



# Monitoring and Analysis of Hateful Language in South Africa

Report #1:  
April 17, 2019

This report is part of an initiative by PeaceTech Lab to analyze hateful and inflammatory language online in South Africa in order to mitigate the threat of this language to fuel violence on the ground during the election period. The term "hate speech" is often used to describe this type of language, but in this context we are looking specifically at terms and phrases that are offensive or inflammatory and are directed towards individuals or groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, national identity, or political affiliation and which may lead to on-the-ground violence. For more information on the definitions and context of the terms and phrases mentioned below, click on this paragraph to see our South Africa Lexicon of Hate Speech Terms.

## Latest Events

At the end of March, xenophobic attacks occurred in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal in which foreign nationals were attacked, their shops looted, and trucks driven by foreign nationals torched. This resulted in foreign nationals seeking shelter at a police station because of displacement due to the attacks or the fear of being attacked.

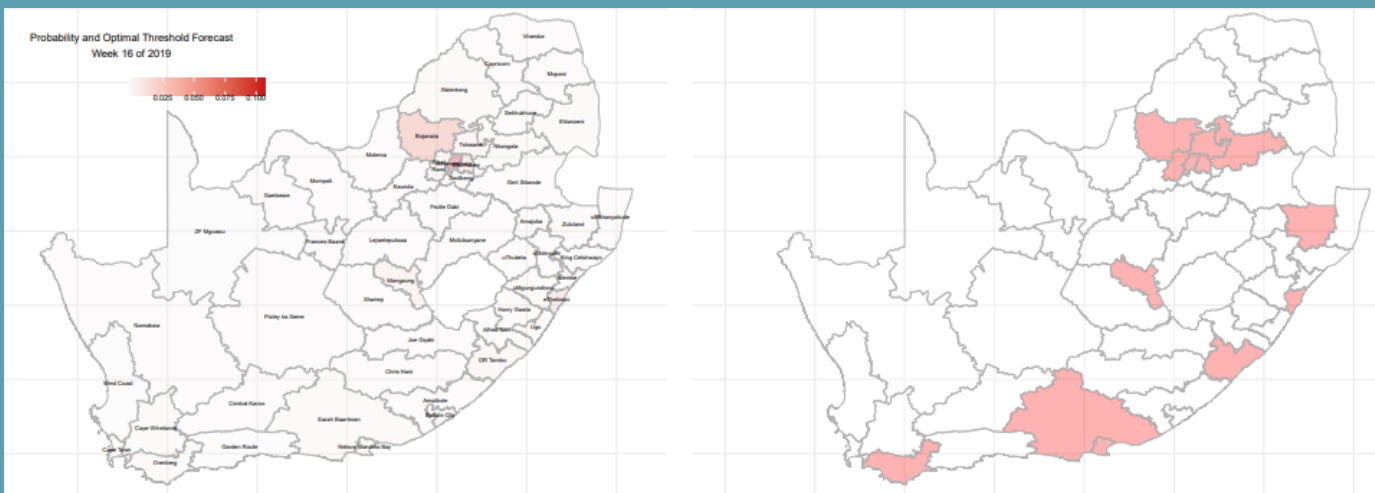
At the beginning of April, service delivery protests dubbed #AlexShutDown began in Alexander, a township in Johannesburg, Gauteng; the protests are still ongoing. While the main reason for the protests is the issue of overcrowding and lack of proper housing, the residents are also complaining that foreign nationals have houses while "indigenous" residents of the township lack them. Other than inflammatory terms targeting foreign nationals, such as "makwerekwere," terms and phrases targeting white people were also used during these protests, especially when the Johannesburg Mayor, Herman Mashaba, sent white mayoral committee member, Michael Sun, to address the protesters.

Additionally, social media and some mainstream media outlets recently reported that a church led by a foreign national had been burnt down in early April in Limpopo. Events such as this may also contribute to increases in conversations containing racially-charged hateful language online.

## EARLY WARNING OF UNREST

### Week of April 16-22

For the Week of April 16-22, PeaceTech Lab's statistical model predicts a higher likelihood of violence against civilians in the municipalities shown in darker red on the map on the left. The map on the right applies a probability threshold to forecast which municipalities can be expected to experience violence over the next week. These districts are Bojanala Platinum, Ekurhuleni, eThekweni, the City of Johannesburg, Mangaung, Nelson Mandela Bay, Nkangala, OR Tambo, Overberg, Sarah Baartman, the City of Tshwane, West Rand, and Zululand.



