**STATEMENT BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON BHEKI NTULI (MPL) ON 13 AUGUST 2020 TO PRESENT THE PROVINCIAL TURNAROUND STRATEGY TO COMBAT CRIME AND TAXI VIOLENCE, AT INANDA POLICE STATION, DURBAN**

* HOD for Community Safety and Liaison, Mr Sibusiso Gumbi;
* Acting HOD for Transport, Ms Simanga Ngubo;
* Provincial Police Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Khombinkosi Jula;
* SAPS Officers present;
* Officials from the Department of Community Safety and Liaison and Department of Transport present;
* Ladies and gentlemen of the Media;good afternoon to you all.

**Introduction**

We would like to start by welcoming members of the media present here today and thank you for attending this media briefing.

The purpose of today’s briefing is to reflect on the crime trends and present the KwaZulu-Natal Turnaround Strategy to combat crime.

Primarily, our plans are mainly focused on addressing the scourge of stubborn crimes such as murder, the scourge of Gender-Based Violence and taxi violence in our province.

Our response plan is in line with our service delivery agreement of **‘Collectively building a crime free province’** as outlined in the budget presentation for the 2020/2021 financial year.

Members of the media are aware that the Annual Crime Statistics presented by Police Minister General Bheki Cele late last month revealed that KZN is one of the leading provinces when it comes to crime and it is the hub of murder, carjacking and sexual offences.

This concerns us and is calling on us to respond with a detailed plan of action, which is informed by these statistics. Importantly, we must use these statistics to measure our interventions over the years if they are making a dent to these serious crimes and in stabilizing the social order of those affected communities.

We also welcome the directive by the Minister Cele that going forward crime statistics will be released quarterly as opposed to annually. This new approach will allow for timeous intervention measures aimed at reducing crime across the various crime categories and will assist in reviewing our action plans where necessary, in line with changing crime trends.

**VIOLENT CRIMES TREND ANALYSIS**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the trend analysis for the 2019/2020 Crime Statistics in the province reflects that all *Contact Crimes,* except *Attempted Murder*, increased marginally in the latest reporting period. The crimes which saw the largest increases were *Murder* (up by 10.6%), *Common Assault* (up by 5.9%) and *Sexual Offences* (up by 5.4%). KwaZulu-Natal also recorded an additional 3 649 counts of *Contact Crimes*.

The fact that violent crimes such as the heinous acts of murder, sexual offences and assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm have increased means that we must intensify our efforts to rid our society of all forms of criminality.

It cannot be business as usual when our province is leading in various crime categories, as such I have directed the police management to invest all necessary resources to make sure that we eradicate crime.

However, all crimes within the *Property Crimes* category have decreased, and these include *Burglaries* (at homes and businesses), *Thefts of vehicles*, and *Stock Theft*. While we welcome the improvements in the *Property Crimes* category, there is still a greater need for strengthening collaboration between police and the community to fight back the criminals and eliminate violent crimes in our province.

We have directed that all wards, local municipalities up to the district level, must have their District Crime Fighting Strategies. Importantly, our main task is to improve relations between the communities and the police so that collectively we can squeeze the space to criminals.

We also want to sharpen community intelligence in the fight against crime so that they themselves can play a significant role in liberating their townships and villages – they must claim what belongs to them back from these dangerous and brutal criminals who are terrorising our people.

**CONTACT CRIME**

Members of the media*, Contact Crime* as a total had been decreasing between 2013 and 2018 but has risen in the last two years.

**Murder:** The latest figure of **4 859** Murders is a **10.6%** increase on the previous period, an increase of 464 Murders. **Murder** has increased year-on-year in KZN over the 5-year period. The present figure is the highest *Murder* figure in the last 10 years.

The problematic areas in respect of *Murder* are:Inanda, Umlazi, Plessislaer, Mpumalanga, KwaMashu E, Marriannhill, Cato Manor, Ezakheni, Verulam and KwaDabeka.Analysis conducted by the SAPS has indicated that Murders occur mainly over weekends with alcohol and drugs continuously playing a major role in incidents.

Youth feature prominently in incidents as both victims and perpetrators. Slightly more Murders are committed with firearms than with sharp objects. The high prevalence of murder cases in the province is owing to the fact that we have many firearms that are in the wrong hands. As part of the turn-around plan to combat crime we have directed the police to spare no effort in rooting out all illegal firearms in the communities through targeted operations.

**POLICE KILLINGS**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are deeply disturbed by the fact that KwaZulu-Natal recorded the highest number of members of the police that have been murdered in the country, with 10 officers killed off-duty while seven officers were killed while on duty.

