

# South African Municipal Political Instability: Evidence of Coalition Collapse

## Recent News and Media Coverage (2024-2025)

### 1. Nelson Mandela Bay Coalition Government Collapse (December 2025)

Source: Democratic Alliance Eastern Cape Report Card, December 9, 2025

Key Findings:

The ANC/EFF-led coalition government in Nelson Mandela Bay has systematically destroyed service delivery and financial stability:

Performance Metrics:

- Mayor's 100-day targets: Only 8 of 85 achieved (9.4% success rate)
- 63 targets not achieved
- 14 targets partially achieved
- Combined average directorate score: 1.75 out of 5 (35%)

Departmental Failures:

Department	Score	Key Issues
Budget and Treasury	2/5	Revenue under-collection, supply chain chaos, R600M capital reserves loss
Corporate Services	1/5	Unfilled positions, unpaid invoices, eviction threats from landlords
Electricity and Energy	1/5	R1.323 billion loss from theft/non-payment, bankruptcy risk
Safety and Security	0.5/5	ShotSpotter not implemented, surveillance vehicle non-functional
Water and Sanitation	2/5	Non-compliant wastewater treatment, 57% non-revenue water loss
Roads and Transport	2/5	Broken traffic lights, potholes, incomplete disaster projects

Critical Impact:

- Multiple provincial interventions required (more than once in a decade)
- Service delivery collapse across all major directorates
- Financial instability threatening municipal viability
- Inability to perform basic functions

Evidence of Coalition Dysfunction: The coalition includes ANC, EFF, AIM, PAC, and DOP parties, each leading different directorates. This fragmentation has resulted in:

- Lack of unified vision
- Competing political interests
- Inability to implement coordinated service delivery
- Directorate-level political patronage preventing performance

### 2. National Coalition Government at Risk (April 2025)

Source: The Conversation, April 11, 2025

Key Arguments:

## (4 of 6) Negotiations with Municipalities vs. Legal Action against Municipalities

Government of National Unity (GNU) Formation:

- Emerged after May 2024 elections
- Marked historical turning point with power-sharing arrangement
- ANC and DA as major actors

Current Crisis:

- Budget impasse between ANC and DA threatens coalition stability
- Only 9 months into term, goodwill has worn thin
- Pragmatism that marked formation is deteriorating

Governance Challenges:

1. Cabinet Ministry Disputes:

- Multiple parties sharing cabinet positions
- Risk of building institutional fiefdoms
- Competing agendas undermining unified governance

2. Public Service Politicization:

- Prolonged legal disputes over ANC cadre deployment
- Conflict between DA and ANC on recruitment and selection
- Undermines professional bureaucracy building

3. Policy Implementation Failures:

- Mechanisms to translate policy priorities into outcomes are ineffective
- Brinkmanship between ANC and DA sections
- Health, education, and land expropriation policies deadlocked

Critical Assessment:

"In our view, failure to overcome deeply ingrained political differences could set off a downward spiral in the country."

Evidence of Instability:

- Public spats over Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill
- Toxic international intervention in land expropriation debate
- DA lobbying for greater control of Operation Vulindlela
- Competing visions on health system reform

### **3. Johannesburg Political Instability (2025)**

Source: Multiple news sources, December 2025

Key Issues:

- Service delivery collapsing in ANC-led administration
- Multiple coalition arrangements and rearrangements
- Political instability preventing long-term planning
- Voter dissatisfaction with poor governance

### **4. Tshwane Coalition Collapse (2025)**

Source: Multiple news sources

Key Events:

- DA-led multi-party coalition fractured
- ActionSA withdrawal destabilized government
- Service delivery disruptions during political transitions
- Repeated changes in municipal leadership

### **5. Gauteng Metropolitan Municipalities Coalition Instability (2024)**

## (4 of 6) Negotiations with Municipalities vs. Legal Action against Municipalities

Source: Pholoma et al. (2024) - Academic Research

Research Findings:

Study on unstable coalition governments in Gauteng metropolitan municipalities:

Key Conclusions:

- Unstable coalition governments fundamentally undermine democracy
- Constant turnover of citizen committees and implementing agencies
- Insufficient administrative capacity to meet governance standards
- Direct consequence: delayed decision-making and budgetary insecurity
- Long-term planning becomes impossible

Affected Municipalities:

- City of Johannesburg
- City of Tshwane
- Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

## Academic Analysis: Coalition Politics in South Africa

### André Duvenhage (2023) - Coalition Politics Study

Key Argument: South Africa is at a political turning point where the ANC's dominance has fundamentally shifted.

