



REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON POLICE ON REFERRED PETITION RELATED TO GANG VIOLENCE IN THE NORTHERN AREAS OF NELSON MANDELA BAY, DATED 21 MAY 2025.

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The Portfolio Committee on Police, having considered the petitions from Mr. Cassim (MPL) Members of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature), reports as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION

The Speaker of the National Assembly referred a petition from Mr Yusuf Cassim (MPL), Member of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, to the Portfolio Committee on Police for consideration and report. The petition requested an investigation into issues related to gang violence in the northern areas of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

2. PETITION: MR Y CASSIM (MPL)

On 7 May 2025, the Portfolio Committee on Police received a presentation from Mr. Yusuf Cassim (MPL), Member of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature that is based on his petition to Parliament. The presentation highlighted the persistent and escalating crisis of gang violence in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. The presentation provided both statistical evidence and lived experiences of a community in distress, where violence has become routine and trust in policing structures is eroding.

The Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay have been gripped by gang-related shootings, killings, and drug-related crime. Between 2021 and 2023, 361 gang-related shooting incidents were recorded, of which 319 were recorded in the Northern Areas, resulting in the deaths of 180 people, including 22 children. In the 2023/24 financial year, 62 individuals, 17 of them children, were killed in gang-related



violence. A staggering 1,060 gang-related killings were documented between 2019 and April 2025 by concerned community members.

Tragic incidents cited included the deaths of 14-year-old Kurtley Roussouw, who was shot while playing soccer, 89-year-old Sophie Erasmus, brutally murdered in her home, and the fatal shooting of three-year-old Emilio Hutchinson, his grandmother, and a family friend in Helenvale in 2024.

Despite the severity of the crisis, Mr. Cassim (MPL) highlighted that previous interventions and commitments by the former Minister of Police have failed to materialise meaningfully. Formal requests for intervention were made as early as October 2023, including calls for the urgent deployment of specialised units, increased police visibility, and investment in crime-fighting technology such as CCTV, ShotSpotter, and drones. Following the killing of Emilio Hutchinson in April 2024, further appeals were made, and a memorandum of demands was submitted to the Gelvandale Police Station. Still, there has been no tangible response from SAPS or the Ministry of Police.

The result has been a formal complaint to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), lodged against the former Minister of Police, the National Commissioner, and the Eastern Cape Provincial Commissioner for their failure to act on repeated warnings and public appeals.

The petition highlighted several systemic failures of the South African Police Service (SAPS), including:

- Severely under-resourced local police stations and specialised units.
- Inadequate crime intelligence capacity in the Eastern Cape.
- Delays in SAPS responses to emergencies in certain parts of the Northern Areas.
- Concerns about police complicity or association with known gang members.
- The collapse of community policing mechanisms due to lack of support.
- Widespread drug activity in schools, affecting as many as 60% of school-going children.
- A dire shortage of social infrastructure, including no public drug rehabilitation centres, skills centres, or schools of skills.

Mr Cassim (MPL) proposed a multi-pronged approach to addressing the crisis:

1. Doubling the personnel of the Anti-Gang Unit (AGU) and deploying experienced detectives nationally to assist in Nelson Mandela Bay.
2. Enhancing police visibility through additional functional vehicles and manpower.
3. Strengthening crime intelligence in the Eastern Cape.



4. Investing in surveillance and crime prevention technologies, including CCTV, ShotSpotter, and drones.
5. Supporting Neighbourhood Watch groups with equipment and logistical backing.
6. Convening joint parliamentary oversight engagements with the Committees on Basic Education, Higher Education, and Social Development to explore integrated social solutions.
7. Conducting a formal oversight visit by the Portfolio Committee on Police to the Northern Areas, to engage directly with affected communities and ensure that interventions are not only noted but implemented.

3. DELIBERATIONS BY THE COMMITTEE

During its deliberations on gang violence in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, the Portfolio Committee on Police engaged with Mr. Y Cassim (MPL), and the South African Police Service (SAPS) and highlighted the following concerns:

Members of the Committee expressed deep concern over the operational readiness of police stations in affected areas, highlighting significant delays in vehicle repairs, shortages of operational resources, and the ineffectiveness of the AGU, which has suffered resignations and remains under-resourced. Questions were raised about the availability and functionality of technology such as the ShotSpotter system, which some Members described as outdated and ineffective, although Mr Cassim (MPL) later countered that it had shown success in certain parts of the region.

