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OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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***Ensuring the safety of Members and
Parliamentary Staff***

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Secretary to Parliament: Xolile George

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Safety of Parliamentarians & Staff



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- Parliaments around the globe face a growing multiplicity of threats from different origins – individuals, protestors, co-ordinated syndicates and even international actors.
- These risks are not limited to physical dangers but increasingly involve other means such as the manipulation of technology, data breaches and cyber-attacks.
- The evolution of the parliamentary environment has thus necessitated ongoing statutory and administrative reforms to ensure that members and staff could work in safety.



Democratic Parliament



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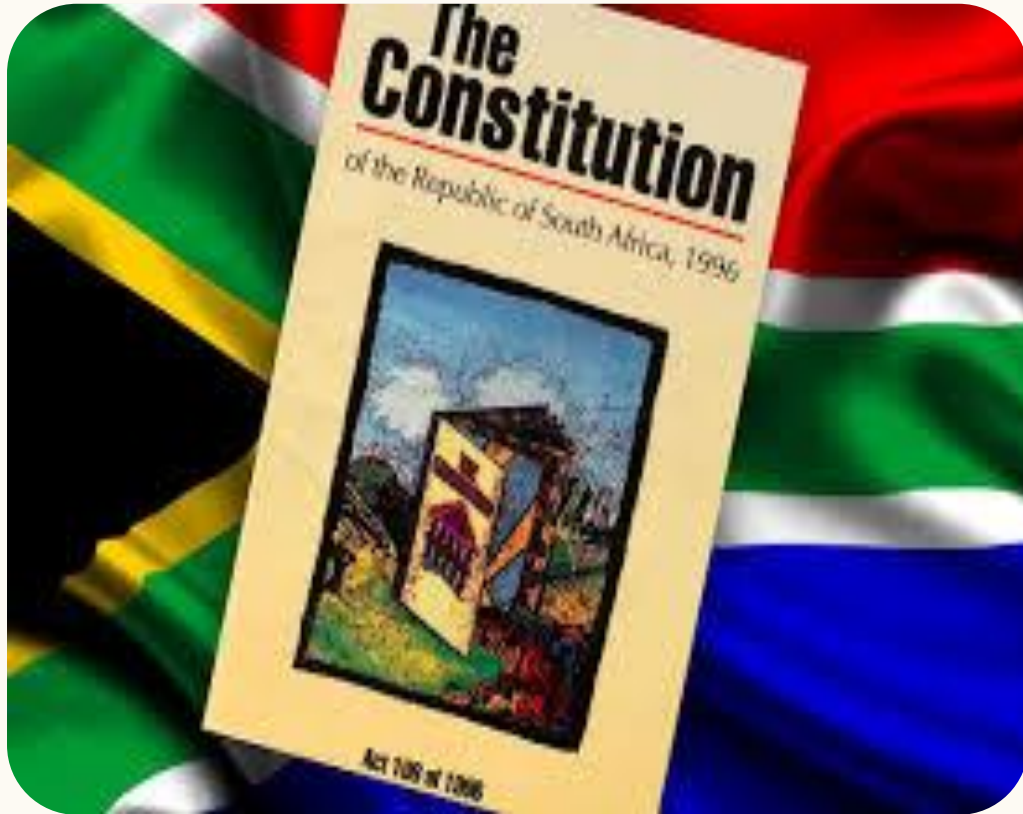
- South Africa's 1994 transition to a constitutional democracy introduced the first inclusive elections for the NA and NCOP.
- Many MPs were former anti-Apartheid activists adapting to their new constitutional roles in a democratic state.
- Parliament had to balance safety and security with the constitutional principle of openness and accessibility.
- Over time, new challenges emerged, including the risks of a new millennium, the Covid-19 pandemic, and rapid technological change.
- Today, parliamentarians face a broader and more complex range of threats than ever before.



