

## **ANC Parliamentary Caucus.**

### **Peace and Stability Cluster: Study Group on Police.**

#### **Ministerial Statement: The Statement by the Minister of Police on actions taken by the South African Police Services to deal with threats posed by extortion in the country.**

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**Cde Plaatjies (8 Minutes)**

**Honorable Chair**

**Ministers and Deputy Ministers**

**Honorable members**

**Let me start by passing our sincere condolences to the MK party for the lost of their members over the weekend.**

We welcome the statement by the Minister of Police in outlining the interventions by the police to deal with crime in general including the crime of extortion that is rising within our communities.

These interventions are aimed at building safer communities which is a policy priority of the ANC in government. We know too well that our people want to live in safer communities without fear of criminals and that they want to engage in business activities without any hindrance from criminals.

Our point of departure and point of arrival is that all of us have Rights as outlined in Chapter two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Some of the fundamental Rights include the Right to Dignity, the Right to Life, the Right to Freedom of Trade, Occupation and Profession.

Therefore, it should be borne in the mind of criminals that when they harm their fellow citizens, when they engage in activities of extortion, when they frustrate and stop construction activities demanding money for services they did not render, they are in essence undermining these fundamental Rights to our people as outlined in the Constitution.

To these criminals we say nobody, regardless of how powerful they can think they are, have a right to undermine the Rights of the people of this country!

These criminals must stop their illegal activities, if they don't stop, the law enforcement agencies must stop their criminal activities!

We characterise these crimes of extortion as crimes of economic sabotage because they disrupt economic activities in the construction industry, through the so-called 'construction mafia' gangs who demand monies for services they did not render. Crime of extortion robs some businesses, especially small businesses, of their hard-earned revenue to criminals who thrive on threatening our people.

It goes without saying that many aspirant business persons, both local and foreign will be discouraged from investing in our economy because of fear of these extortionists.

Therefore, the extortionists are militating against the noble efforts of government to build safer communities, the efforts of creating a conducive environment for economic activities to thrive, these criminals are standing on the way of government to provide services to our people, they are disrupting government infrastructure development.

Extortionists targets various businesses including the transport sector. Some schools had to close and learners miss their classes and lessons because extortionists were demanding monies on some of the projects in the schools.

These crimes of extortion are rising in many of our provinces, including the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, North West and the Western Cape. The concern is that these crimes may be higher given that most of our people are threatened and thus does not report these crimes of extortion to the police.

We note the deployment of the extra police capacity in Eastern Cape by the SAPS to deal with the crimes of extortion. This deployment follows the engagement of the police with stakeholders in Mthatha and Gqeberha.

This deployment of police will also focus on clamping down gangsterism which is also linked to the crimes of extortion.

It is important to acknowledge the contribution of civil society and the institution of traditional leadership in the fight against crime in general and in particular the crimes of extortion.

In this regard, we would like to commend the steps taken by the King of the AbaThembu tribe, King Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo, Zwelibanzi, for ensuring that the acts of extortion in the Mthatha area are stopped and ensuring that nothing disrupt schools from operating and that teaching and learning should proceed unhindered by thugs.

In this spirit of Zwelibanzi, we urge civil society and institutions of traditional leadership to work together with the police and law enforcement agencies to root out these crimes of extortion out of our communities.

Our firm believe is that the police alone cannot win the fight against crime. Crime is everybody's business and therefore we should lend a hand.

We commend the steps taken by the Minister of Police to build collaboration and cooperation among the law enforcement agencies among the spheres of government to deal with crime.

We urge the Minister to roll-out these collaborative efforts to other provinces to ensure the safety of our people and thus build safer communities. We therefore call on national dialogue in form of community Imbizos so that we don't leave our communities behind.

We call on the society, through the CPFs, and other civil society organisations to join hands with the law enforcement agencies to fight crime in our country.

We cannot surrender our country to criminals. We have fought so hard for our democracy and many of our compatriots have died for this freedom and therefore nobody has a right to undermine the freedom we have by visiting crime upon our people.