

The Western Cape can develop the blueprint for provincial police service

By **Isaac Sileku MP** – Democratic Alliance Member of the NCOP

Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Minister and Deputy Minister,
Honourable Premiers,
Honourable Members,
And Fellow South Africans, Good Afternoon.

The 13th of July 2021 will stand out as the day when South Africans in every corner of this beautiful country were left breathless by the unpreparedness of our security cluster, and especially, the South African Police Department; in the face of the worst politically driven protests and unprecedented streak of crime since democratisation.

As a loyal and patriotic South African, I never regarded or treated this as a political opportunity to take a shot at the ANC's ability to govern and in this case police.

The potential consequences of what we witnessed in those hours that extended into days, when our economy was pillaged and the lives of people were in grave danger, are not matters that any political party should utilise to score political points. But let us not be mistaken, we all had a lingering fear that our community, and our neighbourhood, could be next to feel the brunt of an unprepared security cluster.

In the face of this situation it is time for us to sacrifice our political sentiments and to reach out to one another, and to address the safety of our people in unity.

Sadly, what happened in July of this year was not the first signs of a police service that became outnumbered if compared to the extent of crime in South Africa.

The signs were there.

The signs are there every day.

It is there in every city and every town.

It was there at Marikana.

It is there every time Minister Bheki Cele announces the crime statistics.

It is visible in almost every violent service delivery protest where POPS is, at times so badly outnumbered that they simply cannot protect people nor, municipal and economic infrastructure.

The signs are there when frustrated people take to the streets.

The deteriorating state of the economy is there as a testimony of the effects of lawless actions and the limitations of SAPS.

Chairperson, the signs are here in the Western Cape where the gang lords, for decades, dictate to the people and the police. This as a result of the corruption embedded within SAPS who have aided these gang lords in their criminal enterprises by selling guns to them.

It was there when POPS lost control of a protest in Caledon and two men died.

It is there, every day and every night, in the informal townships, when kids are murdered, mutilated and violated.

It is here, where we have one of the highest rates of violence inflicted on women and girls in the world, where our daughters are killed and raped, then plummeted into emotional despair.

Every day criminals throw down the gauntlet in the face of the police. They challenge and almost formally confront the police and they get away with it.

Chairperson, this cannot continue.

We know that July 2021 was small compared to what can happen when the political agendas and criminals really start to play.

The Western Cape is hard hit by a lacking police presence and capacity when it comes to crime, the reign of gang bosses and protests.

It is only a matter of time before the police fails and are overpowered. When that happens it will dwarf the events of Marikana.

Should we wait for that to happen?

No, Chairperson, we have to take pre-emptive actions.

And therein lies the solution. That solution is to extend competent provinces the mandate to include the South African Police Service.

Chairperson, we are forced to go this route as the face of crime differs in every province and not every province has the face of the ANC.

We should go this way in the Western Cape because this province can develop a blueprint for a successful provincial police service.

We should walk this road to strengthen our police and to restore the respect they deserve.

We should walk this road to save people their livelihoods and once again allow our females to walk this beautiful country without a constant fear of; "am I next?"

We should walk this way to protect state infrastructure and scarce resources that drives our economy.

To conclude Chairperson, I request government to commence the devolution of SAPS to competent Provinces. This will need a blueprint and I suggest that the blueprint be developed in the Western Cape as it is the only competent province with the ability to successfully implement it.

I thank you.