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South Africa Summary 30 July 2026

President Cyril Ramaphosa (2018-present) announces a cabinet reshuffle, making several changes to his government, primarily implementing changes Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Geordin Hill-Lewis requested. The DA is also navigating a scandal following allegations that former DA leader-turned lobbyist Tony Leon is leveraging his influence in the party to benefit his clients. The National Treasury temporarily suspends grant funding to municipalities that were not compliant with the requirements of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA). Tens of thousands of people participate in anti-immigrant demonstrations across South Africa on 30 June, which conclude more peacefully than initially expected. However, the country continues to deal with the externalities of the rise in xenophobic sentiment.

President reshuffles cabinet

In a separate development on 30 June, President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present) [announced](#) a cabinet reshuffle, making several changes to his government. This reshuffle was precipitated by a [request](#) from **Democratic Alliance (DA)** leader **Geordin Hill-Lewis** to change the makeup of the DA's contingent in the **Government of National Unity (GNU)** coalition, as well as the need to appoint a new social development minister after Ramaphosa [fired](#) the previous incumbent **Sisi Tolashe** in May following a series of scandals.

Ramaphosa made the following changes to his cabinet:

- The **African National Congress' (ANC) Dina Pule** was appointed as the new social development minister;
- The DA's **Willem Aucamp** was moved from being the environment minister to be the new agriculture minister;
- **David Maynier** (DA) was appointed as the new forestry, fisheries and environment minister, replacing Aucamp;
- Former DA leader **John Steenhuisen** was demoted from being agriculture minister to be one of two deputy trade, industry and competition ministers;
- **Alexandra Abrahams** (DA) was moved from the **Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC)** and is now deputy electricity and energy minister, Energy, replacing **Samantha Graham** (DA), who was dropped from cabinet;
- **Jack Bloom** (DA) was appointed as deputy water and sanitation minister, replacing **Isaac Seithlolo** (DA), who was dropped from the cabinet; and
- **Yusuf Cassim** (DA) was appointed as the deputy higher education minister, replacing **Mimmy Gondwe** (DA), who was also removed from cabinet;

The changes to the DA representatives reflect the shift in power dynamics in the party as the cabinet representatives now better reflect Hill-Lewis's supporters. As such, this development underscores the new DA leader's ongoing success in stamping his authority on the party and the declining influence of his predecessor, Steenhuisen, who has publicly [criticised](#) Hill-Lewis for demoting him, accused the DA leader of reneging on the agreement that facilitated Steenhuisen's decision not to run for re-election as party leader (*see ARC Briefing South Africa Apr 2026*).

However, it was Pule's appointment as the new social development minister that [received](#) the most criticism. Pule previously served as communications minister from 2011 to 2023 under then president **Jacob Zuma** (2009-2018). She was removed from cabinet after Parliament's ethics

committee found that she had abused her position when she concealed the fact that she was in a relationship with a businessman who had received lucrative tenders from the department. A later public protector report also found that Pule had lied to Parliament when this relationship was being investigated. Notably, Pule's appointment was criticised across the political sphere with parties including the DA, **ActionSA**, and **uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)**, the ANC-aligned **Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)**, and the NGO **Corruption Watch** all denouncing her return to cabinet.

The ANC has responded by declaring the need to grant people second chances, but in practice her appointment confirms Ramaphosa's tendency to prioritise internal party dynamics over the combatting corruption, and affirms the government's perceived indifference to maladministration. Pule appears to have primarily been appointed as minister due to her seniority within the **ANC Women's League (ANCWL)**, which is an influential organisation within the ANC. Tolashe is the ANCWL's president and Ramaphosa clearly felt compelled to appoint another senior ANCWL figure (Pule is the group's deputy secretary-general) in order to avoid alienating the ANCWL and causing tensions within the party.

DA faces lobbying scandal

Ramaphosa will likely be grateful that the public anger over Pule's appointment was short-lived after public and media attention shifted to the developing allegations of the DA's inappropriate ties to political lobbying firms. [Steenhuisen](#) first mentioned the allegations in an interview on 28 June in which he accused former DA leader **Tony Leon** of driving a negative campaign to remove him as agriculture minister. He further accused Leon's lobbying firm, **Resolve Communications (Resolve)**, of using Leon's proximity to the DA to ensure access to cabinet ministers.

The allegations were subsequently granted additional legitimacy by former senior DA figures, including the leader of the **Good** political party, tourism minister **Patricia de Lille**, who served as a **Cape Town (Western Cape Province)** mayor with the DA from 2011 to 2018. De Lille [claimed](#) that Leon lobbied the City of Cape Town on behalf of Resolve's clients using his influence within the DA to secure access for Resolve's clients. Similarly, former environment minister **Dion George**, who was previously the DA's federal finance chairperson, [claimed](#) that he was lobbied by Leon on behalf of Resolve clients. George also alleged that Resolve actively pushed a negative campaign against him as minister.

