



## 2019 ELECTIONS

Revealed: At least 20 percent of party leaders have a shady past

By Rebecca Davis • 27 March 2019

**One in five of the leaders of the political parties registered to contest the 2019 elections nationally has a chequered past: Criminal charges or court orders brought against them, professional sanctions, or compelling evidence of wrongdoing for which they have yet to be prosecuted. Yet, in terms of the Constitution, all are eligible for election to the National Assembly.**

At least 20% of the leaders of the 48 political parties registered to contest the 2019 general elections on a national level have previously faced accusations of significant wrongdoing.

That is the finding of a Daily Maverick investigation after the IEC published the final list of political parties which will appear on the national ballot sheet in May 2019.

We have excluded untested allegations of wrongdoing which can be explained by internal political disputes — such as claims that the leaders of the African Transformation Movement (ATM), including Jimmy Manyi, are using the party as a front for money laundering.

This is, admittedly, a complicated area. The leader of the PAC, Narius Moloto — who is also the general secretary of Nactu, the National Council of Trade Unions — refused demands to step down from Nactu in 2018 amid accusations of “[massive irregularities](#)”, and was also accused of [sexual harassment](#) in 2018 by a former Nactu employee. Moloto strongly denied the allegations, as did Nactu, which released a statement accusing the complainant of “a well-documented history of promiscuity within the trade union movement”.

Relations between South African unions, and between unions and political parties, have been particularly fractious over the past decade. The head of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party, Numsa general secretary Irvin Jim, has also been [accused in the past](#) of dodgy deals and the misuse of worker funds, but has denied all wrongdoing.

We have also excluded claims which are publicly known to be the subject of active investigations or court challenges, such as the allegations of malfeasance against Good party leader Patricia de Lille during her time as the DA’s mayor of Cape Town.

One individual escaped inclusion on this list purely by virtue of the fact that he was sent to prison just before he could lead his party into the 2019 elections.

Ex-Better Residents Association (formerly Bushbuckridge Residents Association) president Delta Mokoena was at the helm of the party until he was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2017 for charges related to vigilantism. He maintained the party leadership despite previous convictions on the same charges, including being convicted in 2013 of accusing a community member of witchcraft and setting his house alight.

Even at the time of Mokoena's sentencing in 2017, BRA secretary Cleopas Maunye [was quoted](#) as saying:

"It's a tough situation for us. We're still looking at the judgment and after that, we'll have a conference to announce what we're going to do."

With those exclusions in mind, the party leaders with a chequered past who are registered to contest the 2019 elections nationally are as follows, alphabetically in terms of party names:

#### **African Content Movement: Hlaudi Motsoeneng**

In 2014, erstwhile Public Protector Thuli Madonsela's [report on wrongdoing at the SABC](#) found that its then COO, Motsoeneng, committed fraud in misrepresenting his qualifications; abused his powers to approve three salary increases for himself in a single year; and purged the broadcaster of his rivals without following proper procedures. The courts later declared Motsoeneng's appointment as COO as unlawful, and in December 2016 the Western Cape High Court ordered the SABC to commence disciplinary proceedings against Motsoeneng which culminated in his dismissal.

#### **African Renaissance Unity: Bryce Mthimkhulu**

Mthimkhulu was taken to court in 2016 by the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government and the department of co-operative governance and traditional affairs (Cogta) to try to stop him calling himself "King of the amaHlubi". This dispute was more significant than it sounds, because Mthimkhulu had previously tried to benefit financially from his title — including a failed attempt to claim billions of rands from the British government as reparations for the colonial destruction of his "kingdom".

#### **Afrikan Alliance of Social Democrats: Pappie Mokoena**

Mokoena, the former mayor of Mangaung, was arrested by the Scorpions in 2005 under suspicion of fraud and money laundering but acquitted in 2012, although his former personal assistant was found guilty of similar charges. More recently, Mokoena has chaired the entity known as Bloemfontein Correctional Contracts (BCC), [which is being sued](#) by 42 inmates in the wake of a Wits Justice Project investigation which uncovered the use of

electric shocks, forced medication and suspicious deaths in the BCC-run Mangaung Correctional Centre.