2021 Election Results:

- ANC lost majority in 70 municipalities (hung councils)
- Created coalition-dependent governance
- Marked end of single-party dominance

Crisis Situations:

- Coalition governments inherently unstable
- Political instability evident from coalition dynamics
- Inability to maintain long-term commitments

Quote:

"Coalition governments are themselves in crisis situations, which is evident from political instability."

## Pattern Analysis: Why Municipal Agreements Fail Under Coalition Governments

### 1. Political Cycle Vulnerability

Problem: Municipal agreements are bound by political cycles (typically 4-5 years)

Reality: Coalition governments change more frequently than election cycles

- New coalitions formed after each election
- Mid-term coalition collapses
- Leadership changes within coalitions
- New administrations abandon previous agreements

Example: Nelson Mandela Bay saw multiple coalition changes, each bringing new priorities and abandoning previous commitments

### 2. Competing Interests

## (4 of 6) Negotiations with Municipalities vs. Legal Action against Municipalities

Problem: Coalition members have conflicting agendas

Evidence:

- Nelson Mandela Bay: Different parties leading different directorates with competing priorities
- National GNU: ANC and DA in constant conflict over budget and policy
- Johannesburg: Multiple coalition arrangements preventing unified service delivery

Result: Agreements negotiated with one coalition partner become invalid when coalition composition changes

### **3. Lack of Institutional Continuity**

Problem: Political instability prevents institutional memory and consistent implementation

Evidence:

- Constant turnover of committee members and implementing agencies
- Unfilled positions for months (Nelson Mandela Bay Corporate Services)
- Lack of long-term planning capacity
- Budget uncertainty year-to-year

Result: Agreements require consistent institutional support that coalition governments cannot provide

### **4. Budgetary Instability**

Problem: Coalition governments cannot guarantee budget allocation for agreed commitments

Evidence:

- Nelson Mandela Bay: R600 million capital reserves loss
- Revenue under-collection across municipalities
- Budget impasses threatening national coalition
- Inability to fund service delivery commitments

Result: Even if agreements are maintained, lack of budget prevents implementation

## **Comparison: Court Judgments vs. Municipal Agreements**

### **Binding Power**

Municipal Agreements:

- Dependent on political will of current administration
- Can be abandoned by new coalition
- No enforcement mechanism beyond negotiation
- Subject to renegotiation

Court Judgments:

- Legally binding across all administrations
- Enforceable through contempt of court
- Backed by judicial authority
- Cannot be overturned by political changes

### **Durability Across Political Cycles**

Municipal Agreements:

- Vulnerable to coalition changes

## (4 of 6) Negotiations with Municipalities vs. Legal Action against Municipalities

- Abandoned when new parties take control
- Renegotiated with each new administration
- No protection against political instability

### Court Judgments:

- Remain valid regardless of political changes
- Structural interdicts enforce compliance across administrations
- Precedent value for all similar cases
- Protected by constitutional framework

## Implementation Assurance

### Municipal Agreements:

- Dependent on budget allocation by current administration
- Vulnerable to budget cuts and reprioritization
- No guarantee of long-term funding
- Subject to political pressure

### Court Judgments:

- Enforceable regardless of budget constraints
- Court can impose penalties for non-compliance
- Structural interdicts create accountability mechanisms
- Protected by judicial oversight

## Conclusion: Evidence of Coalition Government Failure

The evidence from 2024-2025 demonstrates a clear pattern:

- 1.Systemic Coalition Instability: Multiple municipalities experiencing coalition collapse and reorganization
  - 2.Service Delivery Deterioration: Agreements made by previous administrations are abandoned
  - 3.Political Cycle Vulnerability: Municipal agreements cannot survive political transitions
  - 4.Institutional Weakness: Coalition governments lack capacity to implement long-term commitments
  - 5.Community Impact: Citizens suffer from broken agreements and service delivery failures
- Key Finding: Communities seeking long-term protection of their rights and service delivery commitments are better served by court judgments than by municipal political agreements.

## Sources Cited

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