

## **Numbers Vote in Thokoza, Makhanda Townships Experience Low Morale but Face Problems**

By Viwe Mazwana and Anelisa Bentele

### *Thokoza Cast Votes*

Millions of South Africans of all ages, if they were eligible to vote, flocked to the voting stations to cast their votes, unfazed by long queues and the cold weather, with determination to make their voices heard. The 2024 elections marked a historic milestone in South Africa. These elections are seen as the most important and contested since 1994.

On 29 May 2024, the day of the vote, people from different sections of Thokoza, East of Johannesburg, also queued for hours to make their choices, as did other South Africans countrywide. The voting started smoothly in the morning with no mishaps taking place. The vote to decide the parties that will form the seventh parliament since the dawn of democracy in Mzansi saw a huge number of youths participating, with first-time voters in Thokoza eager to make their mark as early as 7 AM. Some young women even brought their small children along to mark this historical moment.

Despite efforts by electoral officers and security personnel to ensure a smooth voting process, elections in Thokoza faced many challenges including violence, intimidation and damage to property, which resulted in injuries and trauma to many voters.

The first problem of the day arose after many voters were turned away from voting, due to Section 24 (a) Electoral Amendment, which says a voter may nominate a voting station outside of their Voting District only if they notified the Electorate Commission of South Africa in advance. This issue caused challenges as many voters claimed they'd voted outside their registered districts before.

"The new changes were not communicated clearly, this really deprived me of my right to vote," said Masibonge Nodada, who was turned away.

Before midday, queues were moving slowly, with IEC officials having problems with the new device that was introduced to make the process of voting go faster. This issue caused people to wait for up to five hours in queues, "I arrived at Mohlodi Primary School around 10 AM and I only voted around 2 PM," said Thando Mkhwanazi .

As the 9 PM cut-off time approached, a lot of people were still in queues waiting to cast their votes, some of them had been waiting for more than five hours. The Fire Station voting district ward 52 in Thokoza closed at 9 PM, despite information saying people who were already in the queues should be allowed to vote even after 9 PM. This decision caused panic and frustration, "People started chanting and banging windows out of fear of not voting even after waiting for so long," explained Nolubabalo Nzima.

Post elections has been an even greater disappointment, allegations of electoral fraud have now surfaced during the counting of ballots. Observers and party agents reported several issues, including ballot boxes being tampered with and unauthorised people accessing the ballots. Although the IEC has promised to do a thorough investigation into the matter, the integrity of these elections is now tarnished.

The incidents in Thokoza serve as a harsh reminder of the challenges that South Africa faces in its democratic journey. As the country reflects on the 2024 elections, it is important

to address these issues and work towards creating an easier, safer, and more transparent voting environment.

### *Ward 9 Nombulelo Voting Experience*

For the past years, National Elections Day has always been rainy but on 29 May 2024, it was sunny, the queues were not that long in the townships but very long in town, in the past, you would stand in the queue to cast your vote for hours even in the location this year it is different. South Africans are tired, only about 600 voters went out to at Ward 9 (Nombulelo), in Makana, to cast their vote, not even half of the expected voters.

In the past years during national elections, one didn't need to go back to the town, she registered in but in these elections, if one did not re-register at local IEC office for one's corresponding new voting station, one would not be eligible to vote. Several voters were turned away from stations.

One of those turned away, Linda Ncibi, said, "I was dismissed for voting because I appeared in a voting station that is in East London, I am so hurt I wanted to cast my vote." The middle class always makes sure they go out and vote but the lower classes tend to stay at home because of a loss of hope in political parties.

"I won't be voting, I see no point of [sic] doing so, I am unemployed why should I then vote?" said Lonwabo Vazi.

Political parties and activists have a big role to play bring awareness to citizens about the importance of voting.

Lutho Deliwe said, "This year that I was interested in voting, I misplaced my ID. It would have been my first time to vote. I was excited." A lot of voters tend to be interested in voting at the last minute.

In Makhanda, Eastern Cape, the ANC won the elections, the DA took second place while the EFF came in at third. Political parties will evaluate the results in preparation for local elections in 2026.

*This article is an amalgum of various submissions by FAJs around Gauteng. The various articles were submitted on 3 and 4 June 2024. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*