

ANC's Top Six mulling the future of two premiers

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THE ANC's Top Six officials yesterday had their hands full discussing the future of two premiers who are under fire in their respective provinces.

Like North West's Supra Mahumapelo, Eastern Cape Premier Phumulo Masualle is facing attempts to remove him from office by the governing party's tripartite alliance partners, the SACP and Cosatu, among others.

Frustrated ANC Eastern Cape officials met at the party's headquarters Luthuli House in Joburg yesterday, seeking consensus to take action against Masualle, who they say is defying

them over changes in the provincial administration.

Following Masualle's defeat by provincial chairperson Oscar Mabuyane in last year's chaotic provincial conference, the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) ordered Mabuyane's provincial executive committee (PEC) not to remove him from the helm of the provincial government.

This was part of the healing of divisions created at the conference.

While Masualle's group backed Minister in the Presidency Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma's presidential candidacy

before last year's national elective conference, Mabuyane rallied behind Cyril Ramaphosa.

Mabuyane's executive has grown impatient with Masualle for what they say is his failure to remove some of his loyalists from the provincial leadership, as ordered by the party in March.

An ANC provincial leader said the PEC wanted the NEC to review the decision to keep Masualle in the premier's office, and possibly deploy him elsewhere.

"We want the NEC to review this decision, because it is clear that he (Masualle) does not

recognise the current PEC. He must be deployed somewhere else, maybe Parliament... so that the organisation can be allowed to lead here," he said, on condition of anonymity.

The NEC's decision has emboldened Masualle and his group because in some of the regions that supported him, this defiance is continuing.

The MECs who are wanted out include rural development and agrarian reform MEC Mlibo Qhoboshiyane, roads and public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu, social development MEC Nancy Sihlwayi and finance, economic affairs

and tourism MEC Sakhumzi Somyo.

Their removal would weaken Masualle's power within the provincial government.

Yesterday, provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukaitobi led a delegation which met with the party's top leadership where they wanted permission to discipline Masualle – who is a member of the ANC's NEC and the SACP's central committee.

Last week, alliance provincial leadership, including the SACP, Cosatu and SA National Civic Organisation provincial structures, expressed frustration with Masualle's snubbing

of the ANC on governance matters.

Cosatu Eastern Cape secretary Xolani Malamlela yesterday accused Masualle of trying to create two centres of power in the province.

"In as much as we respect the NEC's decision, the national leadership must recognise that things are going to get worse here if he remains and continues to behave like this.

"He does not respect or recognise the PEC or the decisions of the alliance. He seems to be returning favours to the group that supported him at the conference. He is refusing

to remove the MECs who he was asked to remove. He must move," Malamlela said.

Masualle's backers continue to snub the provincial leadership under Mabuyane and its authority, even in municipalities where it was in control, arguing that it was elected at a violent conference where other delegates were excluded from participating.

Branch members from regions supporting him, including Amathole and Nelson Mandela Bay, picketed outside Luthuli House and petitioned the ANC's national leadership not to remove him, but to dis-

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band Mabuyane's PEC.

The group – led by Mnquma sub-regional chairperson Ndoda Mesani – called for the Sbu Ndebele report to be implemented. The report proposed that the PEC be disbanded, but was set aside by the NEC.

ANC spokesperson Pule Mabe wasn't available for comment.