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IEC in Focus

The IEC's case, which seeks to remove former president Jacob Zuma from the MK Party candidate list due to his criminal record, dominated the online elections conversations between 2 and 15 April 2024.

According to a new report by the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC), the conversation received more than 300,000 mentions during the period. Two peaks were recorded on 9 and 12 April, the former related to the Electoral Court ruling to include Zuma on the MK Party list and the latter related to the IEC's decision to appeal the ruling.

Despite acting within its mandate, the IEC is being criticised by some members of the public and political figures such as Floyd Shivambu, who accused the commission of playing politics.

Overview

- Among the most retweeted posts was an X user who criticised others for reading a thread containing 30 posts, but not being able to channel the same energy into reading political party manifestos. This post received more than 4,000 likes and was reposted by more than 1,500 accounts. Responses to this post ranged from users stating that manifestos were not interesting enough to read; that they roughly focused on the same issues (jobs, housing, etc.) and that parties seldom delivered on their promises.
- Our continued reporting on the election conversation has shown that while there is a general anti-ANC sentiment that stems from dissatisfaction with how the governing party runs the country (issues such as load shedding and corruption are the most prevalent), there is also a "Who do we vote for?" sentiment from users who cannot decide which party best aligns with their values and priorities.
- Some individuals have expressed being "anxious" over the country's uninterrupted power supply, with load shedding being at bay for 21 [days](#) as of 15 April. The general sentiment is that load shedding is used for electioneering and will return after election day.

- In relation to e-tolls, some noted that there was a sense of irony in the celebration of the scrapping of something the government itself had implemented in prior [administrations](#). Furthermore, others expressed concern that no reference was made to civil society movements, particularly [OUTA](#), which effectively led and mobilised action against e-tolls [\(1\)](#) ; [\(2\)](#) ; [\(3\)](#) ; [\(4\)](#) ; [\(5\)](#) ; [\(6\)](#) ; [\(7\)](#).
- President Cyril Ramaphosa received backlash after telling an unemployed young lady (who said she was a communications graduate) to keep searching for a job, while on the campaign trail in Orange Farm. Sentiment in relation to this incident was predominantly negative, bolstered by a *Sowetan* headline which read “president dashed my hopes”: [\(1\)](#) ; [\(2\)](#) ; [\(3\)](#) ; [\(4\)](#) ; [\(5\)](#).

IEC

- Under the broader conversation directed toward the IEC, the CABG has detected attacks and criticisms against the IEC and an IEC Commissioner, Janet Love, in particular.
 - The MK Party called for Janet Love to resign from the IEC - stating that she is biased toward the party and a close ally of President Cyril Ramaphosa: [\(1\)](#) ; [\(2\)](#). Notably, the commissioner was [appointed](#) to the IEC by former President Jacob Zuma.
- Alongside the MK Party calling for her resignation, a variety of accounts have begun to mobilise against the commissioner. These narratives related to, among others, a previous call made by opposition parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who had accused the commissioner of legitimising a fraudulent election in the [country](#).
 - This took place against the backdrop of the 2023 Congo-Kinshasa general election which has been described as [shambolic](#) and [contested](#) and was characterised by [electoral disputes](#) and [violence](#). Commissioner Love denied the accusations made against her by Congolese opposition parties. It is this context that is being highlighted by accounts online.
- A common sentiment across the posts alleged that the commissioner had been deployed as a “secret weapon” by Cyril Ramaphosa to steal the election: [\(1\)](#) ; [\(2\)](#) ; [\(3\)](#) ; [\(4\)](#)
 - The [IEC](#) has reportedly responded (see [News24 article](#)) to the calls for Janet Love’s resignation. The IEC stated that the commission is impartial and that their decision to approach the constitutional court off the back of the electoral court’s decision to permit former president Zuma to contest the 2024 general election was to seek clarity on the electoral court’s decision, which had been issued without reasoning (for a deeper analysis see “[Zuma Candidacy](#)” - Daily Maverick).
 - Furthermore, EFF deputy president Floyd Shivambu has chastised the leadership of the IEC, including the commissioner, for ostensibly “[playing politics](#)”.

- Key narratives relating to the IEC’s decision to refer the Zuma matter to the Constitution Court include:
 - A series of posts sought to make the case that judgements from the electoral court are final and cannot be appealed to the constitutional court. These were predominantly from MK Party aligned accounts or accounts which sought to make the case that former President Zuma was being unfairly targeted: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4).
 - Posts claimed that the IEC and Constitutional Court were working together to ensure that Zuma would not be on the ballot: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4).
 - We’ve noted a [perspective](#) that suggested that the IEC’s appeal to the constitutional court may threaten peace and security during the election period.

Election Manipulation Claims

- The CABC has noted three high-engagement posts which spoke to threats of internal election manipulation:
 - [EFF Leader Julius Malema](#) alleged that load-shedding would be used as a tool to disrupt the counting of ballots and rig the election.
 - [Andile Mngxitama](#) referred to the need for MK party agents to be present at every voting station to ensure the votes are not rigged.
 - An anonymous account, ‘[Soldiers of MK Party](#)’, posted text and an image from December 2022 which states that Cyril Ramaphosa has set aside R60 million to bribe provincial commissioners and the IEC to rig the elections.
- Further claims of foreign interference in the election were also detected:
 - A [high-traction](#) post contained disinformation which alleged that the ANC had been notified by the CIA that the EFF was set to win the general election and that this would not be a desirable outcome for the country.
 - The CABC noted content related to Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) and the IEC’s initiative to tackle [mis- and disinformation](#) during the election. An account posted numerous threads alleging that MMA and the IEC are funded as part of a “globalist” agenda to influence opinion in the country: (1) ; (2) ; (3).

Mis- and Disinformation

- We’ve noted ongoing attempts to shut down opinions that do not align with the pro-MK agenda. Individuals who criticise the party or former President Jacob Zuma are subjected to online vitriol. Former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela was targeted by the use of false and derogatory imagery, (1) ; (2) ; (3), accusing her of being a CIA agent, (1) ; (2) ; (3), and ally of the apartheid regime, (1) ; (2).

Read the full report here:

Please email info@cabc.org.za for more information.

About the CABC

The Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC) is a non-profit organisation. It was established to track and counter mis- and disinformation, fake news and divisive and polarising rhetoric promulgated online to undermine social cohesion, democratic integrity, and the stability of nation-states.