



Bi-weekly Democracy Report

22/08/2022

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 1 August - 18 August 2022.

Research Methodology

The CABC made use of Brandwatch and other 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 move rapidly from Twitter to traditional media and other social media platforms. Even though only 15% of South Africans have twitter accounts, the site is still frequented by more than 50% of population, according to *World Wide Worx's Social Media Landscape 2022 report*. 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 294k mentions were created by more than 60k unique authors (figure 1). Every unique author therefore accounts for roughly 5 mentions. Total retweets stand at more than 174k, resulting in a retweet percentage of 59% for the conversation. This percentage is slightly higher when compared to the previous bi-weekly report which had a retweet percentage of 57%. 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 may point to coordination by a group of tweeters to amplify specific content.

Mention volume for the conversation is dominated by the *RET network and corruption* focus area followed by the *ANC elective conference* focus area (figure 2). The spike observed on 5th August represents a increase in conversation in the *ANC elective conference* focus area. At this time, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, acceded to a section 89(1) enquiry by the African Transformation Movement to impeach President Cyril Ramaphosa for violating the Constitution. The 8th of August represents a clear spike in the *RET network and corruption* focus area conversation. This coincides with former Public Protector Advocate Thuli Madonsela's comments on the Phala Phala farm theft in which she stated that it did not constitute corruption by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

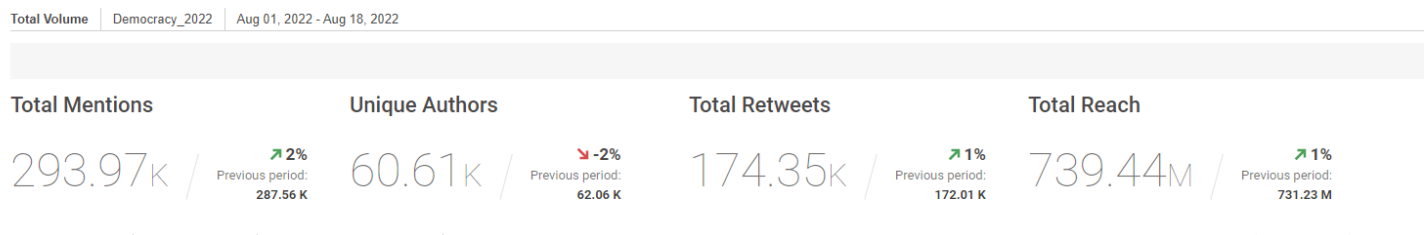


Figure 1: Total volume of Democracy conversation between 01 August and 18 August 2022.

