

Ramaphosa ‘must bite the bullet’ on lockdown, experts say – The Citizen 18 June 2020

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Critics say the economy is in ruins and needs urgent intervention, while the DA is using the situation to advocate for a halt to plans for land expropriation and the National Health Insurance

President Cyril Ramaphosa’s announcement that more sectors of the economy would be opened under Level 3 of the lockdown has come under heavy criticism from several sectors, who argued that now was the time to be decisive in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of citizens and the economy.

Political analyst Ralph Mathekga said: “Whatever we call it, level 3, 2, 1, it doesn’t matter as it is just the easing of restrictions. Its no longer going as initially planned. The reality is some things that belong to level 2 might be adopted under level 3.

“Government is under pressure, it cannot manage the nation under a lockdown. They went into this thing thinking they could manage the country under a lockdown. Social security is a disaster, UIF is a disaster on all fronts, there is mounting pressure to open up the economy.

“This opening up means everyone is going to take responsibility now, it’s no longer in the hands of government, it’s in all your hands and business will have to adopt certain measures going forward. Ideally one would have been confident if things were done systematically. We’re having levels being eased but the virus numbers are increasing. This is the most realistic response at this point.”

While Mathekga notes the reality the country faces, Congress of the People’s national spokesperson Dennis Bloem welcomed the easing of the regulations but said it was too early to talk about ending the lockdown.

“It is very clear that the numbers of infections are rising, and it’s a serious cause for concern. We must never be irresponsible in undermining Covid-19. We have always said that this is a very difficult situation that the country and the world is facing. It is a balance between saving lives and saving the economy, and the impact of the virus remains devastating.

“The economy of our country is on its stomach, and we must do everything possible to save lives and the economy.”

African Transformation Movement’s (ATM) Mxolisi Makhubu says the movement welcomes the reopening of different sectors. Government needs to remain patriotic in these times to reopen businesses especially those that have a large number of people under their employ.

The DA’s John Steenhuisen said Ramaphosa’s announcement could have come sooner.

“Everything he announced could have been announced months ago.”

In a statement, the party said: “It is simply not true to say the cost of human lives could have been higher. We are only beginning to see the deaths, as we head into the peak. The president’s claim that an increase of infection was inevitable is also simply not true.”

Steenhuisen claims that Ramaphosa’s announcement on the further lifting of the lockdown restrictions is an admission that the lockdown serves no purpose and has failed.

“He seems to have finally realised just how devastating this lockdown has been – and will continue to be – for ordinary South Africans, but it’s happened far too late. The truth is that the world’s longest hard lockdown, and not Covid-19, killed our economy and ruined the lives of millions of South Africans.

“There is no shortcut to undoing this devastation. There is only the proper way, which is to immediately walk away from the suicidal policies such as EWC, the NHI and the prescription of assets, and then implement the economic reforms that we all know must happen.”

In a televised address, on Wednesday evening, Ramaphosa announced that restaurants, cinemas, casinos, non-contact sport, hotels and other personal care industry could resume business, provided they adhered to strict safety measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Reminding South African’s of the role they had to play in lessening the spread of the pandemic, he reminded citizens to avoid touching their faces with unwashed hands while providing a strong message against gender-based violence.