# South Africa's General Election: ANC Faces Unprecedented Challenge



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On May 29, 2024, South Africans went to the polls for a general election predicted to be the most critical since the end of apartheid in 1994. The African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party since the first democratic elections led by Nelson Mandela, is facing its toughest challenge to date. Widespread dissatisfaction with the country's direction has put the ANC's majority at risk, potentially requiring them to form a coalition government for the first time.

Polling stations opened at 7 a.m. local time, and millions of citizens flocked to cast their votes. South Africa employs a proportional representation system where citizens vote for political parties rather than individual presidential candidates. This year, 31 parties are vying for votes. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has facilitated the election process, managing a record 27.79 million registered voters.

South Africa's persistent issues include high unemployment rates, economic stagnation, corruption, power cuts, and escalating violent crime. These problems are particularly felt by Black South Africans, who constitute 81% of the population. Disenfranchisement within this majority is coupled with disillusionment among the youth, who face bleak job prospects despite higher education levels.

ANC leader and President Cyril Ramaphosa, voting in Soweto, a symbolic location given its historic significance in the struggle against apartheid, expressed optimism. He reiterated his belief that the ANC would retain the public's confidence. However, pre-election polls indicated the ANC's support had dwindled to below 50%, a significant drop from 57.5% in the last election.

Opposition parties, including the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), have seized on this discontent, urging voters to seek change. DA leader John Steenhuisen addressed supporters in Benoni, expressing confidence that the ANC's longstanding dominance was nearing an end. Former ANC President Jacob Zuma's new party, uMkhonto weSizwe, also contested, despite Zuma himself being barred from running for parliament.

With counting underway, final results are expected by Sunday. The outcome could reshape the political landscape as the ANC grapples with potentially forming a coalition to maintain governance.