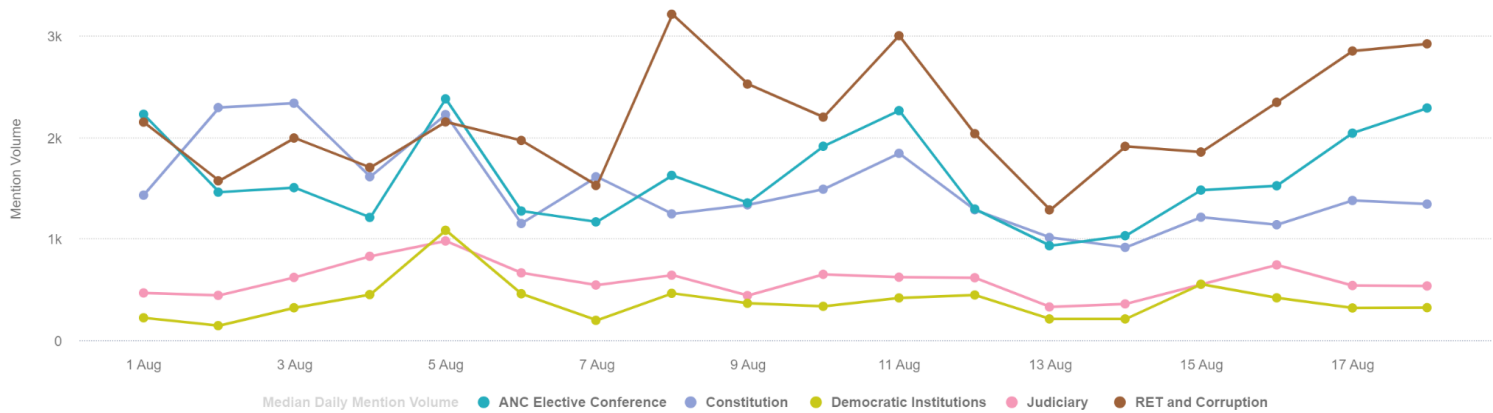


Figure 2: Mention volume by focus area.

Julius Sello Malema Retweeted

African Transformation Movement @ATMovement_SA

JUST IN
 The Speaker of the National Assembly has acceded to the s89(1) Enquiry of the ATM, to Impeach Prez Ramaphosa for violating the Constitution. The process as outlined in her letter will basically follow similar process as in case of the Public Protector.
#PhalaPhalaFarmGate




1:22 PM - Aug 5, 2022 - Twitter for Android

754 Retweets 73 Quote Tweets 1,929 Likes

https://twitter.com/Julius_S_Malema/status/1555542457051484163



Mzwanele Manyi 
@MzwaneleManyi

...

If Adv Thuli Madonsela cannot see the serious allegations of Tax Evasion, Money laundering & violation of Foreign Exchange as corruption, it's really regrettable.

Now that she has put her stake on the ground, she has disqualified herself for consideration as independent panelist.



8:43 PM · Aug 8, 2022 · Twitter for Android

521 Retweets 28 Quote Tweets 1,712 Likes



<https://twitter.com/MzwaneleManyi/status/1556712758984540162>

The number one trending topic and hashtag throughout this period was #PhalaPhalaFarmGate (figures 3 and 4), followed closely by the #KenyaDecides2022 hashtag. The latter refers to the recent Kenyan presidential elections held on the 9th of August in which Deputy President William Ruto was elected the new president of Kenya. It is interesting that the Kenyan presidential elections had a large share of voice within the South African democracy conversation. One potential explanation for this is that the elections were extensively covered by South Africa's major news houses i.e. the SABC [here](#), the Mail & Gaurdian [here](#) and the Daily Maverick [here](#). The third trending topic was #Tembisa, relating to violent protests held by the residents of the East Rand township in Gauteng. The cause of the protests which claimed the lives of four people is believed to be rising costs of electricity, rates and taxes. Complaints were also raised regarding the end of the free basic electricity package issued to residents each month. Calm was restored when Ekurhuleni Mayor, Tania Campbell, visited the area and stated that the city would not embark on disconnecting those residents who are in debt with the city for at least the next 90 days. She also stated that the threshold for qualifying disadvantaged families would be increased. Damages caused by the protests are estimated to be to the tune of millions of rands as stated [here](#).



Figure 3: Top 20 trending hashtags over the period.

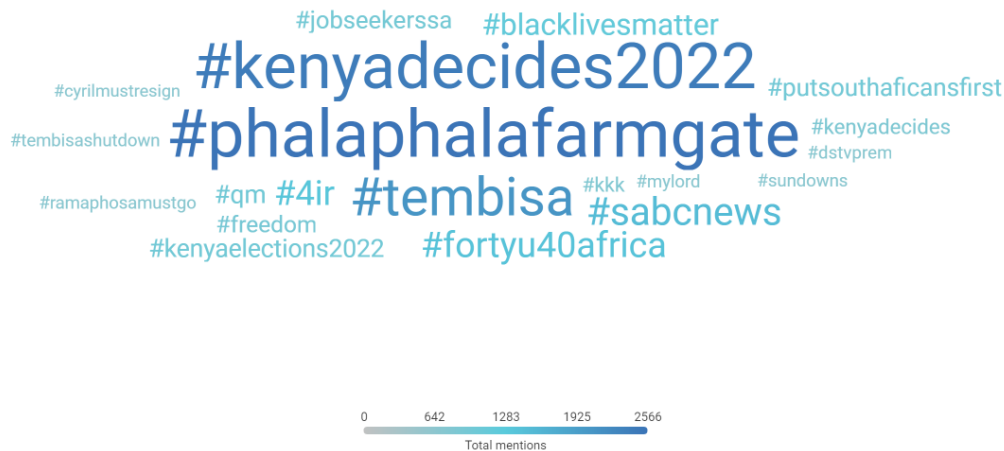


Figure 4: Top 20 hashtags according to total mentions.