Concerns were also raised about the capacity of SAPS to conduct thorough investigations and secure convictions. Members questioned the low arrest and conviction rates, attributing these to excessive case docket loads, poor investigative follow-through, and insufficient prioritisation of drug-related forensic work. It was further noted that while the criminal justice system grants broad protections to suspects, bail was often granted too easily creating a sense of injustice among victims and communities. Committee Members voiced frustration that perpetrators appeared to enjoy more protections than those affected by their crimes.

Another major theme that emerged was the perceived strategic failure in tackling organised crime. Members noted that traditional policing methods were inadequate in addressing unconventional and well-embedded criminal networks. This point was reinforced by comparisons to the Western Cape, where similar dynamics between gangs, drugs, and under-resourced policing structures persist. Several Members suggested that the AGU, in its current form, was ineffective and had become little more than



a symbolic initiative. One Member proposed that the original architect of the AGU be summoned to brief the Committee on its purpose, effectiveness, and future viability.

Concerns extended beyond operational issues to broader institutional culture and accountability. Reports of SAPS members abusing state vehicles, appearing drunk while on duty, or making excuses related to stress without follow-through on psychological support interventions were described as unacceptable. These patterns of behaviour were seen to undermine public trust and suggested that for many officers, policing was treated as a job rather than a public calling. It was proposed that a national think tank be established to explore how to restore a sense of purpose and integrity within the police service.

In his response, Mr Cassim (MPL) acknowledged the relevance of the Drug Master Plan but questioned whether Parliament was exercising sufficient oversight over its implementation. He suggested that a multidisciplinary Joint Committee be established in the National Assembly to monitor the Plan's delivery across Departments. While recognising the resource constraints within SAPS, he argued that the issue also lies in a lack of clear and cohesive strategy. He thanked local police and station commissioners for their responsiveness in conducting drug raids and clarified that while certain systems such as ShotSpotter were working in his experience, the absence of dedicated liquor licence officers and institutional support had left many officers set up to fail.

The Minister of Police also responded, noting that while socio-economic factors such as unemployment and poverty were contributing factors to crime, they were not the sole cause. He acknowledged the presence of criminality within SAPS and stressed that although resource constraints were real, they could not be used as an excuse. He informed the Committee that structural changes to SAPS had been approved by the Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council (SSSBC), including the restructuring of the Visible Policing Component. This restructuring would split the current Component into two branches: one focused on station management and the other on operational duties, to improve command structures and frontline effectiveness.

Throughout the engagement, Members reiterated that the problems plaguing Nelson Mandela Bay were systemic and echoed across the country. Repeated acts of violence, a culture of fear in communities, and an apparent lack of accountability had become entrenched. Members underscored the need for Parliament to move beyond surface-level discussions and address the root causes of dysfunction in law enforcement. In their view, proper resourcing, strategic clarity, and a renewed commitment to ethical



policing were essential to restore public confidence and ensure that communities are protected from the violence and intimidation associated with organised crime.

4. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Portfolio Committee on Police resolved to request further information from SAPS on the status and resourcing of the AGU and Crime Intelligence in the Eastern Cape, as well as SAPS' plans to improve investigation quality, prioritise forensic analysis, and enforce discipline among its ranks. Consideration would also be given to holding interdepartmental engagements on the Drug Master Plan and the possibility of establishing a joint oversight mechanism to ensure that national strategies translate into tangible interventions on the ground.

The Committee recommends the following:

- 1) SAPS must urgently address staffing, equipment, and capacity gaps in the Eastern Cape's AGU and Crime Intelligence structures, specifically in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. A progress report on steps taken to implement the recommendation should be submitted by the end of July 2025.
- 2) SAPS should prioritise forensic processing in drug-related cases and intensify school-based anti-drug operations, not only in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality area, but countrywide.
- 3) SAPS must enforce accountability for officer misconduct (e.g., abuse of state vehicles, intoxication) and expand psychological support services to officers.
- 4) SAPS must engage the Department of Justice to assess and, if necessary, reform bail policies in relation to gang and drug-related offences. A report on this engagement must be submitted to the Portfolio Committee by the end of July 2025.

5. CONCLUSION

The Committee appreciates the public participation in Parliament as enshrined in the Constitution and highlights the importance of concern raised by citizens on service delivery issues affecting them at ground level. This enables the Committee, through Parliament, to assist citizens to improve service delivery.

Report to be considered.