### **Black First Land First: Andile Mngxitama**

Mngxitama was found to be in contempt of court in 2017 after violating an interdict preventing him from harassing journalists, and given a three-month suspended sentence.

### **Christian Political Movement: Brian Mahlati**

Mahlati, a businessman and pastor, was ordered by an East London court in 2017 to pay R43-million [after the court found](#) that Mahlati and his wife had misappropriated money from his business's liquidation account.

### **Economic Freedom Fighters: Julius Malema**

Malema has fallen foul of the Equality Court, the taxman and the ANC, but he makes this list primarily on the basis of the [Public Protector's 2012 report](#) into his company On-Point Engineering. Thuli Madonsela's investigation found that Malema's company, awarded lucrative contracts from the Limpopo Department of Roads and Transport, was guilty of "unlawful, fraudulent and corrupt conduct", including fraudulent misrepresentation of its track record and engaging in illegal back-to-back deals in which it charged the province and service providers for the same work. Part of the proceeds of the R52-million contract was found — on the basis of On-Point bank statements — to have been funnelled to Malema's Ratanang Family Trust.

### **Free Democrats: Dr Johan Reid**

Cape Town neurologist Dr Johan Reid was found guilty of a 2007 incident of sexual harassment by the Health Professions Council (HPC), but cleared in 2011 when the HPC's appeals committee ruled that the original hearing was procedurally unfair. In 2007, however, the Sunday Times also reported that Reid had previously been found guilty on seven counts of unprofessional conduct during consultations between 1995 and 2001, including performing sexual acts on a patient. Reid has previously denied all charges.

### **Independent Civic Organisation of South Africa: Jeffrey Donson**

Donson is a convicted rapist. He was convicted of one count of indecent assault and seven counts of statutory rape in 2008, with the charges relating to a 15-year-old girl with whom Donson entered into a sexual relationship while mayor of Kannaland (and a married 42-year-old father of three). His subsequent appeal was rejected. News24 [reported in 2008](#) that Donson had previously been found guilty of indecent assault while working as a sports teacher at a Ladismith high school. In 2010, Donson was expelled as a Kannaland councillor after a disciplinary inquiry found him guilty of abusing money in the mayoral fund to purchase equipment for his mobile disco sideline, "DJ Fantastic" — charges he denied.

### **Patriotic Alliance: Gayton McKenzie**

McKenzie was sentenced to 15 years in jail in 1995 after being found guilty on two counts of armed robbery. He ended up spending seven years behind bars, before receiving a pardon from President Thabo Mbeki as a result of his work exposing grotesque conditions for inmates in the notorious Grootvlei Prison.

### **South African National Congress of Traditional Authorities: Chief Bhekumuzi Mantjolo Mnisi**

Following an exposé by The Star newspaper, [independent auditors confirmed](#) in 2003 that Mnisi had been paid more than R1-million by the Mpumalanga health department for Aids education programmes, “even though his charity, Tibuya Emasisweni, was unregistered and despite his apparent lack of knowledge on the subject”. The auditors found:

“It appears that ultimately Chief Mnisi and his family are benefiting financially from the programme and not the community.”

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It should be noted that Daily Maverick only looked at the leaders of political parties — raising the question of which characters might be present in lower positions within the parties.

All the political hopefuls listed above are eligible for election to the National Assembly. While the Constitution bars the election of anyone convicted of an offence and sentenced to more than 12 months’ imprisonment without the option of a fine, an important caveat is that this prohibition is lifted five years after the sentence has been completed.

That clause is what allows Gayton McKenzie to be elected as an MP. In the case of Icosa’s Jeffrey Donson, meanwhile, his 2008 rape conviction resulted in a sentence of only one year suspended for five, with a fine of R20,000.

Reference:

Davis, R. (2019). [Revealed: At least 20 percent of party leaders have a shady past](#) from *Daily Maverick*, 27 March 2019. Available at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-03-27-revealed-at-least-20-percent-of-party-leaders-have-a-shady-past/> online. Accessed on 27 March 2017