The alarming number of police officers killed in the line of duty clearly demonstrates that police are under siege and are also targeted by criminals, even in the communities where they reside. This act of criminality needs to be confronted by all of us because it is a direct attack to the state and the rule of law. The violence against the police calls for us to unite in defending our police as they are the only shield between criminals and innocent civilians. We also appeal to them to use safety protective gears when conducting operations and to fight until the last bullet in their defense against ruthless and dangerous criminals.

On this note we commend the police, who on Tuesday defended themselves against criminals in Malvern, Durban, which resulted to five suspects dying during the shoot-out. This will send a very strong message to criminals.

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL OFFENCES**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the scourge of Gender-Based Violence is one of the persistent crimes that needs serious and urgent attention. We must bemoan the cruelty and brutality against women. The crime directed against women and children is alarming and all of us need to stand up to defeat the scourge. Many gender-based violence incidents happen behind closed-doors, so police rely on the statements and evidence brought by the victims. Therefore, we call on neighbours and family members not to turn a blind-eye when they witness gender-based violence but they need to come forward and report these incidents to police before an innocent life is lost.

We are angered by the on-going killing of women by a suspected serial killer in uMthwalume, South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Yesterday, a fifth body was discovered, and we have instructed the police to work day and night to ensure that the suspect or suspects are arrested sooner than later. On Saturday we are going to engage the community of this area – and by that time I demand progress from the police. We cannot allow our women to be terrorised in this manner.

**Sexual Offences** rose by 5.4% to 9 809 incidents. Problematic areas include: Inanda, Umlazi, Plessislaer, Empangeni, KwaDukuza, Osizweni, Pongola, KwaMashu E, Mountain Rise and Eshowe. Within this category, ***Rape*** increased by 4.6% (standing at 8 268 reported cases), ***Sexual Assault***increased by 8% (standing at 1 367 reported cases) and ***Contact Sexual Offences***increased by 24.3% (standing at 174 reported cases).

While clamping down and eliminating these heinous gender-based violence crimes will not be an overnight assignment, we are confident that we are in a good space to tackle this scourge and reduce the current levels of violence in the society. Our turn around strategy will focus more on intelligence driven operations and community support to reduce the frequency and intensity of crime.

As part of the strategy, we are going to unleash a provincial campaign against serious crimes and Gender Based Violence will also feature strongly in the provincial campaign dubbed **“Operation Vala”.** The aim of this campaign is to intensify the departmental crime prevention strategy and tactics.

The campaign will be integrating other Departments, including Social Development and SAPS. Some of the activities will be coordinated through the Provincial Council Against Crime, which is a structure that involves all role players, including, gender activists’ organizations, civil society, organised labour and business.

Through this campaign, we are determined to make our streets, homes and communities safer through improved police visibility and greater involvement in community policing and safety structures. Indeed, fighting crime is our collective responsibility.

We will also conduct workshops and trainings as means of beefing-up the stations where a high number of Gender Based Violence cases are reported. Working with eThekwini Municipality, Joint Crime Prevention Structures and civil society we will embark on a campaign to mobilise communities to reclaim their space. Both Metro Police and SAPS working with community safety structures will focus their energy in identified hotspot areas, like, *Inanda, Ntuzuma, Kwamashu, Umlazi and Pinetown.*

In eradicating crime and violence in these hotspot areas, integrated law enforcement operations will be held. Working with the Youth, Interfaith, Men's Fora, all crime fighting structures, Safer Cities as well as academia we will strengthen our educational and awareness campaigns on Gender-Based Violence.

The Department of Community Safety and Liaison, working with other stakeholders, has conducted more than 40 awareness programmes in various communities to fight the scourge of Gender-Based Violence, we have deployed 60 of our volunteers at Victim Friendly Facilities and also welcome the employment of 183 Gender-Based Violence support social workers by the Department of Social Development.

Furthermore, we have directed the police in the province to prioritise murders and Gender-Based Violence cases and in most cases, suspects are being apprehended.

**TAXI VIOLENCE**

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the key contributing factors to instability in the province is taxi violence. We have held a series of engagements with the provincial leadership of the taxi industry to address the spike in taxi related conflict and murders, including recent incidents which saw commuters being caught in the crossfire.

There have been eight (8) taxi related murders and 20 cases of attempted murders this year alone due to ongoing violence, unrest and instability involving the Ndwedwe and District Taxi Association. The fatalities include three (3) commuters, three (3) taxi drivers, one (1) taxi owner and one (1) rank manager. With regards to the 20 attempted murder cases, 18 are community members and two (2) are taxi drivers. All these people sustained gunshot injuries and could have lost their lives.

