Will the EFF and MKP push South Africa over the cliff in 2026?

Compiled by Tony Stone

Following the sentencing of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema on Thursday, April 16, 2026, to five years direct imprisonment for unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition, intense racial and political tensions surfaced, featuring accusations of racism from multiple sides.

Outside the East London Magistrate's Court, Malema labelled the presiding officer, Magistrate Twanet Olivier, a "racist of note". He further alleged that the judgment was biased, driven by racial prejudice, and that the court was influenced to send him to jail.

Supporters of the EFF, and some commenters, labelled the court's decision as white racist retaliation, particularly noting that a white co-accused was acquitted, leading to claims that the judiciary is being used to fight white-led wars against Black leaders.

In November 2022, the Human Rights Commission gives Julius Malema 10 days to retract anti-white comments made at a rally. They served Malema and the EFF with a written notice that if they did not retract and apologise for the prima facie unlawful statements, as well as give the appropriate undertakings to desist from further promotion of hatred and violence on any ground, the Commission would proceed to the Equality Court for relief.

Nothing was done and by all accounts, Malema and the EFF have become even more radical and verbal.

Former President Jacob Zuma, leader of the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), has directly requested that the EFF join forces with his party to achieve "total liberation," highlighting shared goals to align their respective parties.

While the EFF actively promotes revolutionary rhetoric and the potential for unrest is a persistent concern, several factors mitigate against a full-scale violent overthrow.

As South Africa approaches the 2026 local government elections, both the EFF and the MKP are adopting more assertive, populist, and radical stances, which analysts predict will make them formidable and potentially disruptive actors in municipal councils.

EFF leader Julius Malema has described the 2026 local elections as a "victory or death" moment for the party, aiming to recover ground lost in the 2024 national polls by intensifying their radical rhetoric.

Analysts warn that if the MKP and EFF form coalitions or act as opposition, they could bring "anarchy" to municipalities, particularly if, as analysts warn, their decision-making remains highly centralized around leaders like Zuma and Malema.

Concerns exist that continued or heightened radical economic policies could deter investment in local municipalities, affecting services and growth.

So, based on an analysis of South African political developments, expert opinions, and recent reports leading into April 2026, the probability of a successful, widespread violent revolution by a joint MKP and EFF coalition is generally considered to be high risk and in the range of 6 to 8 out of 10.

The question is, what would trigger the EFF and MKP to launch a revolution?

Potential catalysts identified from recent developments include:

- ✓ Direct legal action against leaders, such as the arrest of Jacob Zuma (MKP) or the jailing of Julius Malema (EFF), or the disqualification of their parties from participating in elections, could trigger mass action.
- ✓ Claims that the IEC (Independent Electoral Commission) is rigging elections to maintain the ANC/GNU in power, which the MKP has previously hinted at, could trigger widespread violent protest.
- ✓ Supporters of MKP have indicated that actions deemed to be targeting or disrespecting Jacob Zuma could incite violence.
- ✓ A push for extreme land expropriation without compensation, or failure to deliver on radical economic transformation, could lead to violence.
- ✓ Incidents of racial conflict or high-profile instances of systemic racism are frequently used to trigger large-scale protests, often resulting in violence.
- ✓ If police action against the opposition is perceived as right-wing suppression or a return to apartheid-style policing, this could provoke an armed or violent response.
- ✓ Lastly, a collapse of the South African economy due to geopolitical conflict amongst South Africa's major trading partners, international sanctions imposed by the West or all or any of the above in any combination.

South Africa faces severe, compounding crises, often described as a "fiscal cliff" due to high debt, a widening budget deficit, and low revenue growth threaten to make public finances unsustainable. Increased foreign debt repayments and sluggish growth threaten the economy, with some analysts noting this is a recurring, and yet worsening, crisis. In

addition, South Africa’s energy situation is dire. Load reductions, breakdowns and exorbitant price increases decreasing affordability, especially amongst lower income households. South Africa's service delivery crisis is severe, often described as a systemic failure at the local municipal level that produces, on average, 210 protest actions per month, as well as a worsening corruption/fraud problem nationally within local municipalities certainly provide the ingredients to support a nationwide revolution.

--ooo--