<https://twitter.com/SABCNews/status/1556880619174518786>



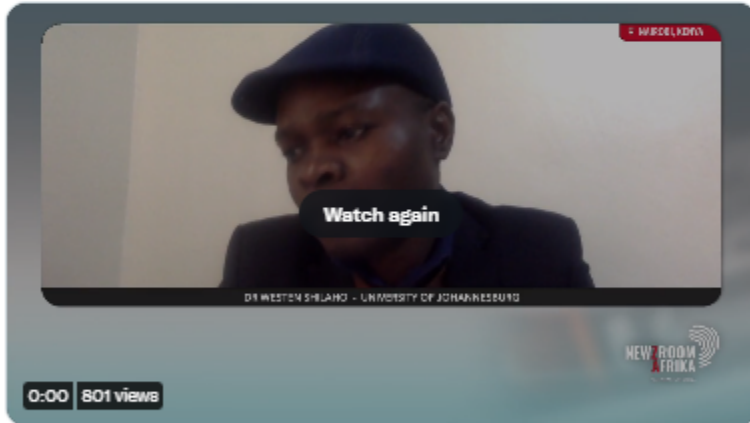
Newzroom Afrika
@Newzroom405

...

Polls have opened in Kenya as millions are set to elect a new president. This is the country's 7th general election since the resumption of multiparty electoral democracy 30 years ago. Dr Westen Shilaho weighs in.

Watch: bit.ly/3SAedmS

#Newzroom405 #KenyaDecides2022 🇰🇪



10:28 AM - Aug 9, 2022 - Twitter Web App

6 Retweets 9 Likes



<https://twitter.com/Newzroom405/status/1556920280278335491>



Tebza
@Aluta_Continua6

...

People who are complaining about the Protests don't even have a clue of the kind of issues we are facing here... I mean Electricity for R500 doesn't even last 4 days you let less than 60 units.... That's how bad it is..

[#Tembisa](#) [#Tembisashutdown](#)



11:09 AM - Aug 1, 2022 - Twitter for Android

696 Retweets 79 Quote Tweets 2,044 Likes



https://twitter.com/Aluta_Continua6/status/1554031437401231360



ANC is Evaporating!!!!
@MRSEROUS

...

Ikaneng substation on fire tomorrow they will be complaining about no electricity.
[#Tembisa](#)