Statutory Privileges and Protections



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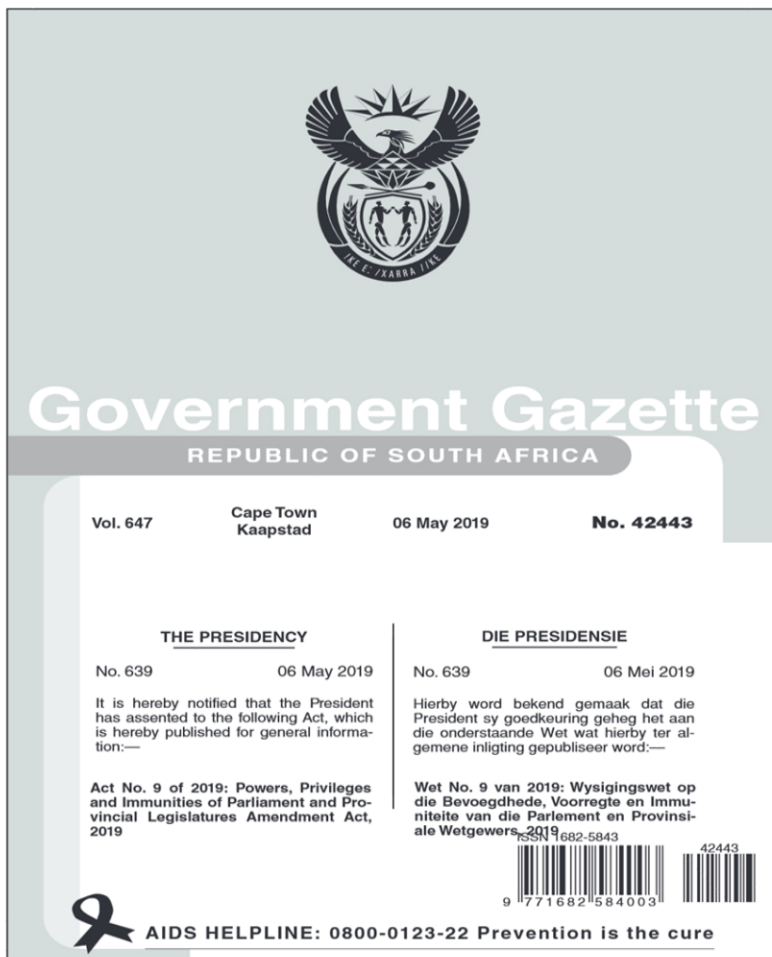
- Constitution defines Parliament's powers and functions as a separate arm of the State.
- It grants parliamentarians specific privileges and protections, including freedom of speech and immunity from prosecution for statements made in the Legislature, as well as the right to attend proceedings.
- Parliamentary staff also enjoy limited protections against obstruction or interference while carrying out their duties.



Statutory Privileges and Protections



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- Parliamentary privileges are subject to limitation by the rules and orders of the Legislature.
- The **Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act (2004)** further defines these powers and protections.
- The Act grants joint control over the parliamentary precincts to the Speaker of the NA and the Chairperson of the NCOP.
- State Security Services may only enter or remain within parliamentary premises with the authorisation of the presiding officers, except in cases of immediate danger to persons or property.
- No summons may be served, nor any arrest made within the Legislature, without the permission of the Speaker or Chairperson.
- Any person who contravenes the Powers and Privileges Act may face criminal liability.

Statutory Privileges and Protections



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- The Legislature is also defined as a national key point as per the **National Key Points Act (1980)**.
- This Act placed a special onus on Parliament to secure its precinct, including the appointment of competent security personnel.
- The need for Parliament to have independent security led to the establishment of the **Parliamentary Protection Services (PPS)**.



Statutory Privileges and Protections



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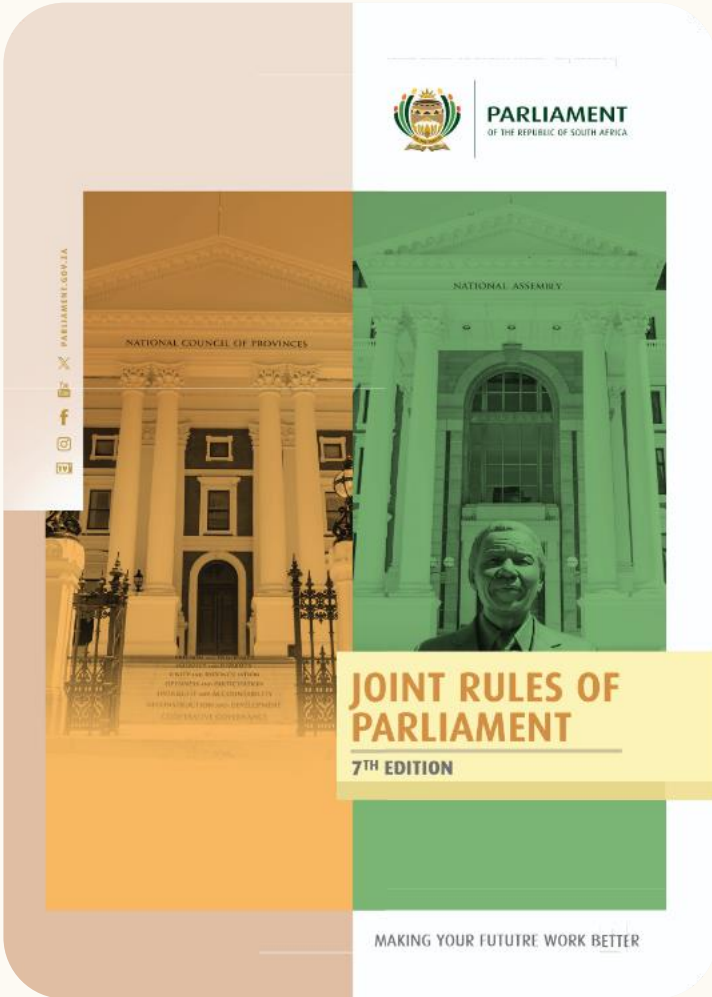
- The Constitution (1996) provides for **secret ballots** in the election of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and President in the NA, and the Chairperson in the NCOP.
- No constitutional requirement exists for secret voting on other parliamentary decisions.
- In 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled that the **Speaker may permit a secret ballot in specific circumstances.**
- The Speaker must consider the political and social context, ensuring that members can vote freely without fear of undue hardship or intimidation.