We acknowledge however that out of the 246 taxi associations in KwaZulu-Natal, very few remain with challenges. Our assessment with the industry is giving us clear indications that the source of the conflict has very little to do with route disputes. However, the violence is fuelled by internal association power struggles and dynamics.

Apart from the Ndwedwe and District Taxi Association, special attention will also be given to the Mpumalanga and District Taxi Association, Lower South Coast Taxi Association, Dolphin Coast Taxi Association, Richards Bay Taxi Association, Bambanani Taxi Association, Umzinto Taxi Association and Swayimane Taxi Association which have also been engulfed with violence.

To-date 47 taxi violence cases have resulted in convictions, 15 cases did not result in guilty verdicts, 48 cases are currently on the Court rolls whereas more than 449 cases are under investigations. Police are closing in on suspects linked to these cases and arrests are eminent.

As government we have regular engagements with the taxi industry, but more recently I held an urgent meeting with the taxi industry leadership, following the brazen attack last month which went viral on social media, where a taxi affiliated to the Ndwedwe and District Taxi Association was shot at multiple times by unknown gunmen who were travelling in a white Bakkie. In this incident a 55-year-old female passenger was shot and declared dead on the scene while six passengers who sustained gunshot wounds were rushed to hospital.

We convey our deepest condolences to all the affected families and we wish to assure them that their loved ones have not died in vain and we are determined to end the violence in this area – and many others.

Disturbingly, since we started making interventions, two taxis affiliated to the Ndwedwe and District Taxi Association ferrying passengers again came under heavy attack from unknown assailants, in separate incidents. In the latest brazen attack which took place on 01 August 2020, a passenger and taxi driver were shot and declared dead on the scene and three passengers who sustained gunshot wounds were rushed to hospital and one passenger succumbed to their injuries in hospital.

It therefore became clear that urgent action needed to be taken in order to prevent further bloodshed.

I have also been directed by the Provincial Executive Council to act decisively and drastically to ensure that innocent lives are protected, especially commuters who continue to bear the brunt of taxi violence.

As such, we are now taking extraordinary measures to normalise and stabilize transport services in the area which is affected by violence, unrest, conflict or instability, hereby declare.

Having declared extraordinary measures in uMzinyathi and Ndwedwe in eThekwini, I intend invoking the provisions of Section 91(2) (a) and/or (b) of the Act of the National Land Transport Act. Further details whereof shall be published through an appropriate medium including a Government Gazette today. This notice declares our intention to shut-down the operations in the area, should there be further incidents of violence and killings.

I have met with Minister Cele and the provincial SAPS team led by the Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant-General Jula to ensure that police work with other agencies in developing a comprehensive safety strategy thus maintain a heavy presence along the route. On the other hand, we will also continue to engage the taxi industry and affected communities to explain our intentions in this regard.

I am pleased to report that three suspected hitmen who are involved in the Ndwedwe and District Taxi Association were arrested on Monday this week through an intelligence driven operation involving the Crime Intelligence Unit, Technical Response Team and Organised Crime Unit. During the operation, four illegal firearms were recovered which include three Rifles with ammunition and 9mm 45 Pistol with five rounds of ammunition which are suspected to have been used to carry out these heinous crimes. Police investigations are on-going to examine their possible link with the recent series of taxi violence murder cases in the Inanda area and more suspects are going to be arrested. We are clamping down on the network of criminals and closing in on the hitmen, including those who are issuing instruction whilst in prison.

Our people, the majority of whom are commuters are demanding, rightly so, a stable taxi industry – and that is exactly what we are working towards achieving in this province.

**STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE AND INSTABILITY**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I recently presented the turnaround strategy to the Provincial Executive Council aimed at addressing violence and instability in the province. This strategy which focuses on taxi violence, gender-based violence and political killings has been approved by executive council for implementation.

With regards to murder cases involving political figures, a task team of expert investigators was established to investigate any suspected political killings in the province. Since its inception 249 people have been charged with murder, 35 people have been sentenced and 48 dockets are ready for trial.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, ensuring an integrated approach to crime prevention through stronger collaboration between police and all crime fighting structures will form part of our robust intervention strategy in order to put an end to the rising crime scourge in our province. Increased police visibility is central to our strategic approach to ensure effective policing.

The fact that violent crimes such as the heinous acts of murder, sexual offences and assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm have increased means that we have to intensify our efforts to rid our society of all forms of criminality. It cannot be business as usual when our province is leading in various crime categories, as such the police management have been directed to invest all necessary resources to make sure that we eradicate crime.

The Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant-General Khombinkosi Jula will present a detailed overview of the 2019/2020 Crime Statistics in KZN.

I thank you.