitter Web App

18 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 72 Likes



<https://twitter.com/xuberaird/status/1550138360311824384>



Philani Sikho  
@SikhoPhilani

...

The newly elected Provincial Chair, Sboniso Duma, of the ANC starts his reign with lies 🤡🤡🤡  
#ANCKZNconference



12:16 AM · Jul 24, 2022 · Twitter Web App

1,724 Retweets 769 Quote Tweets 6,167 Likes



<https://twitter.com/SikhoPhilani/status/1550968011401609218>



Izwe Lethu  
@LandNoli

...

KZN Chair Duma - Closing #ANCKZNconference:

We support Pres Zuma. Law is used to settle political scores

Zondo is no longer a judge, he's a political analyst or pushes an agenda.

Is democracy transformative noma iyasicindezela?  
Kufuneka iConstitution enikeza iMajority amandla.



11:22 AM · Jul 25, 2022 · Twitter for Android

926 Retweets 66 Quote Tweets 2,068 Likes



<https://twitter.com/LandNoli/status/1551498176020074497>

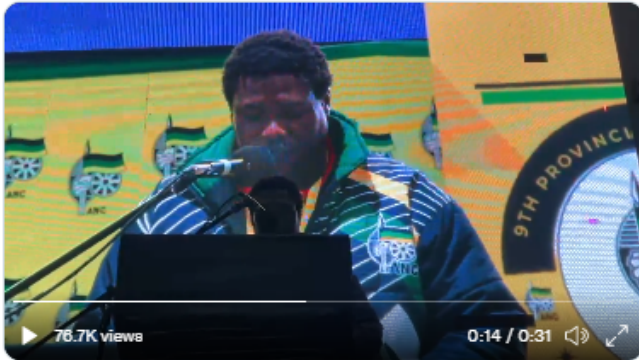


Kgothatso Madisa  
@kgmadisa

...

JUST IN | The ANC in KZN has officially adopted a position that step aside must not only be reviewed but must be scrapped entirely.

The newly elected provincial secretary Bheki Mtolo says this is what they will take to the policy conference next week. #ANCKZN



9:09 PM · Jul 24, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

474 Retweets 170 Quote Tweets 1,192 Likes



<https://twitter.com/kgmadisa/status/1551283470596464641>



Goolam  
@goolammv

...

The conference was a massive victory for Cyril Ramaphosa. As for the criminal RET, it's the end of the road. A victory for Cyril is a victory for South Africa and it's people. #ANCPolicyConference



5:15 PM · Jul 31, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

101 Retweets 30 Quote Tweets 678 Likes



<https://twitter.com/goolammv/status/1553761381199093760>



Izwe Lethu  
@LandNoli

Thembinkosi Nciza (ANC GP Sec):

Policy Conference must implement 2017 resolutions

1. State Bank, Health Ins. - not established
2. Land - Expropriation without compensation
3. SAA - why it went down?
4. Eskom - why unbunde, renewable focus & phase out coal? #ANCPolicyConference



9:00 AM · Jul 31, 2022 · Twitter for Android

393 Retweets 33 Quote Tweets 730 Likes



<https://twitter.com/LandNoli/status/1553636813956415490>



Thabani Mdletshe  
@Realthabanim

President Jacob Zuma's ideas are in the right hands.  
Radical Economic Transformation now.  
#ANCPolicyConference



8:21 PM · Jul 30, 2022 · Twitter for Android

77 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 477 Likes



<https://twitter.com/Realthabanim/status/1553445668651401218>

## **Conclusion**

South Africa's online democracy conversation between 11 July - 31 July 2022 was dominated by three main trending hashtags/topics. The first was related to the Phala Phala farm heist and the staying power of the negative sentiment towards President Cyril Ramaphosa as evidenced by the presence of #cyrilmustresign alongside #phalaphalafarmgate. The second, and most popular topic, revolved around the ANC's KZN provincial conference and the emergence and subsequent dominance of the Taliban faction during the associated elections. Similar to the RET faction, the Taliban are pro-Zuma and a front for Zandile Gumede, former executive major of the Ethekeweni Metropolitan Municipality, who is currently being investigated for corruption charges. The third trending topic involves the ANC's recent policy conference which confirmed the party's step aside rule for its members remains standing amidst calls for it to be scrapped by certain provincial departments.