10:07 AM - Aug 1, 2022 - Twitter Web App

82 Retweets 13 Quote Tweets 484 Likes



<https://twitter.com/MRSEROUS/status/1554015995915898880>



Vehicle Trackers
@VehicleTrackerz

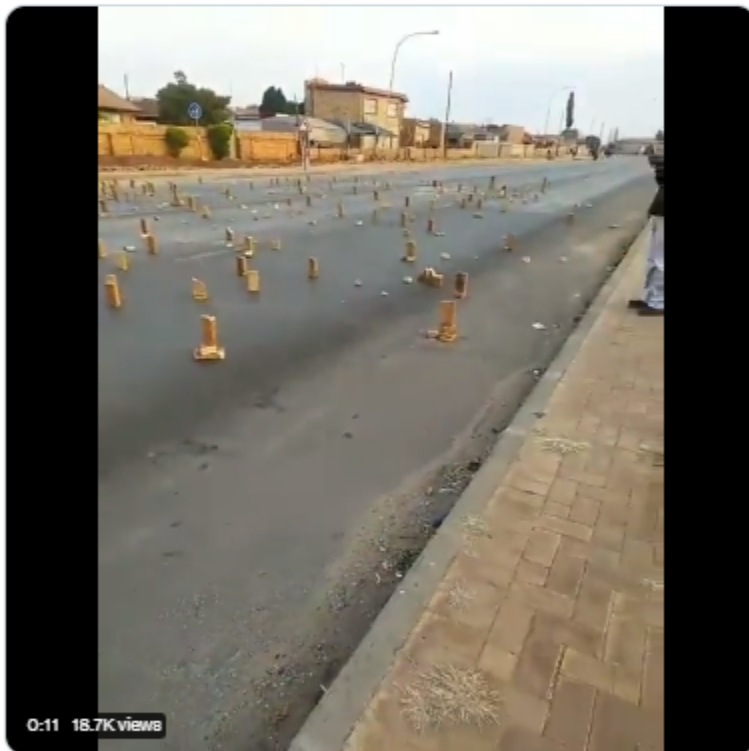
...

Angry residents have shutdown Tembisa, this after Ekurhuleni Mayor failed to meet the residents as promised

Reasons for the protest: high municipal rates & cutting off of electricity

The R21 #Tembisa has been blocked

#tembisashutdown



11:05 AM - Aug 1, 2022 - Twitter for Android

60 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 133 Likes



<https://twitter.com/VehicleTrackerz/status/1554030484669272065>

The main theme that dominated the reporting period was the threat of impeachment of President Cyril Ramaphosa due to the #PhalaPhalaFarmGate saga in which large sums of foreign currency were allegedly stolen from his private farm and not reported to SAPS. The attempted cover up of the robbery and details surrounding how the matter was dealt with has raised alarm bells on potential corruption (money laundering) involving the president. An independent panel, yet to be announced, will be tasked with assessing whether or not Ramaphosa violated his oath of office and potentially contravened the laws of the country by failing to report the incident.

Interestingly, #PhalaPhalaFarmGate (or an iteration thereof) has now been a trending hashtag for at least 10 weeks, appearing within the top 10 trending hashtags in each of the previous three bi-weekly reports released by the CABC. Initially appearing in our first bi-weekly report as #PhalaPhalaFarm and #PhalaPhalaGate, these iterations are the precursors to #PhalaPhalaFarmGate (blue) which dominated our second and third bi-weekly reports. The anti-Ramaphosa sentiment associated with these hashtags is clear and constant. In fact these hashtags have trended alongside #RamaphosaMustGo (pink), #CyrilRamaphosaMustGo, #SorryJacobZuma (yellow) and #CyrilMustResign (purple) (figure 5). The anti-Ramaphosa sentiment has remained topical over the last 10 weeks. A sustained anti-Ramaphosa sentiment is clear in the South African Twitter conversation. We are observing this trend with interest, particularly in the light of the upcoming ANC national elective conference in December 2022.