Subsequent investigative [reports](#) have detailed the ties between Resolve and the DA that question the extent to which Leon's firm exercises influence over the party. These include Leon's role in negotiating the GNU agreement and the fact that a former Resolve COO was appointed as a DA member of parliament (MP) a month after leaving the firm, after which she began actively advocating for legislation that would benefit the narrow interests of Resolve clients.

The DA has largely failed to contain this developing scandal, which has been compounded by further [reports](#) of the party's ties to lobbying firms. This is primarily because any proactive action to address the matter would require Hill-Lewis to take steps to reduce Leon's influence within the party. It should be noted that there have thus far been no allegations that Resolve or any of the other lobby firms that the DA has ties to have breached South Africa's comparatively weak lobbying regulation. However, the revelations of the influence these firms have with the party and the revolving door between the DA and the lobbying firms have created the appearance that the DA is marred by political sleaze.

This is a problem for the party whose fundamental offering is that it offers clean government and is steadfastly opposed to corruption. This scandal has created an opening for the party's opponents to attack this position and force the DA into the unwelcome position of having to explain the thin line between state capture and political lobbying.

National Treasury temporarily suspends grant payments to dozens of municipalities

The **National Treasury** announced on 7 July that it had [withheld](#) grant payments to 69 municipalities over financial mismanagement and governance failures, specifically that these municipalities had persistently failed to comply with the **Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA)**. The affected cities included **Johannesburg (Gauteng Province)** and **Mangaung (Free State Province)**.

Initially, the National Treasury stated that it would only resume grant payments once the affected municipalities had demonstrated that they had begun to address the MFMA compliance shortcomings. However, on 28 July, treasury officials [announced](#) that the funding would be released on 31 July in an effort to limit the negative impact on basic service delivery. This should prevent a worst-case scenario in these cities, some of which were at risk of financial collapse. Indicative of this, on 16 July, Johannesburg mayor **Dada Morero** [claimed](#) that the city only had 12 days of operating funding left. It should be noted that the measure did [record](#) some success and a number of municipalities received their funding by 17 July after confirming that they had taken steps to address MFMA compliance issues.

Finance minister **Enoch Godongwana** [revealed](#) on 28 July that this was not a temporary measure, and that going forward, conditions will be placed on grant payments to municipalities with additional central government oversight. It is evident that Godongwana has lost patience with poor financial governance at a local government level and is trying to find a means to enforce better governance while minimising the negative impact on residents. This will be a difficult task, especially in the short-term, as several municipal leaders already know that they will not be returning after the 4 November local government elections and have little interest in improving their job performance.

State continues to grapple with Xenophobia following countrywide demonstrations

Tens of thousands of people [participated](#) in anti-immigrant demonstrations across **South Africa** on 30 June, the largest of which occurred in the cities of Johannesburg (Gauteng), **Ekurhuleni (Gauteng)**, and **Durban (Kwa-Zulu Natal Province)**, where thousands of demonstrators marched through the city centres demanding that undocumented immigrants leave the country. Notably, the 30 June protests concluded significantly more peacefully than initially feared. [Officials](#) reported that of the 120 demonstrations that were held across the country, 108 were peaceful and only 12 required police intervention. That being said, police still arrested over 900 people on the day on charges ranging from assault to looting shops to damaging property.

The weeks building up to the 30 June protests had been marked by a series of demonstrations and xenophobic violence (*see ARC Briefing South Africa Jun 2026*). Among the most notable of these was the xenophobic riot in the **Asla Park** informal settlement in **Mossel Bay** (Western Cape) on 29 May, in which at least two Mozambican nationals were killed, and 55 shacks were destroyed, and the 19 June lynching of a **Malawian** national in **Pietermaritzburg** (Kwa-Zulu Natal). The rise in threats and acts of violence ahead of the 30 June deadline has fuelled fears that the planned day of protests could devolve into widespread xenophobic violence.

The fact that such mass unrest was avoided was due to several interconnected factors, the most relevant of which was the major security force deployment implemented ahead of 30 June, which included cancelling all police leave, deploying the **South African National Defence Force (SANDF)** in a support capacity, and even coordinating with the private security sector to act as a force multiplier on the day. In addition, the well-publicised exodus of tens of thousands of foreign nationals in the weeks ahead of the 30 June protests also took some of the intensity and the momentum out of the demonstrations. For many participants, the day was a victory celebration of sorts rather than a declaration of a new campaign to drive out foreign nationals.

