

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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The interviews for the new National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) conclude on 11 December, marking a key step in the process to appoint one of the key figures leading the fight against crime and corruption in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) holds its National General Council (NGC), in which it is confirmed that President Cyril Ramaphosa (2018-present) remains safe at the helm of the party and that the ANC's 2027 leadership election remains wide open. The United States (US) refuses to invite South Africa to the first Sherpas meeting of the next G20 cycle, indicating that South Africa-US relations are not improving.

Interviews for new head prosecutor underway

The interviews for the **National Prosecuting Authority's (NPA) new National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP)** [concluded](#) on 11 December, marking a key step in process to appoint one of the key figures leading the fight against crime and corruption in South Africa. Incumbent NDPP **Shamila Batohi** [is set to retire](#) on 27 January after she turns the mandatory retirement age of 65 years old. Notably, Batohi will be the first NDPP to leave under normal conditions, such as retirement or completing the ten-year term. No NDPP has completed a full year term since the NPA was constituted in 1998, underscoring the extent to which the position has been plagued by political interference and controversy over the past 27 years.

Batohi has had mixed success at the helm of the NPA. Her tenure was primarily focused on rebuilding the NPA as an institution after several years of political interference and state capture, which had fundamentally weakened the entity. In this regard, she has had some success both in depoliticising the NPA and strengthening the organisation's institutions. Among the most noteworthy achievements was the creation of the **Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC)** – a unit within the NPA focused on investigating and prosecuting public sector corruption and state capture matters.

Although Batohi's term as the NDPP did result in numerous high-profile corruption charges being filed, as yet, there have been no successful major high-profile prosecutions and convictions. This will leave a mark on Batohi's legacy, as the public's trust in the NPA is dependent on the authorities' ability to successfully prosecute such matters. Accordingly, Batohi's successor faces high public expectations to secure such convictions.

The process to select the NDPP has already been marred by some controversy and criticism. This includes the fact that President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present) left the process of identifying and selecting a new NDP late. Public interviews have taken place only a calendar month before the new appointee must take office, giving the impression that the process has been rushed and that there has been insufficient transparency and thoroughness.

Underscoring this is the fact that former NDPP **Menzi Simelane** [was included](#) in the short list of six candidates who were interviewed by the selection panel. Former president **Jacob Zuma** (2009-2018) appointed Simelane as NDPP, but the constitutional court invalidated this appointment in 2012 over prima facie findings of dishonesty against Simelane. The fact that he was included in the short list is concerning, given his controversial past, the court finding of dishonesty, and the fact that he was Zuma's chosen NDPP candidate – Zuma was arguably the central figure who drove state capture corruption in South Africa during his presidency. Former IDAC head **Hermione Cronje** (another NDPP candidate) has also accused Simelane of undermining the NPA during his stint as NDPP,

including allowing political interference in the organisation. Cronje has noted that he was central to fatally weakening the initial corruption investigation into Zuma's role in the 2009 arms deal scandal. Simelane is unlikely to be selected as the NDPP, but his presence on the short list is concerning, as it indicates that the process has been deeply flawed.

The short list of candidates includes. Simelane, Cronje, IDAC head **Andrea Johnson**, Western Cape Province director of public prosecutions, **Nicolette Bell**, Western Cape deputy director of public prosecutions, **Adrian Mopp**, and the **Global Coalition to Fight Financial Crime** chair, **Xolisile Khanyile**.

Khanyile is [widely perceived](#) as the preferred candidate of Ramaphosa and his **African National Congress (ANC)** party; notably, one of her references was from deputy finance minister (and senior ANC member) **David Masondo**. She is the former director of public prosecution in **Free State Province** and a former director of the **Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC)**. Her appointment would indicate that the government wants to prioritise the prosecution of financial crimes, and her supporters have touted her supposed role in helping remove South Africa from the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** grey list. However, her detractors claim that Khanyile played a negligible role, and the **National Treasury** entirely drove the effort to get off the list. She has also not been a prosecutor since 2017, which has raised concerns about her ability to understand the needs of the position and drive institutional reform in the NPA.

Although Khanyile is the most likely candidate to be selected as NDPP, there is a strong possibility that there will be a legal challenge to whoever is appointed, given the shortcomings in the process and the politically sensitive nature of the NDPP as an office. The opposition **Democratic Alliance (DA)** has already [indicated](#) that it is considering seeking an interdict against any appointment arising from this process.

The new NDPP will play a pivotal role in combating corruption and criminality in South Africa. Whoever is appointed needs to be willing to pursue major reforms and capacity building within the NPA and aggressively pursue cases against organised crime groups, politically connected individuals, as well as those implicated in the ongoing **Madlanga Commission of Inquiry into Criminality within the Criminal Justice System**. If Ramaphosa appoints a candidate who is insufficient to this task, South Africa will lose more ground in the fight against crime and corruption.

