

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL CHAIRPERSON OF THE JUSTICE, CRIME PREVENTION AND SECURITY CLUSTER, MR SIPHO HLOMUKA, ON THE PLANNED PROTEST, FRIDAY 17 MARCH 2023, ARCHIE GUMEDE BUILDING, DURBAN

Provincial Police Commissioner, Lt Gen Mkhwanazi;

Acting Head of Department for Community Safety and Liaison, Ms Xaba;

Other heads of enforcement agencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media;

Members of the media, we appreciate your presence in this media briefing convened by the KwaZulu-Natal Crime, Justice and Security Cluster (JCPS). I have been mandated as the Chairperson of this Provincial Executive Council sub committee to share our position as the province.

We are doing this because KwaZulu-Natal is historically known to be a centre of many activities and unfortunately, unlike other provinces, things always intensify in our province. You will recall the July 2021 unrest and looting, and many other unfortunate incidents that have been characterised by violence and disruptions in the past.

As the province, we align ourselves with the position of the National JCPS that Monday, 20 March 2023, will be a normal working day in the province and we wish to assure our people, especially those who will be going to work that their rights to work and commute will be protected.

Whilst we respect the Constitutional right of the protesters to protest, such must be done peacefully and without tempering with the rights of others who will not be part of the planned protest action.

Our monitoring of the protest will be done inline with observing the National Gatherings Act no 25 of 1993. The act places the responsibility on the organiser to make sure that their action is peaceful, and their members act within the law.

It is important to note that learners will not be going to school on Monday because of the Human Rights Day holiday on Tuesday. We therefore appeal to all parents to make sure that their children do not participate in the planned protests.

We are also encouraged by the fact the bodies representing the taxi industry, which is the South African Taxi Council (SANTACO), have distanced themselves from participating in the protests. This means public transport will be operating as normal.

Equally, the bus industry will be operating as per usual, trains will be working, and the freight industry have also engaged their members not to participate or be used in the planned protests.

STATE OF READINESS

As of Friday, 17 March 2023, all our teams and deployments from all districts will be activated and have been placed on high alert. We have also activated the Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (ProvJoints). This structure comprises of all government departments, including the South African Police Services, South African Defence Force. Equally, our intelligence operatives have been activated in all districts for early warning systems and for proactive interventions.

Through the ProvJoints, we will be monitoring developments every minute and hour of the day until the protesters disengage. We will use the lessons from the previous experiences to make sure that our citizens are safe.

As part of our operational plan, we have additional deployment that will be dedicated to this protest action. This will augment the existing 18 000 SAPS members in the province. Deployments will be made in areas which are perceived to be more fragile and seen as hot spots, including National Key Points.

Normal policing will continue at police stations as members of the public will be serviced as usual. As part of the deployment, we will have members of the Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI), Public Transport Enforcement Services (PTES), eThekweni Metro and other municipal traffic officials who will be managing all strategic points.

The police management have also convened a meeting with Business Against Crime to engage them on increasing vigilance and security around their premises. This means the private security will be part of the machinery that will be monitoring the situation on the ground.

The Department of Community Safety and Liaison will also be adding 1 400 volunteers in all districts to assist in monitoring the situation and feed the information to the police. Community Policing Forums and other Community Safety structures will be actively involved on the ground.

Government will also be deploying resources such as helicopters, vehicles, inyala's, water cannons, and technology as part of monitoring the planned protests and securing the people.

Public order police will also be deployed in all districts as they are trained in crowd management and control.

We also appeal to members of the public to refrain from circulating unverified information on social media. This causes unwarranted panic and we urge people to use social media responsibly during times like this. Stop circulating old videos!

We also want to caution against the spreading of messages of fear, intimidation or inflammatory statements that could incite violence. This is a criminal offence!

Law enforcement will not tolerate any lawlessness and any form of criminality. Therefore, it is important to note that anyone found contravening the law will be dealt with accordingly within the prescripts of the law.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGE STRIKE

As the JCPS in the province we welcome the decision by the labour unions to suspend the public sector strike. This is important because as the province we did experience some disruptions. This mostly affected hospitals and other critical sectors, including government buildings.

This planned protest, will have no effect to the public service operations. Members of the public must be assured that they will receive maximum service, this include licensing offices and social services officers.

On the same note we wish to commend the leadership of the unions for suspending their strike. This is progressive!

PROGRESS IN FIGHTING CRIME IN PROGRESS

The planned protest on Monday will not disrupt our crime fighting efforts as the province. Strides are being made every day to stabilize the province and fight key categories of crime. As the JCPS cluster we have a clear programme focusing on murder, illegal firearms, drugs and Gender Based Violence.

Yesterday police made a breakthrough in Cato Manner when they arrested heavily armed criminals who are believed to have been on their way to kill a business man. Police pro-actively intercepted and recovered two AK 47's and stolen vehicles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for the month of February 2023, as the cluster we have made number of progress and successes. More than 8 857 suspects were arrested for various crimes. Of these 152 for murder and 150 for attempted murder. Police also recovered 309 firearms and 4747 live ammunition.

Ninety-two (92) people were arrested for driving under the influence alcohol. 157kg of various drugs were seized. As we intensify the fight against the Gender Based Violence, as more than 157 arrest were made on crime committed against women and children.

This work will continue and we must applaud the efforts led by the police and all other law enforcement agencies.

CONCLUSION

As the JCPS cluster, we wish to commend the people of the province for their resilience and their involvement in the fight against crime. Even on Monday, we have no doubt that they will demonstrate their resilience and avoid any temptation to be on the wrong side of the law.

As one of the strategic priorities for this government, the JCPS will continue with its work of building a safer province. Let's work together as government, social partners and civil society.

We commit to leave no one behind in building a crime free society.

#CrimeMustFall

#BuildingAsaferProvince

I thank you