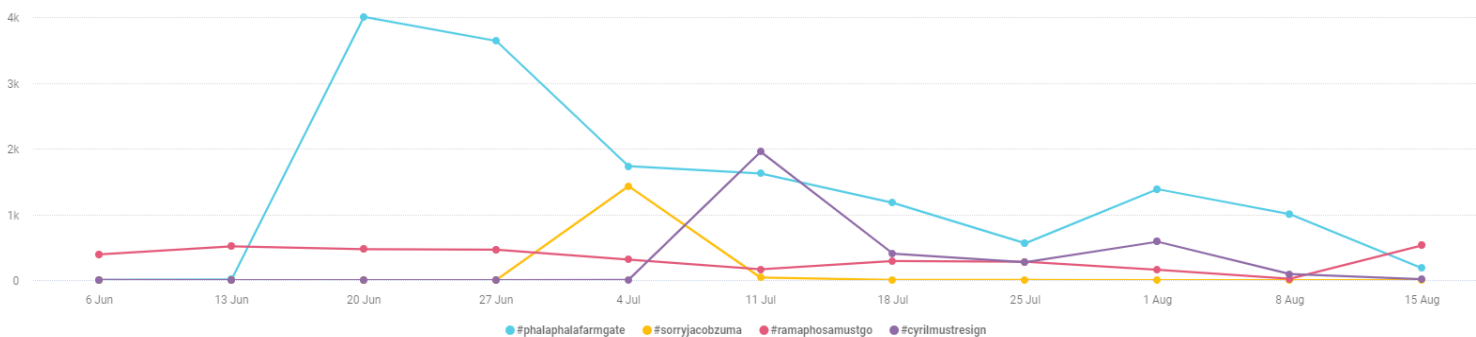


Figure 5: Mention volume of #PhalaPhalaFarmGate (blue), #SorryJacobZuma (yellow), #RamaphosaMustGo (pink) and #CyrilMustResign (purple) between 8 June and 18 August 2022.



Mzwanele Manyi ✓
@MzwaneleManyi

...

Dear Tweeps.
Please suggest 3 names (legal gurus) for the
Independent Panel that must assess that indeed
President Ramaphosa violated his Oath of Office by
failing to uphold, respect and defend the Constitution
& laws of the Republic of South Africa.
[#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#)

10:07 AM · Aug 7, 2022 · Twitter for Android

114 Retweets 44 Quote Tweets 411 Likes



<https://twitter.com/MzwaneleManyi/status/1556190305124229120>

Srini Naidoo (Real Democracy): It is inappropriate to refer to Ramaphosa as president after the crimes he has committed.

[#PhalaphalaFarmGate](#)



iol.co.za

Citizen's arrest of President Cyril Ramaphosa foiled during Women's Day event
Members of civil rights organisation Real Democracy, who had come to make a citizen's arrest of the president, were prevented by his security detail from ...

3:30 AM · Aug 16, 2022 · Echobox

207 Retweets 9 Quote Tweets 451 Likes



<https://twitter.com/IOL/status/1559351929435820032>

Adv Busisiwe Mkhwebane investigates the President's [#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#) for possible money laundering, while Prof Thuli Madonsela says the [#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#) wasn't corruption.

Pick your Public Protector !!

4:29 PM · Aug 8, 2022 · Twitter for Android

224 Retweets 11 Quote Tweets 615 Likes



<https://twitter.com/bongzmessi/status/1556648695784931330>



Princess
@Sisi_Sasha



Every single day during the “Zuma years” we were told about investors. We need the same updates on how investors are feeling about:

- The unemployment rate
- [#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#)
- Illegal immigrants
- The mass shootings/tavern deaths/rape
- Loadshedding

9:23 AM · Aug 7, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

106 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 276 Likes



https://twitter.com/Sisi_Sasha/status/1556179244669181953



Ngoako Kunta Kganakga
@kunta_j



I want to confess and apologize that there was a time when I held [@ThuliMadonsela3](#) in high regard as Public Protector! When she said what President [@CyrilRamaphosa](#) is accused of at [#PhalaPhalaFarmGate](#) is not corruption I felt sick to my stomach! 🤢🤢🤢

10:50 AM · Aug 8, 2022 · Twitter for Android

104 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 261 Likes



https://twitter.com/kunta_j/status/1556563563770253315

Conclusion

South Africa's online democracy conversation between 01 August - 18 August 2022 was dominated by three main themes. The recent Kenyan presidential elections, which saw Deputy President William Ruto become the President-elect, was among these three themes as it was extensively covered by South African media houses (SABC News and Newzroom Afrika amongst others). Another main theme revolved around the Tembisa protests which took place at the beginning of August. Residents of Tembisa made their feelings known with regard to electricity, rates and taxes costs in the township. The fatal protests are believed to have caused damages to the tune of millions of rands. The main theme and number one trending hashtag over the reporting period was directly related to the Phala Phala farm heist and the staying power of the negative sentiment towards President Cyril Ramaphosa as evidenced by the omnipresent #phalaphalafarmgate, which has been a top 10 hashtag for the last 10 weeks.