**Parliament, Sunday, 25 October 2020 –**Public hearings of the Ad Hoc Committee to Initiate and Introduce Legislation Amending Section 25 of the Constitution on the expropriation of land without compensation had to be cancelled today in Polokwane, Limpopo, due to some members of a huge crowd not wanting to adhere to national lockdown level 1 regulations and forcing their way into the venue.

The Leader of the delegation in Limpopo, Adv Bongani Bongo, indicated that the Members of Parliament (MPs) and security forces had tried to negotiate a way forward but were unable to succeed. “We were initially supposed to start the public hearings at 11:00 but due to the large crowd dressed in T-shirts of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that forced their way into the hall that was already filled according to Covid-19 level 1 regulations, the committee decided to delay the hearings to 14:00.

“According to the initial report we received, a big crowd of supporters dressed in African National Congress (ANC) T-shirts arrived first at the hall in the morning and as per our rules followed at all public hearings so far, were allowed to register and enter the hall. Later, supporters dressed in EFF regalia arrived, only to realise that the hall was almost full and forced their way into the venue, thereby contravening regulations.”

Adv Bongo said: “Collectively, after several attempts to find a solution, the multi-party delegation decided to delay the meeting till 14:00 in order to work out a way forward. However, at this time when we were supposed to resume the meeting, the crowd still did not want to adhere to the regulations and supporters dressed in red barricaded the entrance to the venue. Initial reports also indicate that a weapon was brought into the venue.

“Further attempts were made to resolve the matter but on advice of Parliament Security and the South African Police Service and in consultation with the other MPs, I decided that in the interest of safety and health concerns, it is best to call off the hearings. This was done as a last resort,” said Adv Bongo.

He emphasised that today’s evet was an isolated incident at the hearings as the public was disciplined at the other three public hearings. “At the three prior hearings EFF supporters arrived early, filled the hall and were allowed to speak freely. Other participants had to wait outside for an opportunity to speak. I think it would only have been fair today for them to allow the same courtesy they have received so far.

“We understand that the expropriation of land without compensation is a delicate and emotive matter and that the majority of political parties that support it would want to be seen at the forefront. But what happened today is definitely not the way to do so. It must be condemned in the harshest possible terms as security and health restrictions were breached and people’s lives were put at risk,” said Adv Bongo.

Furthermore, he said there are only two parties in Parliament that support the expropriation of land without compensation, the ANC and the EFF. “It was therefore surprising that supporters dressed in EFF regalia disrupted the hearings.”

A decision on whether to reschedule the Polokwane hearings will have to be taken by the full committee after receiving a comprehensive report from support structures. The delegation has been holding public hearings in Limpopo since Thursday and was meant to wrap up the process in Polokwane.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE LEADER OF THE LIMPOPO DELEGATION OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO INITIATE AND INTRODUCE LEGISLATION AMENDING SECTION 25 OF THE CONSTITUTION, ADV BONGANI BONGO.**