

MEC VR Shongwe's Key note address on the Provincial Celebration of the National Police Day at Elukwatini Stadium on the 27th of January 2016

The Executive Mayor of Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, Cllr. Busi Shiba,
Public Safety councillors from various municipalities

Head of Department, Mr. William Mthombothi

The Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant General, Advocate Mark Magadlela

Chairperson of the Provincial Community Police Forum Board Mr. Kevin Pillay

Representatives from the JCPS Departments

Distinguished guests and all dignitaries present today

Members of the media,

Comrades and Friends

Ladies and gentlemen

Sanibonani.

Introduction

Program Director, yesterday we took time to commemorate our police officers who lost their lives in the line of duty. It was a very moving ceremony because these officers were killed in pursuit of safety of the people of South Africa.

Their lives were cut short by criminals who are hell-bent on taking over the streets of Mpumalanga and South Africa in general.

However, as we meet today to celebrate the National Police Day, criminals must get the message that they shall never win this battle.

We shall hunt them down day and night.

They shall know no joy.

We will pursue them in the bushes, in the mountains and anywhere they may decide to run to.

There shall be nowhere to run for them.

As we meet here today, we are carrying a message to law abiding citizens that they must not despair because the SAPS and other law enforcement Agencies will never rest until all South Africans are and feel safe.

We are saying, your confidence in the police and the criminal justice system must not be shaken. As the people of Mpumalanga we must work together with the police

to reduce the levels of crime and increase the ability of our police and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Program Director, we witness violent mob justice being committed against suspected gang members here at Elukwatini last year.

I want to appeal to all that, we must never do that again. As members of the public, we must report to the police and not take the law into our own hand.

The problem with mob justice is that, it turns law abiding and responsible citizens into criminals. I want to call on the Police to act swiftly when the public report crimes before they resort to mob justice.

It is also important for our people to note that, once a crime has been committed, police must investigate and based on the evidence in their possession then arrest suspects.

The suspects will then appear before a court of law to answer on the allegations. It is the duty of the courts to find a suspect guilty or innocent.

I would like to call on members of the public to understand that once a criminal case has been open, the police must act according to the law and the court processes must be allowed to run unhindered. This is how the criminal justice system works in this country.

General Magadla, as we celebrate this very important day, we are looking forward to you and your team to mitigate the negative impact of crime which interferes with our enjoyment of freedom and human rights.

In your presence, we can't live in fear.

In your presence, women, children, people with disabilities and older persons cannot be subjected to the indignity of rape and abuse.

For as long as we have you, we must rest assured that crime will not undermine the values of a cohesive society we are building.

In his Policy and Budget Speech last year, the minister of Police, reported that the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences unit has made great stride and continues to secure life convictions for perpetrators of evil acts against woman and children.

I want to thank all officers who worked hard to secure the achievement alluded to by the Minister.

These life sentences to criminals who target vulnerable groups allows for an environment where we will be able to raise our children free from fear and want.

Domestic violence happens behind locked gates and closed doors, therefore I want to appeal to the SAPS working with my Department to do everything possible to

secure community participation. In that way, we will close down the breathing space for abusers of woman and children.

Through the Criminal Justice System, we all mobilize for maximum permissible sentences for those who are found guilty of perpetuating abuse against women and children.

Program Director, This Province is known in the country as one of the Provinces that has been consistent in the reduction of crime.

As we celebrate the National Police day today, let me call on all of you to renew your commitment to that shining record.

This will surely not be a one man job alone, but it requires hard work from all of us as members of this cluster. I have full confidence in the Leadership of the Provincial Commissioner Lt. General Mark Magadlela to steer this ship.

We must intensify our work on the 25 priority police stations that are contributing more to crime statistics in the Province and gave them a closer look and attention.

We must intensify our Overall Friday programmes which necessitate joint planning by SAPS and all its units, Traffic Officials and DCSSL to conduct road blocks, stops and searches, raiding of taverns and shebeens.

Therefore, as we celebrate the National Police Day, we should instil a desire on the Police to ensure that, places of leisure are safe for those who chose to use them and that they are also run in line with their license conditions. This includes ensuring that they are not selling alcohol to underage children.

We all know that taverns are generators of crime and they are responsible for increasing crime statistics. We need to conduct more intelligence driven operation in taverns.

That is why I was happy that Minister Nhleko's announced in his budget speech last year that the budget for crime intelligence has been increased by 7.8% in the medium term. This increase must translate into high level intelligence driven operation to stop crime before it happens.

We must get drugs before they reach our youth and be a step ahead of syndicates and cartels that are operation around.

It is my view that the greatest beneficiaries of this development will be our communities as government continues to strengthen war on crime. Intelligence driven policing is very fundamental in our fight against crime and corruption.

I also noted that the budget for the SAPS' Detective Services also increased and that must improve the conviction rates and also improve public confidence in government's effort to fight against crime.

All this, Program Director happens against the backdrop that some police officers amongst us are actually not with us. They are with the criminals.

Corruption and criminal activities within the SAPS is a worrying factor. As part of fighting it, we must intensify community orientated policing and encourage members of the public to report any wrong-doing that they see police officers doing.

We believe the few police officers who are doing wrong things should be exposed and when they are found guilty, they should be taken out of the system.

As we celebrate this day, officers must renew their commitment to arrest their fellow officers once they cross the line to become criminals. A police must uphold the law not break it.

This must be done without blink because their actions, do not only rob communities of qualitative services, but they endanger the lives of their colleagues and that of community members.

Program Director, Police have a right to defend themselves from criminals, and criminals must know that we cannot allow them to continue to kill our police officers.

As part of our efforts to mobilise communities against police killing in Mpumalanga we are saying “bulala iphoyisa wabulal’ umphakathi”, you kill a police, you kill a community.

We are of the view that Police officials are there to protect us and society has a collective responsibility to ensure that they are protected too.

Phansi ngokubulala amaphoyisa phansi.

Program Director, this ever increasing number of violent service delivery protest that police have to deal with is worrying. These protests divert your attention other crimes and exhaust your limited resources.

It is also true that, during the violence, confrontation ensued between the police and community which damage this much needed relationship between the two in order to effectively win the fight against crime.

More work need to be done to eliminate the violence during protests. We are a free country; communities must not vandalize property, burn clinics and schools in the name of lack of services delivery.

Program Director, as we celebrate this important day today, let us remind ourselves of the commitment as a country to Vision 2030 as contain in the National Development Plan.

Let’s build a united front to help and protect communities, let our daily work always take us closer to vision 2030.

Safer communities can be realised, if we all play our part in our different areas of responsibilities.

As the sun rises in Mpumalanga, lets work together with our communities for safer living environment.

I thank you.