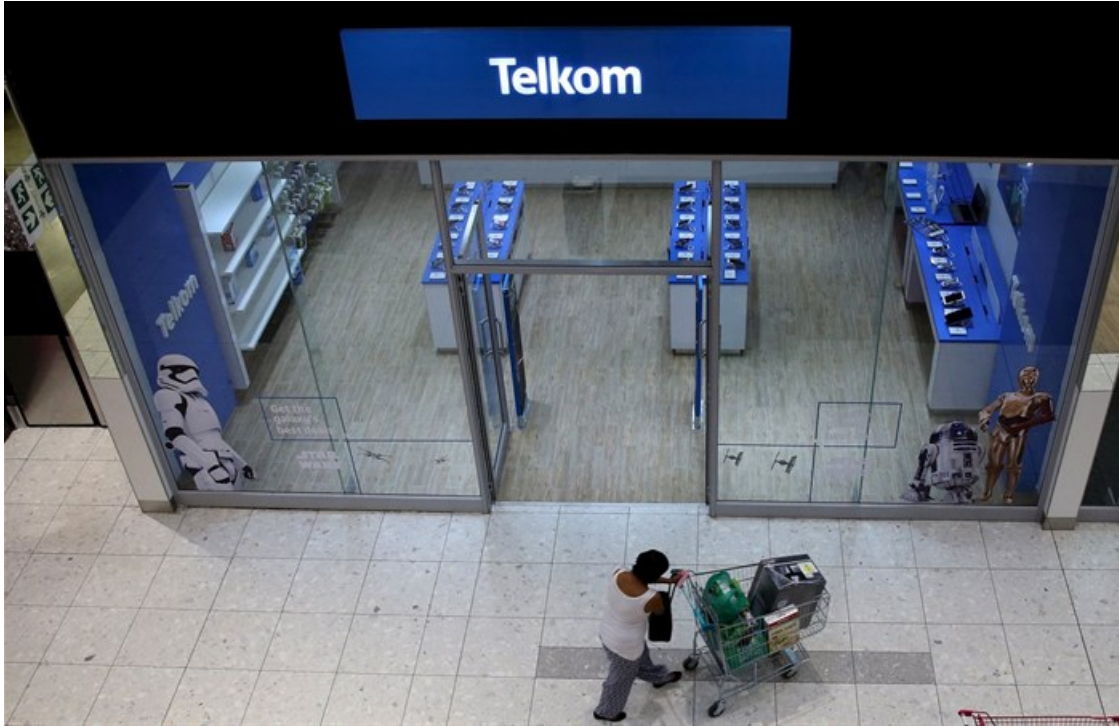


Icasa to fight Telkom's temporary spectrum lawsuit

By [Ngobile Dlodla](#)

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South Africa's telecom regulator will oppose litigation brought by Telkom to stop the watchdog from withdrawing temporary radio frequency spectrum assigned at the start of the Covid-19 outbreak last year, it said on Wednesday.



A shopper walks past a Telkom shop at a mall in Johannesburg, file. Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

The temporary frequency spectrum have allowed mobile operators to deliver faster connectivity to customers to meet a surge in data demand as large numbers of people continue to work and learn from home.

But the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) said in August telecom operators must return the bandwidth by the end of November as it could not allow the temporary assignment to "assume a state of permanence."

Earlier this month Telkom, the third largest telecom operator, filed papers asking the High Court to set aside Icasa's decision, saying the removal of temporary spectrum would have a "catastrophic" impact on its network performance and also its customers.

Icasa reiterated on Wednesday that it was never its intention to assign that spectrum on a long-term or semi-permanent basis.

"The Authority will therefore be derelict in its duty if it were, by default, to perpetuate what is now becoming an anti-competitive, unfair, and unjust spectrum licensing regime, under the guise of pandemic relief," it said in a statement.

Icasa has twice extended the deadline for the expiry of the temporary spectrum, with the last one on 31 August, plus a three-month grace period to allow time to wind down the temporary spectrum.

The regulator has delayed auctioning permanent high-frequency spectrum due to a court case brought by operators Telkom and MTN as well as broadcaster eMedia Holdings, which are critical of the process viewed as key in bringing down communication costs in the country.

Earlier in October, Icasa said it would restart efforts this month to auction off 4G and 5G high-speed spectrum licences, with a view to offering them next March.

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