

KZN Provincial Executive Council Media Statement By Honourable Premier Sihle Zikalala Focusing On The Crime Turn Around Strategy And Plans To Build A Crime Free Province

KZN PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEDIA STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SIHLE ZIKALALA FOCUSING ON THE CRIME TURN AROUND STRATEGY AND PLANS TO BUILD A CRIME FREE PROVINCE, MAYVILLE DURBAN, 21 OCTOBER 2020

- Minister of Police, General Bheki Cele;
- MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Bheki Ntuli;
- National Police Commissioner, General Khehla Sitole;
- Members of the media;

Thank you very much members of the media for responding positively to our invitation to attend this media briefing. We always value the continuous partnership with you in keeping our citizens informed and updated about issues affecting the lives of citizens in our province.

The Provincial Executive Council of KwaZulu-Natal has convened an emergency meeting which was focused on dealing with the scourge of escalating levels of crime in the province. This was convened out of the conviction that no government can govern freely and effectively if people are not safe and do not feel safe in their communities and live in fear.

This emergency meeting emanates from the presentation which was made by the MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Bheki Ntuli, together with the Provincial Police Commissioner Lieutenant-General Jula, after the release of the National Crime Statistics. The presentation painted a grim picture in showing the seriousness and escalating levels of crime in the province.

What was more concerning, was the fact that there are areas, which over the past ten years or more have featured continuously on the national list of leading stations when it comes to crimes such as murder and sexual assault.

Our view is that the situation needs to drastically change. If we are to win the battle against crime we must all put our hands on deck.

The KwaZulu-Natal Citizens Satisfaction Survey, which is the study conducted annually, always places crime as an apex concern for the people of this province. As government we can't always be lamenting about crime levels, but we need to do something, review strategies, invent new ideas and apply new tactics.

We welcome the presence of the Minister of Police, General Cele, who has joined us to re-enforce the Turn-around Strategy of the SAPS and his presence is reassuring that government at a national level is indeed willing to give us all forms of support.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Provincial Executive Council has identified the battle against crime as key to the implementation of a successful post Covid-19 Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, and has vowed to intensify all efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability in the province.

In a report tabled today, Minister Cele indicated how the anti-crime Turnaround Strategy had resulted in an encouraging reduction in provincial crime levels for the period October 2019 to March 2020. The KZN anti-crime Turnaround Strategy rolled out by SAPS since 2018 has been credited for the significant drop in key crimes that the province has experienced since October last year.

During this period an overall decrease of 2.2% in crime was recorded compared to the same period in the previous year. For instance, a comparison of Contact crimes in 2017/2018 to 2018/2019 showed an increase of 4.1%. However, when comparing Contact Crimes that were reported in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 there was an increase of only 1.8% which increase was cut by more than 50%. This clearly indicates that the implementation of the Turnaround Strategy is proving to be successful.

In addition, the Provincial Crime statistics for the period from 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2020 show a reduction of 20.2% in the 17 Community Reported crimes. All crime categories have shown a decrease with the exception of crimes linked to borders with Mozambique and Lesotho. These cross-border crimes continue to pose a big threat to the country's sovereignty and therefore will remain a priority over the current financial year. Engagements with all agencies responsible for boarder management and control are continuing so that collectively we can reduce these crimes.\*\*\*

Much remains to be done in the effort to build a KwaZulu-Natal that is safe and secure for all, more especially women and children. The brutality we are witnessing against women and children is alarming and something drastic needs to be done now, not tomorrow but now.

National Government has identified 30 GBV and Femicide hotspots across the country. Six of these hotspots are located in this province. They include Umlazi, Empangeni, Ntuzuma, Osizweni, KwaMashu and Inanda which is sadly also known as the rape capital of the country. The provincial government remains committed to protecting women and children and we have developed a comprehensive approach working with all other sectors and organisations that are involved. Over and above this, we are encouraged that the SAPS has prioritised crimes committed against women and children, including the establishment of dedicated GBV helpdesks at police stations. This will go a long way in ensuring that efficient service is rendered to all victims of Gender Based and Domestic Violence.

We applaud the fact that the Minister after noting the positive impact of the Turnaround Strategy the Provincial Management of the SAPS decided to continue with the strategy until 31st March 2021. This will undoubtedly deliver the envisaged results and further reduce crime level in the province.

The Turnaround Strategy will focus on Stabilizing the crime situation in the top 30 stations in KwaZulu-Natal as identified during the State of the Province Address and the announcement of crime Statistics by Minister Cele.

During this period, criminal syndicates and those with illegal firearms will also be targeted as they remain a major threat because they plan murders, robberies, cash-in-transit heists, and motor vehicle thefts; their tactics are often aimed at evading the police at all cost.

Back in 2019 the Province of KwaZulu-Natal was identified as one of the Provinces in South Africa that was experiencing an escalation in violent crimes, especially contact crimes, including murder and attempted murders, aggravated robberies, sexual offences and assault GBH.

Derived from the Turnaround Strategy will be the Stabilisation Plan that will target the following 11 stations prioritised because of their high crime levels including Rape, Murder and Gender-Based Violence. These are:

- Plessislaer;
- Durban Central;
- Umlazi;
- Inanda;
- Phoenix;
- Ntuzuma;
- Kwamashu E;
- Marriannahill;
- Verulam;
- Cato Manor; and,

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we expect the political campaigns for the Local Government Election 2021 to start intensifying early next year, the province continue to be vigilant against incidents of violence and political killings. The work done so far points to serious stability that has been achieved. We have seen a decrease in incidents of killings of public representatives and we have decided to resuscitate the Multi-Party-Political Intervention Committee for early detection of threats and pro-active intervention. We also commend the good work done by the Political Task Team with regards to the investigation of some of these cases. Our message this time around is that KwaZulu-Natal should not be a hotspot for political killings. Working with all political parties we want to send a clear message that tolerance and political peaceful co-existence is possible. We appeal to leaders of political parties and community at large to denounce violence and embrace tolerance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are now approaching the November Safety Month. The Department of Community Safety and Liaison working with the police have detailed a plan of action. What is important is the fact that we will be using this month to launch the provincial crime fighting campaign known as Operation Vala. Through this campaign our intentions are clear, it is to fight and defeat crime. We will also be using this campaign to build strong relations between the police and the communities. Recently we have had few community protests where allegations of police brutality were suspected. We are against the use of maximum force against un-armed civilians however, people must also be educated to cooperate with the police. We have tasked MEC Ntuli to follow-up on these cases with the Independent Police Investigative Directorate to ensure that police who abuse their power face the full might of the law. The campaign will also focus on assessing the functionality of stations when it comes to handling of Gender-Based Violence cases. We will also be robustly engaged in a campaign to collect the illegal firearms in the hands of our communities.

The roll-out of this campaign and the partnership with the police and all community structures will be paving the way for a peaceful festive season holiday. This year, we will make sure that criminals are squeezed, and they have no space to advance their nefarious activities.

Building a Crime Free KwaZulu-Natal is possible! Let's work together to build a Growing Province!

I thank you