



## Media Statement

19 February 2020

### **MEC Shabalala appeals to communities to protest peacefully**

Communities are within their rights to hold protests. However, communities should protest within the ambit of the law and not infringe upon the rights of others.

This is according to the Mpumalanga MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Ms Gabisile Shabalala. She was responding to several cases of violent protests reported in various parts of the province.

In one of protest actions that took place in Bushbuckridge last week, some community members who were protesting on the R40 Road blockaded the road with a truck that they have reportedly torched.

In another violent protest on the same road, protesters reportedly stopped a light delivery vehicle (LDV) and removed items such as doors and window frames in order to block the road.

There were protests that took place in Schoemansdal and Langelooop in Nkomazi Local Municipality as well as Fernie in Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality. Barberton in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality also experienced violent protests last week.

Most of these protests were characterised by road closures and violence. The road closures denied those who were not protesting their rights to move freely.

In some cases some shops were looted, most people were unable to go to work and learners were also prevented from attending schools.

The closure of roads and the destruction of property should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

"We must not deprive other citizens their rights to movement by blocking the roads when there are protests."

"Such actions also affects the economy of the country. If we prevent people from going to work, the economy becomes severely affected such that it may even become difficult to create more jobs," added Shabalala.

The MEC has further called on those protesting to refrain from attacking the law enforcement officers who are deployed to the protest scenes.

She appealed to protesters not to allow criminal elements to infiltrate their protest actions. Shabalala has warned those who become involved in criminal activities during these protests that they will be arrested.

Therefore, as part of dealing with criminality during the protests, Shabalala has encouraged community members who know the culprits to inform the police so that wrong doers face the consequences of their actions.

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**Issued by the Mpumalanga Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison**

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