



## **EFF STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO SWITCH OFF ANALOGUE TV SIGNAL FOR MILLIONS OF POOR SOUTH AFRICANS**

Tuesday, 29 March 2022

The EFF calls on government to abandon its rushed and anti-poor decision to switch off the analogue television signal transmitters, in favour of migration to a digital signal which will require set-top boxes. This is in light of the this decisions harmful impact on access to information for poor communities.

In a move that is being falsely motivated by a desire to free up broadband spectrum, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies had resolved to cut of 8.25 million South Africans from free-to-air television, without providing any alternative by the end of March 2022. It is only through a court order that this reckless decision has been postponed to June 2022.

This is not only unconstitutional, it is a condemning of millions of people, primarily in the Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Western Cape and Gauteng to no access to critical information and broadcasting content, primarily the news.

It is through the analogue television signal transmitters, that people in rural and township communities are able to access recreational and news content for free on their television sets in South Africa. To switch this off is to deny access to broadcasting services to millions of people simply because they are too poor to pay for subscription television.

It is to condemn millions of people to lack of information, access to news about what is happening in their society and subject them to deliberate and state-organised ignorance.

We are particularly dismayed that the Gauteng High Court has ruled that government has done enough to provide these poor communities with alternatives to the analogue television signal, when only 660 000 households have had new set-top boxes which are able to connect to the digital signal, installed for them.

This shows a collaboration by our judiciary and government, in denying our people access to information.

The Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies Khumbudzo Ntshaveni, has resorted to threatening to undercut the funding of the South African Broadcasting Co-Operation's (SABC) due to its resistance to this anti-poor decision.

We call on the SABC Board to fiercely defy and resist any digital migration that is not coupled with a meaningful assurance and assistance to poor communities, that they will not be cut off from accessing information.

The EFF calls on government not to switch off analogue television transmitters until all households are provided with the necessary infrastructure to migrate digitally, namely, the provision of set-top boxes which will connect to the digital signal.

Access to television services is a fundamental right and to deny people access to that is tantamount to fascism. It is an attempt to undermine democracy and ensure that people cannot have full view of the conditions facing South Africa, the continent and the world.

**ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS**

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