

IEC calls for responsible voting selfies

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has appealed to voters to respect the privacy and secrecy of their vote by refraining from taking pictures in the ballot booth and of their marked ballot papers in this week's election.

The popularity of selfies - a self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a hand-held digital camera or camera phone - along with a number of social media campaigns promoting voting selfies, has increased the risk of undermining the secrecy of the vote.



No selfies are allowed in the voting booth - you risk a criminal record if you try it. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Following voting by South Africans abroad last week, a number of photographs appeared on social media in which voters had photographed their marked ballot papers.

Votes are secret

The Electoral Commission strongly supports voters expressing their support for democracy and the elections through social media and selfies but these should be within the law.

"Voters may take photographs of themselves outside the voting station and of their inked thumbs to show their participation.

"However, voters are reminded that it is an offence to take and/or publish photographs, which reveal a person's vote on a ballot paper. Upon conviction, offenders will be liable to a fine or a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year," the IEC said.

While taking a camera or photographic equipment into the voting booth is prohibited, it is not feasible to remove every voter's cell phone and to return these to voters after they have voted.

The Electoral Commission therefore appeals to voters to respect the law and the fundamental right of secrecy which underpins the democratic system.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>