According to [officials](#) on 7 June, at least 53,000 foreign nationals had been repatriated in the weeks ahead of the protests. However, **France-based Agence France-Presse's (AFP)** independent assessment from mid-July estimates that over 160,000 foreign nationals left South Africa between mid-May and mid-July, of which over 50,000 were deported. This is a small fraction of the

[approximately](#) 3.1 million foreign nationals living in the country, but images of full buses and overflowing repatriation centres would have been viewed as a sign of success by the anti-immigrant protesters.

Although xenophobic sentiment has eased since 30 June, it still remains elevated across urban areas in the country. Anti-immigrant organisations such as **March and March** (which initially called for the 30 June demonstrations) have [continued](#) to stage regular, albeit smaller, protests calling for undocumented migrants to be expelled. In addition, political parties have witnessed the support for anti-immigration positions, which will keep this issue alive in the country's politics, especially ahead of the upcoming 4 November local government elections. As such, authorities are having to remain vigilant as the potential for a renewed surge in xenophobic violence remains.

South Africa is also having to navigate the diplomatic fallout around these anti-immigrant marches. Other African states such as **Ghana** and **Nigeria** have sharply criticised the country, forcing the government to dispatch envoys across the continent to try and repair relations (*see ARC Briefing South Africa May 2026*). The **Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)** is attempting to navigate these tensions but is increasingly taking a firmer stance in [defending](#) the country against such criticism, in particular accusing critics of promoting misinformation about the country. In an effort to try and take control of this diplomatic dispute, the government has welcomed Ghana's proposed **African Union (AU)** debate but [pushed](#) for it to focus on the causes of migration instead. This may be effective at diverting future criticism away from South Africa and opens a door for other net migrant recipients in Africa such as **Kenya** and **Egypt** to express shared frustrations of uncontrolled migration in the region. However, it will not amend the diplomatic and reputational damage South Africa has incurred as a result of this latest surge in xenophobia.

Planner

4 Nov 2026 (**South Africa**) Local government elections;

16 Nov 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** Final **Madlanga Commission** report due;

Chronology

27 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Presidency*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** accepts **Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC)** investigating director **Andrea Johnson**'s resignation with immediate effect;

24 Jul 2026 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The **Western Cape** high court grants President **Cyril Ramaphosa**'s request to interdict **Parliament**'s Section 89 impeachment committee from proceeding with its public inquiry;

20 Jul 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. Investigative reports reveal that the Inspector General of Intelligence (IGI) **Imtiaz Fazel** has submitted a high court affidavit challenging his suspension in October 2025 as irregular and potentially unconstitutional;

20 Jul 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The trial of suspected organised crime boss **Vusimuzi 'Cat' Matlala** on charges of ordering and financing attempted assassinations begins at the **Gauteng** high court;

16 Jul 2026 **Washington D.C (United States)** *World Bank*. The **World Bank** approves a \$1.5 billion loan to support infrastructure modernisation and job creation initiatives;

13 Jul 2026 **Durban (South Africa)** *TimesLive*. Former **eThekweni** mayor **Zandile Gumede** defects from the **African National Congress (ANC)** to join the **uMkhonto we Sizwe Party (MKP)** as the MKP's deputy provincial convener in **KwaZulu-Natal Province**;

10 Jul 2026 **Durban (South Africa)** *Mail & Guardian*. The **Democratic Alliance (DA)** confirms that **uMngeni** mayor **Chris Pappas** will run for re-election in the 4 November local

government elections (LGE), strengthening the DA's bid to retain the only municipality it governs in **KwaZulu-Natal Province**;

9 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Business Day*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** extends the **Madlanga Commission's** final deadline from 31 August to 16 November;

7 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. Public protector **Kholeka Gcaleka** releases a report which finds that the **City of Cape Town's (Western Cape Province)** failure to provide basic services to residents of the city's **Langa** and **Khayelitsha** areas amounts to maladministration;

2 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. International relations minister **Ronald Lamola** orders an internal investigation into South Africa's high commissioner to India, **Anil Sooklal**, for appearing at an event alongside **uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)** leader, former president **Jacob Zuma**, and state-capture implicated businessman **Ajay Gupta**;

1 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The **Specialised Commercial Crime Court in Pretoria** rejects the plea agreement reached between suspected organised crime boss **Vusimuzi 'Cat' Matlala** and the **National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)** under which Matlala would plead guilty to fraud and corruption to serve a 15-year prison sentence of which seven would be suspended; the court does insist that Matlala should serve at least 12 years behind bars;

1 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *SARS*. The **South African Revenue Service (SARS)** introduces a new online traveller declaration requirement for individuals entering or departing the country that must be completed before travelling;

28 Jun 2026 **Beijing (China)** *EWN*. Deputy president **Paul Mashatile** completes a working visit to China which included his participation in the **China International Supply Chain Expo**;

28 Jun 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. Gunmen shoot **Crime Intelligence** officer **Feroz Khan** in a suspected assassination attempt three days before he was set to testify before the **Madlanga Commission**;

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