

Parties skip poll talks

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By Warren Fortune [Comment on this story](#)



Independent Newspapers Archbishop Thabo Makgoba and members of the electoral conduct commission confirm their goals for the elections. Picture: David Ritchie

Cape Town - Western Cape political leaders were invited to meet election monitors and observers on Tuesday to discuss how to ensure that the May 7 elections go off peacefully - but no leaders turned up.

Civil society leaders who are members of the Electoral Code of Conduct Observer Commission (ECCOC) were due to meet political leaders in Bishopscourt at the official residence of Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, who chairs the commission.

A review of the expectations of the Electoral Code of Conduct was also due to be discussed, but as a result of the absence of party representatives, it was not.

Earlier the commission said it was concerned that gang warfare and protests over service delivery would have consequences for election campaigning.

Mokgoba said the commission would try and bring a holistic experience to the elections.

“We the members of ECCOC would like to create a climate that would lead to free and fair elections.

“We want a contest of power between political parties during these elections that will not hurt, kill or maim anyone. We also call for a government that will continue to serve the interests of all South Africans.”

The task of the commission is to assist political parties to uphold the Electoral Code of Conduct and to contest the elections in accordance with the spirit of the code.

The commission consists of civil society leaders drawn from the legal, business, academic, media and health sectors.

There is also a representation from multireligious communities.

Commissioner Tahirih Matthee, who is the director of the Baha'i national office of public affairs and an executive member of the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum, said: "During an election a number of things can go wrong and there needs to be structures in place.

"This commission is doing everything in its capacity to deal with what needs to be dealt with. When things go wrong others would want to listen to the guidance and we represent that."

Lester Hoffman, who represents the business sector on the commission, said: "We act independently; we only act once a complaint is lodged with us.

"If a political party doesn't adhere to the Electoral Code of Conduct then we will notify the IEC (Independent Electoral Commission)."

When asked about the ECCOC's stance on IEC chairwoman Pansy Tlakula, who was implicated in the public protector's investigation into the leasing of the IEC's head office in Pretoria, Makgoba said the ECCOC would write to the IEC to try to establish the facts.

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