



AZAPO

AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

TO: ELECTORAL REFORM CONSULTATION PANEL
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FROM: AZAPO SECRETARY GENERAL

DATE: OCTOBER 28, 2024

SUBJECT: AZAPO ELECTORAL REFORM PROPOSALS

1. Preamble

Elections are, by definition, regarded as the most democratic process within which the will of the people can be tested, in line with the principle of universal adult suffrage. Determination to ensure that elections are independent, free and fair accentuate their credibility prospects.

To better improve credibility prospects and ensure sovereign safeguards for the exercise of the right to vote, free of financial interests investing in an electoral process for the returns of directing public policy, elections should be funded from the fiscus.

To solidify the oneness of the nation and the singularity of the country, the geographic configuration should steer clear of the nine-province formula and its last born cousin, Orania, all of which have a disturbing resonance with the ethnicization and balkanization of our country and its people with echoes of the tribal homeland reserves that not only cemented land dispossession of the majority but also as devise to solidify the rule of divide, rule and conquer.

Because elections are about acquisition and retention for the exercise of public power and the means towards control, they tend to be mostly contested and at times deadly. This contestation can both be overt and covert. The covert part happens to be dangerous as it involves illicit means to direct the desired outcomes, which often are not the will of the people and a contributory factor to financing the hands that pull the trigger in assassinations.

This is more common in third world countries as the first world countries are the prime drivers of covert operations that add unsavoury dimension to predetermine electoral outcomes. Africa has been, and continues to be, the backbone upon which Europe and the West developed their countries to first world status. It is therefore not surprising that the scramble for Africa will continue for as long as the African natural resources are necessary for Europe and Western development. This scramble, coupled with neo-

colonial precepts, will drive the programme of wishing to decide the types of government African countries elect.

It is against these factors that poor countries are prone to coup de tat, internal wars, unfairly biased media, rigged elections, intimidation, instability, corrupt practices and other nefarious tendencies. This tends to seeing people losing faith in the electoral process convinced that the bullet - for which the hidden and guiding financial corporate hands are just as culpable - is the better option than the ballot.

It is for these reasons that due care should be encouraged for the electoral process to have necessary checks and balances to eliminate underhanded schemes that muddy the election process.

2. Unitary State

AZAPO rises from the premise that South Africa/Azania is a unitary state. This premise presupposes a firm opposition to balkanization and creation of semi-autonomous governance with a ring of divisive ethnic reserves.

AZAPO is opposed to the legislative and administrative legs of provincial governance. This country is over governed and given its limited resources and few number of citizens, it can do more with less public representatives and officials.

India has a population of over a billion people yet in her two houses, Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, has a public representation of a maximum 250 and 550 respectively.

AZAPO holds that the country can do away with the legislative and government legs in the provinces. Having abolished provincial governance, the country could efficiently experience centrally and locally run arms of government.

3. The head of State and government

Being the embodiment of the nation, the head of State is representative of all the people of the country irrespective of the party he / she represents or may come from and thus merits to be directly elected by voters. The head of state should thus not be beholden to the party as his/her constituency is a united nation within a unitary State over which s/he presides by the oath to the highest office. The head of State shall also be the head of government, in other words AZAPO calls for an executive and not ceremonial head of State.

To achieve this goal, it becomes imperative that the head of State be directly elected by the entire nation and not by a party-centric system in which a few representatives in parliament exercise this right on behalf of the nation.

AZAPO therefore calls for direct election of the head of State. This approach will free the head of state from deploying only his/her party acolytes in government but will have the latitude to appoint men and women of character and skillful for the purpose.

4. Dual and inclusive system

AZAPO believes that every vote counts, and for that reason, both the constituency based as well as the proportional representation mechanism must find expression in the electoral process. All the votes cast must ensure representation and a fair balance between the two methods of election.

South Africa / Azania should be demarcated into two hundred regions or constituencies in line with demographics and spatial planning.

The seats in parliament should be four hundred to be populated as follows:

- ✓ Two hundred MPs elected on constituency basis;
- ✓ Two hundred MPs elected on proportional representation basis by political parties.

The constituencies shall be contested by both political parties and individual independent candidates.

There shall be only one house of parliament, the national Assembly. AZAPO believes that a unicameral parliament will be best suited for our country. The Constitution shall also require amendment to do away with the current set-up of two houses as well as the provincial governance.

5. Voting Process

There shall be three national ballots which shall be:

- One for the direct election of the head of state;
- One for the constituency base, which shall confine the voter to that constituency within which he/she is registered;
- The proportional ballot with all the parties contesting elections.

6. Electoral Logistics

The electoral process shall be conducted by an independent body, whose independence must be jealously guarded. The integrity of this body is paramount to ensure confidence in the process and to also guarantee fair participation.

The parties or candidates participating in the elections must meet the basic legal requirements as determined.

7. Registration

Political parties and independent candidates must be duly registered as such.

The registration fee to contest election must be nominal and affordable. Elections must never be made elitist and out of reach of ordinary poor. The registration fee must therefore not be a fund-raising mechanism for the IEC. Elections and the budget thereof must be from the public purse. Participation in the elections must be on the strength of support and membership. If a party can demonstrate registered membership or general public support (through signatures of registered voters) beyond the threshold of a single seat such party must be allowed to participate against payment of a nominal registration fee. This provision should be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to independent candidates.

8. Party funding

AZAPO believes that the Political Party Funding Act has limitations and needs to be amended to provide the following:

- Direct donations to political parties must be abolished and replaced with a system where donations to political parties are channeled to a common purse administered by the IEC.
- These funds are to be distributed on a threshold of fifty percent divided equally among all registered and eligible contestants with the remaining fifty percent allocated proportionately in line with the final election results and representation in the National Assembly.

This approach will ensure non-partisan influence and interference with the desired outcomes of the elections. It will also give political contestants an equitable footing in contesting the elections.

This does not suggest that internal fundraising is discouraged. This is aimed at limiting the undesired interference by external funders / donors.

9. Voter education

In this country we have seen communities either boycotting elections or preventing others from participating in elections over one or other grievances the community may have. This talks to poor understanding of what elections are about and the power of the electorate to secure representative and responsive power to minister to the will of the people for societal well-being.

To ensure a responsive government AZAPO calls for the principle of active participation and recall. This means that the electorate must have the power to recall an MP who is either ineffective or is mired in malfeasance, accused of negligence, corruption and any conduct that is not worthy of the public office elected to.

The IEC should have a budget for genuine voter education which runs throughout and not only during elections but also in between. The consciousness of the public and the voters should be such that voting is deemed sacrosanct and the necessity of democracy.

10. Vote monitoring

The IEC should invest in technological research and be able to improve on how elections are conducted to ensure efficacy and easier counting methods with preferred homegrown expertise to the acquisition and deployment of such skills pertaining to running independent, free, fair and credible elections.

Nothing stops the IEC from implementing a dual system of electronic voting and physical ballot. This will help with the tally of the votes and eliminate any accusations of ballots not counted or votes discounted. The integrity of the IEC should be beyond reproach.

11. Electoral cycle

The electoral cycle shall be every five years.

END

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