

Thursday, 18 April 2019

Archbishop calls on South African politicians to “tone down” election rhetoric

Election observers from religious and civil society groups are calling on political parties in the Western Cape to “tone down their campaign rhetoric,” warning that “character assassination is as devastating as physical violence.”

In a statement released today by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, who chairs the Electoral Code of Conduct Observer Commission (ECCOC), he said:

“A free and fair election is not determined only by what happens on Election Day, but by attitudes and activities in the run-up to the election.

“While campaigning is fundamental to any election, character assassination is as devastating as is physical violence. We call on political parties to tone down their campaign rhetoric to reflect values of respect and encourage an environment of decency and dignity.

“An election should not be about winning at all costs. That approach diminishes the electoral environment to a mere scramble for power which ignores decency and respect.

“After the election, we still have to work together as South Africans to address the challenges of our society. We cannot afford for people to become cynical and demoralized as a result of negative campaigning.

“ECCOC has been established to monitor and encourage compliance with the Electoral Code of Conduct, which encourages an environment of free and fair participation in the electoral process by political parties, voters and citizens in general.

“It seeks to create an environment of co-operation and nation building in a highly emotive situation as political parties vie for the support of the voting public.”