

Voting In London Going Smoothly

Written by Rudi Prinsloo
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South Africans turned up in large numbers to cast their ballots in London on Wednesday, a spokesman for the South African high commission said.

Niall Wilkins said South Africans had started queuing around 4am in the city, which had the largest polling station of the elections. A total of 7427 voters were registered to vote there.

The queue remained about 300 meters long on Wednesday morning.

"The atmosphere is good, everyone seems quite happy to be here," Wilkins said.

Party agents from the African National Congress, the Democratic Alliance, the Freedom Front Plus and the African Christian Democratic Party were on site, he said.

South Africans living across the globe were awarded the right to participate in the 2009 election after a Constitutional Court ruling last month.

Some 16,240 voters intended casting their votes at the 124 South African missions abroad.

The second largest overseas polling station was in Canberra, Australia, with 1235 registered voters, then Dubai in the United Arab Emirates with 900 registered and Wellington, New Zealand with 410.

Agnes Nyamande-Pitso, Consul General in the UAE, said a constant stream of South Africans had come in to vote since the polling station opened at 7am.

"We hope the momentum keeps up. We are expecting another wave after work this evening," she told Sapa by phone.

There was an electoral commissioner at the embassy where the ballots would be cast. The station was being manned by foreign affairs and others staffers, she said.

An observer from the DA was also present at the embassy.

"It's going very smoothly, we haven't had any problems yet," she said.

The voting stations with only one voter each were Asmara (Eritrea), Suva (Fiji), Ramallah (Palestine), Bujumbura (Burundi) and Trinidad & Tobago (Port of Spain) with only one voter each.

To ensure both the secrecy and legitimacy of overseas votes, the IEC had set up a two-envelope system.

Once a voter at an overseas mission had cast their vote in secret it was placed in an unmarked envelope and sealed.

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This unmarked envelope would then be placed in another envelope with the voter's name, ID number and voter district number. They would then be put into a ballot box which was sealed.

These would be opened on election day and the details on the marked envelope checked against the voters' roll. If there were no irregularities, the unmarked envelope would be taken out and placed in the ballot box.

This ensured the vote was anonymous.

Overseas voters must be registered and produce their ID and passport to be allowed to vote.

Voting stations at South African missions abroad would be open from 7am to 7pm.

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