Safety in the Chambers of Parliament



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- The **Rules of Parliament** regulate proceedings and committees to ensure both openness and the safety of MPs and staff.
- Visitor access is controlled by the Speaker and NCOP Chairperson, with mandatory security screening.
- The Serjeant-at-Arms, with PPS support if needed, removes unauthorized or disruptive individuals.
- Weapons, dangerous objects, and disorderly conduct by members are strictly prohibited to maintain a safe working environment.
- Public and media access is allowed unless exclusion is reasonable and justifiable, balancing transparency with safety.



Safety in the Chambers of Parliament cont..



- During the 5th Parliament, the Houses faced multiple disruptions and security incidents, including violence when members refused to leave when ordered.
- Rules Committees established procedures for the physical removal of members to minimise injury.
- The Serjeant-at-Arms or Usher may act on the presiding officer's instruction, with assistance from the Parliamentary Protection Services and, in exceptional cases, the State Security Services, using reasonable force only.



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Safety in the Chambers of Parliament cont..



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🕒 13 Jun 2022


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Parliament probes sexual assault claims by EFF MPs thrown out of chaotic sittings

Jason Felix

news24

 Comments

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- Allegations arose that some female MPs experienced gender-based violence by PPS personnel during disruptions in the NA.
- Legal counsel was consulted, resulting in a rule amendment: PPS staff should, as far as possible, remove members of the same gender.
- The right of Parliament to remove members was nevertheless finally upheld by the Constitutional Court.
- Evidence indicates that political disruptions have declined, with no serious incidents reported since the establishment of the Seventh Administration in June 2024.



Security Policy

- The statutes and rules provided the framework within which Parliament could protect its members and staff. Still, questions of detail and administration remained. These were addressed by way of an integrated **Security Policy** adopted in 2005.
- This policy expounded on the duties of the Secretary to Parliament to ensure that the institution remained compliant with security standards. The policy also defined the respective functions of the –
 - Parliamentary Protection Services
 - State Intelligence Services and
 - Policing agencies.



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Protection of Information and Data



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POPI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

DISASTER RECOVERY OFFICER Organisations need to have a disaster recovery officer for both cyber breaches and for private information leaks.	IT GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY IT governance and security should be an agenda item at board meetings, as suggested in the King IV reports.
CLEAR AND CONCISE PLAN Organisations need to have a clear, concise and understandable plan when it comes to cyber breaches.	COST AND BENEFIT ANALYSIS Organisations should do a cost-benefit analysis to determine which critical elements need to be protected in case of a cyber breach.
HOT, COLD, AND WARM Depending on the need, an organisation needs to make use of either hot, cold or warm data.	SOURCE: PROF. MERVYN KING King, M. (2017). POPI and General Data Protection Regulation. In: POPI - Protection of Personal Information. Johannesburg, pp.2.

- The unprecedented advancements in technology have presented new risks.
- At a national level, the ***Protection of Personal Information Act (2013)*** was introduced to protect the right to privacy. This Act regulates the processing and sharing of personal information that is entered into record.
- The Act required Parliament to control access to information, both internally and for those who may correspond with the institution.

Protection of Information and Data cont..



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- Parliament also adopted an ***Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy*** in 2021.
- In terms of this policy, Parliament must carry out regular assessments of its ICT systems. User accounts and password management, network maintenance and procedures in the event of data breaches are also regulated
- Importantly, the policy envisaged systematic training for members and staff on security protocols.



