

Parties say 'no way' to no-go areas

WHILE negotiators at Kempton Park managed to talk their way through wide differences of opinion, the language of war still resounds through many parts of South Africa.

An indication of the intolerance that still grips the country is the existence of no-go areas where political parties are not free to campaign.

Most politicians slam the existence of such areas as contrary to the concept of free and fair elections.

Former ANC regional secretary Tony Yengeni said no-go areas should not be permitted to exist. "The ANC must be able to organise and build itself in KwaZulu, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei," he said.

'Accessibility to all areas is what democracy is about'

To ensure that elections were free of intimidation, "the immediate installation of a national peacekeeping force" was needed, he said.

The Transitional Executive Council (TEC) should shoulder much of the responsibility of fostering a climate of tolerance.

An IFP media liaison officer in the Western Cape, Cloete Breytenbach, said accessibility to all areas was "what democracy is all about".

In Khayelitsha, the party had "sympathisers" but had not opened a branch as, Breytenbach alleged, most members were "afraid of threats and victimisation".

How do you foster a climate conducive to free and fair elections when some townships have become no-go areas for certain political parties? SOBANTU XAYIYA spoke to political groups across the spectrum.

hold a political meeting in Natal, but there is a difference between such a meeting and political instigation.

"For example, when the ANC wanted to march to Ulundi it publicly stated that it wanted to go there to overthrow Chief Buthelezi."

The NP's organiser and media officer, Jan Kruger, said the existence of no-go areas indicated a high level of intimidation, violence and lack of political tolerance.

To counter intimidation, the NP had set up a national toll-free line for victims to voice complaints.

"We are also partaking in national peacekeeping structures to promote an atmo-

'Optimistic things

Do South Africans believe the April 27 elections will usher in an era of equality and prosperity? SOBANTU XAYIYA took to the streets of Cape Town to find out.

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Baba said the PAC wanted a transitional authority with active participation of the international community rather than "mere observation".

The DP's James Self argued that elections were never held in a totally free and democratic environment. He suggested that "we should rather ask ourselves what set of circumstances would make the elections demonstrably unfree and unfair".

He said the presence of peace monitors, the Independent Electoral Commission and international observers had already made a difference in creating the necessary climate for free and fair elections.

The DP had misgivings about the practicalities of training and equipping a multi-party national peacekeeping force in the short time before the elections.

The best way of ensuring free and fair elections, he said, was for parties "to bind themselves to a code of conduct and to take appropriate steps against their members and supporters who infringe the code".

Idasa's Western Cape Regional Director, David Schmidt, said it was obvious that there were many no-go areas where parties could not compete fairly - in Bophuthatswana, KwaZulu, Ulundi, Ciskei and other regions.

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ROTHMANN: Hard NDINISA: Upbeat

The unemployed widow and mother of five commented: "The ANC is already encouraging children to go to school. Also, the party is against wage disparities."

And if the Nationalist Party won a majority on April 27?

"I cannot even think about that," she said. "South Africa would become even worse off than Ethiopia and starvation would be the order of the day."

Jene Rothmann, 57, an antique vendor at

the Church Square flea market, also said people should not have excessive hopes for a post-election South Africa - or for life in general.

"I worked my whole life to have a house. It didn't fall in my lap," she said by way of example. Rothmann, a mother of two, said her husband was not well and that she was "keeping things going" with her antique business. Her son, trained as a lawyer, is unemployed.

"As long as everybody is reasonable and doesn't expect too much from the future, things will go smoothly," she said.

But Piet Jacobs, 34, of Mitchells Plain cited the recent occupation of houses in Delft by squatters as an indication that "things could deteriorate if not kept in check".

And a Sea Point domestic worker who gave her name only as Zoliswa said she feared losing her job "if the madams loose the election".