ANC holds National General Congress

The ANC [held](#) its **National General Congress (NGC)** in **Boksburg (Gauteng Province)** between 8 and 11 December, marking the largest and most senior party gathering held between the ANC's **National Elective Conference (NEC)**, held every five-years. The party used the NGC to discuss its current state and review its performance and policy positions since the 2022 NEC and the 2024 national general election. The key takeaways from the NGC are as follows:

- Rumours of an attempt to depose Ramaphosa or openly challenge him at the NGC failed to amount to anything substantial. In fact, the NGC affirmed Ramaphosa's current control over the party, and even before the conference, the party pledged to [investigate](#) any rumours of a plot against the president. Central to Ramaphosa's security is the fact that he is significantly more popular with voters than the ANC itself. Indicative of this, the NGC affirmed that Ramaphosa will remain in office until at least December 2027 (the next NEC) and will lead the party in the upcoming 2026/27 local government elections.
- **South African Communist Party (SACP)** general-secretary **Solly Mapaila** [did not attend](#) the NGC, making him potentially the first general secretary to not attend a major ANC conference since 1994. His absence is related to the SACP's decision to contest the 2026/27 local government elections itself and not support the ANC. Ramaphosa further [announced](#) that SACP members would be excluded from election workshops and strategy meetings. It is

unclear how this will apply to ANC members, ministers, and municipal councillors who are also SACP members.

- The ANC's ongoing financial troubles were clearly displayed at the NGC. Party staff members [picketed](#) outside the conference venue, demanding unpaid salary arrears. Ahead of the conference, [reports](#) claimed that the party was unable to finance the NGC and required the provincial structures to pay for their own delegates' transport, food, and accommodation.
- Information coming out of the NGC also highlighted the ANC's own internal decline. Indicative of this was ANC secretary-general **Fikile Mbalula's** [announcement](#) that the party needed to dissolve its **KwaZulu-Natal** task team for failing to achieve its aim of resuscitating the party in the province. Mbalula also revealed that the party's branches were largely poorly managed and led; illustrative of this was the [revelation](#) that only two branches in the Free State were in good standing – that they are comprised of sufficient members, dues have been paid, a duly elected leadership, and meetings have been held regularly.
- The sidelines of the NGC were marked by a shift in internal party discourse around the 2027 leadership contest. Notably, this was the first major party event where deputy president **Paul Mashatile** was not viewed as the heir apparent once Ramaphosa's term ends. Mbalula is increasingly viewed as a viable challenge to Mashatile, and the secretary-general actively used the NGC to portray himself as a steady party leader. Most notably, [new names](#) such as **National Assembly** speaker **Thoko Didiza** and electricity minister **Kgosientsho Ramokgopa** have emerged as other potential successors. As such, the race to replace Ramaphosa remains wide open and will be heavily influenced by the ANC's interpretation of voter opinions after the 2026/27 local government elections.

The NGC also revealed the extent to which the ANC remains disconnected from the voting public. The party refused to engage on policy failures and unpopular positions but delegates did call for stronger positions on corruption and a harder stance towards accused corrupt politicians. Ironically, these calls were made to a hall that included ministers and senior members who face criminal charges, corruption investigations, or who face credible corruption allegations arising from commissions of inquiry. Yet, the party made no effort to identify or act against these individuals.

South Africa excluded from the first G20 meetings in the United States

On 27 November, Ramaphosa [confirmed](#) that the **United States (US)** government had refused to invite South Africa to the first **G20** Sherpa's meeting in **Washington, D.C (US)** in December, a clear retaliation for South Africa refusing to allow the **2025 G20 Summit** in Johannesburg in November to be derailed by the US's refusal to attend the summit. US President **Donald Trump** (2025-present) has repeatedly called for South Africa to be excluded from the G20, and US secretary of state **Marco Rubio** has begun [advocating](#) for **Poland** to replace South Africa in the body.

The US technically does not have the authority to exclude a G20 member, as the organisation is based on consensus agreements but the decision has still caused alarm among other G20 members who view such a precedent as potentially fatal to the G20 as a group. South Africa's key partners, [including](#) **China** and the **European Union (EU)**, have promised to lobby the US to reverse its decision.

Although this development will not lead to South Africa's permanent exclusion from the G20, it does confirm that South Africa-US relations are continuing to deteriorate due to the current US administration's hostility to South Africa and its domestic and foreign policies. This is a matter of concern for South Africa as it will likely impact the country's long-term bilateral trade with the US and could lead the US to pressure third-party states to exclude South Africa from international bodies and trade organisations.