Protection of Information and Data



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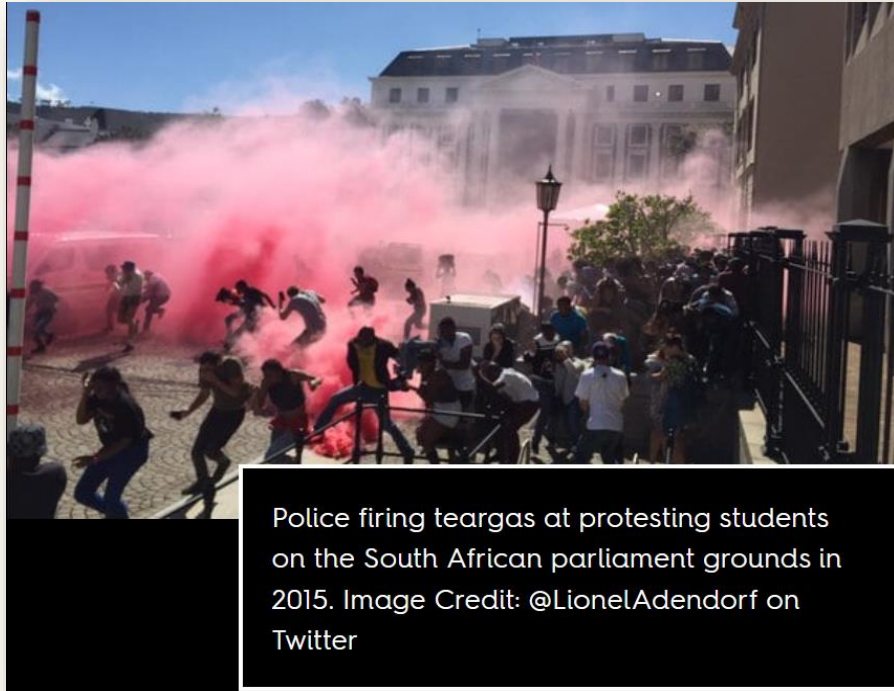
- **Cybersecurity** measures have significantly reduced risks to parliamentary data, though they are not completely foolproof.
- Challenges remain in managing personal use of integrated technology and information systems.
- Managing **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is an emerging challenge for ICT.
- Continuous review and monitoring are required to harness AI benefits while mitigating associated risks.



Security Incidents



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Police firing teargas at protesting students on the South African parliament grounds in 2015. Image Credit: @LionelAdendorf on Twitter

To download the soundbite of Parliament Spokesperson, Mr Moloto Mothapo, click on this link: <https://iono.fm/e/1588374>

Parliament, Tuesday, 19 August 2025 - The Presiding Officers of Parliament condemn in the strongest possible terms the violent criminal attack on three Members of Parliament from the Democratic Alliance, Police Portfolio Committee Chairpersons, Mr Ian Cameron, Mr Nicholas Gotsell, and Ms Lisa Schickerling, who were assaulted this afternoon while returning from an oversight visit in Nyanga, Cape Town.



DAILY MAVERICK

BUSINESS MAVERICK

CRYPTO SCAM

SA Parliament's social media accounts hacked to promote the launch of \$Ramaphosa token

IFP MP shot dead in Gauteng, party calls it an assassination

Khethamabala Petros Sithole was killed on Saturday night in a shooting at the Buyafuthi Hostel in Katlehong, east of Johannesburg and his killer remains at large.

Fire in the National Assembly



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Conclusions

- The South African Parliament has, over time, approached the matter of security in line with legal principles and environmental factors. Of paramountcy has been the need to harmonize security with the vibrancy of a young democracy.
- Security also requires continuous efforts to expand cooperation across different security agencies, while not compromising the status of the Legislature as a distinct arm of the State.
- The 2022 fire highlighted systemic weaknesses in security governance, infrastructure management, and institutional resilience, underscoring the need for modernised safety systems, stronger accountability, and comprehensive risk management frameworks for the protection of the precinct.
- Finally, the ever-expanding range and complexity of security threats will lend new impetus to inter-parliamentary partnerships for the purposes of sharing experiences and solutions.



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Thank you
Ndiyabulela

Ke a leboga
Ndi ya livhuwa

Ke a leboga kudu
Gangans

Ndo livhuwa
Dankie
Enkosi

Ngiyathokoza

Ndza nkhensa
Ke a Leboha
Ngiyabonga
Ndzi khense ngopfu

Braille: 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100