



EFF STATEMENT ON PARLIAMENT'S NATIONAL INITIATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO THE EASTERN CAPE

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) notes with great concern the long overdue oversight work that is being done by the Parliamentary Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), which is currently conducting oversight work on initiation schools in the Eastern Cape. Over the years, an important cultural practice of transitioning boys into manhood has become a death trap. Ten deaths have already been reported for the June 2022 initiation season. There has been approximately 40 deaths in the December 2021 initiation season. Over the past decade, over 700 young men have died in initiation schools in the country.

The oversight committee has unearthed a myriad of problems leading to the death of initiates, and these relate mainly to the proliferation of illegal initiation schools. There is insufficient support and oversight by the government, traditional leaders and communities at large at the schools. During one visit to Libode for example, at kuZeLe village, we found an unregistered traditional surgeon who simply ran away when the committee went to the initiation school he operates. The police, the community and traditional leaders know about this school, yet no steps have been taken to ensure that the traditional surgeon is held to account, and that his initiation school complies with the requirements. In Port St Johns, we found children under the age of 16 at initiation schools, a total contravention of the Customary Initiation Act.

The growing commercialization of this important cultural practice has also led to the rising number of botched circumcisions and deaths. Rogue elements have taken advantage of the custom, and are presenting themselves as traditional surgeons in some areas even though they are not trained and skilled to perform the rituals. This also leads to the growing number of illegal initiation sites, where initiates are not provided the necessary care they need in order to make this transition successfully.

The phenomenon of the incompetent & indifferent Government continues in that it has failed to implement solutions to end the senseless deaths of initiates. There is still little coordination between law enforcement agencies, the provincial department responsible for cooperative governance, traditional leaders and communities. Most of the work is done by poorly resourced civil society organizations. It is tragic that after so many years of consistent and rising numbers of deaths among initiates.

An EFF Government will identify initiation schools. All schools traditional surgeons and carers will be provided with training and access to emergency medical services. All schools will be monitored daily. In addition, psychological support will be available for those with botched initiations. Generally, these young men are treated like outcasts impacting negatively on their psychological and sexual life.

Government intervention and support for this cultural practices is simple. However, it is complicated for the governing party as its area of expertise is limited to corruption, led by its President who has criminal charges of kidnapping, torturing a women domestic worker, money laundering and concealing crimes.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Sinawo Thambo (National Spokesperson) 072 629 7422

Leigh-Ann Mathys (National Spokesperson) 082 304 7572

Sixelise Gcilishe (National Communications Manager) 071 142 1663

✉ communications@effonline.org

🌐 <http://www.effonline.org>

🐦 @EFFSouthAfrica

📷 @EFFSouthAfrica

📘 Economic Freedom Fighters