A look at 2026

Political developments in the coming year will be dominated by the build-up to the 2026/27 local government elections (LGE), which are set to be held at any point between 1 November 2026 and 31 January 2027. The upcoming elections will place a strain on the **Government of National Unity (GNU)** coalition government as its composite member parties prepare to challenge each other in municipal elections. The LGE will be the most reliable test of the state of political support in the country. Of particular importance will be whether the ANC has halted its declining support, whether the **uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)** has maintained its support levels, and if the DA has managed to grow beyond its base.

The Madlanga Commission and the resulting report will also have a major impact on the country's politics, as it will lead to growing pressure to reform the police service and aggressively address public sector corruption. The NPA will be under intense pressure to secure a conviction in 2026, given the large number of high-profile corruption trials which are set to begin in the coming year.

South Africa's economy is expected to record moderate improvements with increased rates of consumer and investor activity expected following the end of load-shedding, South Africa's removal from the FATF grey list, and a recent credit upgrade. However, the economy is unlikely to grow by more than 1.5% in the coming year.

Planner

17 Dec 2025 **Polokwane (South Africa)** The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) national congress to conclude;

Feb 2026 **Cape Town (South Africa)** Mining Indaba 2026;

Nov 2026 – Jan 2027 **(South Africa)** Local Government Elections;

Chronology

15 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. The Presidency confirms that it will not release the interim report produced by the **Madlanga Commission of Inquiry into Criminality within the Criminal Justice System**, but will only release the final report once it is completed after the inquiry concludes next year;

14 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *The Citizen*. The **National Treasury** confirms that suspended funding to 15 municipalities in the **North West Province** over non-performance;

12 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** leader **Julius Malema** announces that his party will seek to cooperate with the "ideologically aligned" **South African Communist Party (SACP)** ahead of the 2026/27 local government elections;

12 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. Communications ministers **Solly Malatsi** gazettes a directive to ease sector regulations to encourage the **United States (US)** satellite internet firm **Starlink** to enter the South African market;

11 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. **Statistics South Africa (StatsSA)** reveals that over 23 million South Africans live below the poverty threshold of R1,300 (\$77.27) per person per month;

10 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *South African Government News*. The Cabinet approves the **Critical Minerals Strategy** to accelerate the development of the country's critical minerals value chain;

6 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. Pro-**Palestine** activists file court papers accusing a **Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)** official of

providing diplomatic assistance to South African nationals illegally serving in the **Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)**;

6 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Al Jazeera*. Unidentified gunmen kill 12 people in a mass shooting at a bar in the **Saulsville** area outside of Pretoria;

5 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. **Gauteng** high court in Pretoria clears **Dumisani Khumalo**, the head of the police's crime intelligence, to return to work even though he has been charged with corruption;

5 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. Johannesburg Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for finance **Loyiso Masuku** is elected as the chairperson of the **African National Congress (ANC) Greater Johannesburg Region**, defeating the incumbent, Johannesburg mayor **Dada Morero**;

5 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. **Marius van der Merwe**, who gave testimony under the pseudonym Witness D to the **Madlanga Commission of Inquiry into Criminality within the Criminal Justice System**, is murdered in a suspected hit outside his home in **Brakpan (Gauteng Province)**;

4 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. Officials cancel over 190,000 driver's licenses following an investigation into fraud and maladministration in the country's vehicle registration, driver licensing, and the **Electronic Traffic Information System (eNaTIS)**;

3 Dec 2025 **New York (United States)** *Daily Maverick*. South Africa votes in favour of a **United Nations (UN) General Assembly** resolution demanding **Russia** repatriate thousands of **Ukrainian** children abducted by Russian security forces;

3 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. The case against alleged organised crime boss **Katiso "KT" Molefe** is transferred to the **Gauteng** high court, where he will face trial on 35 criminal counts, including murder;

3 Dec 2025 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. Correctional services minister **Pieter Groenewald** proposes repatriating all of the approximately 27,000 foreign nationals imprisoned in South Africa to reduce overcrowding in prisons;

1 Dec 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. Authorities arrest five people accused of recruiting South African nationals to fight for **Russia** in **Ukraine**;

28 Nov 2025 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. Senior **uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)** member **Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla** (daughter of MKP leader and former president **Jacob Zuma**) resigns as a member of parliament (MP) amid an ongoing scandal over her allegedly trafficking people to fight for **Russia** in **Ukraine**;

26 Nov 2025 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The **African National Congress (ANC)** loses three ward by-elections across three provinces, highlighting the decline in support for the party.

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