*Click on the map to visit our Hate Speech and Election Violence data portal for South Africa and read more about this predictive model and our data analytics.*



# HATEFUL LANGUAGE DATA & ANALYSIS

March 29-April 11

4,273\*

Total Number of Hateful Posts for South Africa for Current Period\*

+120%

Change in Hateful Post Volume for Current Period Compared to Previous Two-Week Period

"LAND THIEF"

Most Frequently Observed Inflammatory Term for Current Period



Trending Topics Linked to Most Frequently Observed Term

South Africa HateSpeech Monitor: La. — Topics from 3/29/19 to 4/11/19

During March 29-April 11, the volume of hateful posts increased 120% from the previous two weeks. This could be due to several events discussed in the Latest Events section, such as the xenophobic attacks in Pietermaritzburg or the service delivery protests in Johannesburg. The uptick could also be due to the fact that this is an election period and politicians, especially from the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), frequently talk about foreign nationals and land issues. The DA calls for stricter border controls while one of the EFF's campaign posters reads, "Our Land, our Jobs."

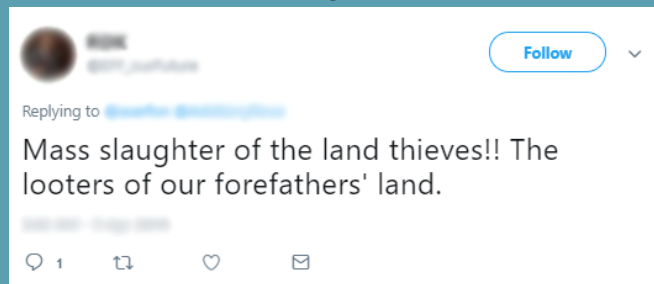
The inflammatory term that appeared most frequently in the past two weeks was "land thief" and its variants. One of the triggers of this is likely the ongoing court cases involving Black Land First (BLF) who are known for chanting phrases such as "kill the boers" and "land thieves." In one of the cases against the political party, the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) party argues that that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) contravened the law in allowing BLF to register as a political party despite having a constitution that encourages racism. This case was withdrawn by the FF+ the first week of April. In another case, South African entrepreneur Johann Rupert took BLF to court after threats by the organization to occupy his land. BLF has called Rupert a "land thief," "colonialist," etc. Frequent references to BLF and its leaders can be found in the Topic Wheel identifying the trending topics most often associated with the term "land thief."

\*Number of posts was drawn from Twitter posts monitored via Crimson Hexagon and Facebook posts monitored via Dataminr by human analysts from Media Monitoring Africa.

## HATEFUL TERMS & PHRASES SAMPLE POSTS

March 29-April 11

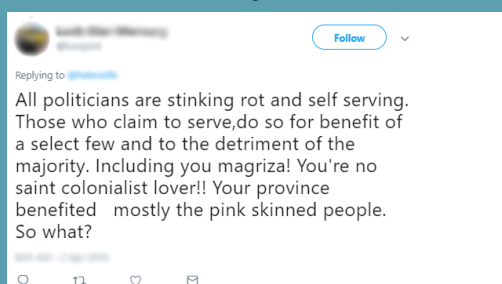
### "Land Thief" Sample Post (Twitter)



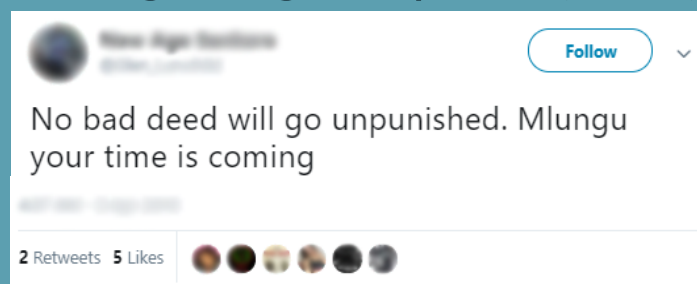
### "White Monopoly Capital" Sample Post (Twitter)



### "Colonialist" Sample Post (Twitter)



### "Umlungu/Mlungu" Sample Post (Twitter)



If you have any feedback on this report and/or suggestions of the most useful types of content to include, please email us at info@peacetechnology.org.