

Crackdown on political violence

With the [general elections](#) on 7 May less than two weeks away, Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa says law enforcement agencies will increase their presence in a number of communities that are often plagued by political violence.

"Our task as the Security Cluster this time is to look into the issue of safety for the communities and do away with hotspots and no-go zones," Mthethwa told *SAnews* in an interview on Thursday.



(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

"We want to see to it that there won't be any no-go areas in South Africa," he said. Earlier on Wednesday, Mthethwa was joined by several other ministers from the Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster as he visited the so-called hotspot areas in Cape Town to assess the communities' readiness for the election.

"We are sending a warning to would-be disruptors that we are not going to be friendly to them when they disrupt a very important national duty," Mthethwa said, referring to the 7 May poll.

It will be South Africa's fifth general election since 1994 and will be symbolic in many respects as it coincides with the country's [20 years of freedom and democracy](#).

South Africa's centuries-long white minority rule ended in April 1994 when the majority black people voted for a democratic government led by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.

Since 1994, government and civil society have notably worked on promoting a multiparty democracy and political freedom which is guaranteed in the country's constitution. But political violence in some parts of the country had threatened to weaken South Africa's democracy which has become the model of the African continent.

This probably explains the government's push to ensure the upcoming elections are free of any political conflict and disruption as predicted by some. Police leadership has found that these identified hotspots are characterised by intra and inter political contestation and include the areas particularly in periods leading to elections.

Cape Town is ready

"We have come a long way as country. We will not allow a few individuals to disrupt us from ensuring that these elections are free of any violence of any kind," Mthethwa said.

Government wanted to ensure that South Africa's citizens exercised their democratic right to vote in a peaceful, free and fair environment, he said.

After a meeting with Western Cape's police leadership, the minister said he was pleased with Cape Town's readiness for the elections.

"I am satisfied that when the day comes, we are going to have a successful election free of any conflict and it will be free and fair. I am satisfied with the readiness of our personnel on the ground."

On Wednesday, the entourage included ministers of security, defence, international relations and cooperation, correctional services as well as local police leadership and government officials.

The delegation made stops at townships like Khayelitsha, Manenberg, Phillippi and Tafelsig where informal discussions were



Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa:
"We want to see to it that there
won't be any no-go areas in
South Africa." (Image: GCIS)

held with residents and community leaders. The ministers also spoke to people on the streets regarding their concerns about crime, gangsterism and drug abuse. Residents in all the visited areas had the issues of crime, drug abuse and gangsterism on their list of concerns.

Meanwhile, Acting GCIS CEO and Cabinet spokesperson Phumla Williams took part in a live radio programme targeting community radio stations across the country. The two-hour programme focused on the country's 20 years of freedom and what it meant for South Africans.

Public invited to SA's birthday celebrations

South Africans across the country are invited to join in the celebrations of its official birthday of [20 Years of Freedom](#).

April marks the Freedom Month to commemorate the historic occasion in 1994 when South Africa achieved democracy.

South Africa will on the [27 April 2014](#) celebrate Freedom Day at the Union Buildings under the theme: "South Africa - A Better Place to live in".

"April is a special month in the South Africa's calendar. This Freedom Month is an opportunity for South Africans to share their stories, experiences and progress we have made as a young nation since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

"As government we call all citizens to join-hands and celebrate this significant occasion," said Phumla Williams, the Acting CEO of GCIS.

The 20 Years of Freedom celebrations are taking place against the backdrop of the fifth [national and provincial elections](#) on 7 May 2014.

The first democratic elections in South Africa were held on 27 April 1994. It marked the dawn of a new phase of building a South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it.

"We acknowledge that the freedom we celebrate today was not free. We therefore, make a plea to all South Africans to honour our hard fought freedom by voting on 7 May 2014, we especially encourage the young and first-time voters to exercise their democratic right by taking part in the upcoming country's fifth election," said Acting CEO Williams.

Freedom Day proceedings will reflect on highlights and achievements of the last 20 years. The programme will start with the interfaith prayer at Freedom Park on Sunday morning.

The [National Orders](#) ceremony will follow the Freedom Day celebrations in the afternoon at the Presidential Guesthouse. The National Orders are the highest awards that a country can bestow on its citizens or eminent foreigners. As a result of the 20 year celebrations, more people will be honoured this year.

"All citizens are invited to respond to the call and join the interfaith prayer for this beautiful land of ours," said Acting CEO Williams.