

EXECUTIVE STATEMENT ON THE 2016 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS TABLED AT THE KWAZULU-NATAL LEGISLATURE BY MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, MR TM KAUNDA, TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

- Madam Speaker;
- The Honourable Premier, Mr TW Mchunu;
- Honourable members;
- Invited guests;

Madam Speaker, please allow me rise and table the executive statement on the peaceful holding of the 2016 Local Government Elections and what this means for the province and the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, I table this statement in terms of rule 100 of the Standing Rules of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, particularly the Department of Community Safety and Liaison, as the leader of the JCPS Cluster, was charged with the task of creating an environment conducive for the holding of peaceful, free and fair Local Government Elections in the province.

Indeed, we were duty-bound to do this in order to fulfil the objectives of the Freedom Charter that “the People Shall Govern”.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, the Freedom Charter further instructs us to ensure that, and I quote, “Every Man and Woman Shall Have the Right to Vote and Stand as a Candidate for All Bodies Which Make Laws.”

Fellow people of KwaZulu-Natal, I therefore have no doubt that all our efforts during the build-up to the elections ensured that we fulfilled all these noble objectives of the Freedom Charter.

BACKGROUND

Speaker and Honourable members, please allow me to reflect on conditions in the province of KwaZulu-Natal during the build-up to the 3rd of August, the day of Local Government Elections.

Given the tension associated with elections list process in South Africa, this period was characterised by high levels of tensions, public protests and political intolerance.

Honourable Members, I regret to inform you, as you know, this was also accompanied by unfortunate loss of lives.

Prior to the elections, the police reported that 12 murders and three attempted murders took place. Other charges included possession of illegal firearms, intimidation and public violence.

These included the death of African National Congress members Bongani Skhosana (Ward 1 candidate in the Umziwabantu Municipality; Khanyisile Sibisi in Ladysmith; Thembi Mbongo (Ward 6 candidate in

Osizweni); Badedile Tshapha and Phetheni Ngubance (ANC volunteers in Imbali in Pietermaritzburg; Municipal Chief Financial officer Simo Mncwabe in Edendale and ANC Branch Chairperson Nathi Hlongwa in Edendale. Two Inkatha Freedom Party campaigners, Siyanda Mnguni and Thokozani Majola, were killed in Umtshezi.

It was announced that a Commission of Inquiry into political murders in KwaZulu-Natal might be launched. The police noted that they have made 11 arrests in the murder cases and two arrests in attempted murder cases. Police investigations are still ongoing.

MEASURES TAKEN TO STABILIZE THE PROVINCE

Honourable members, this was indeed, a difficult period in the province, triggering fears that we might be sliding back into the situation experienced during the political violence of late '80s and early '90s.

However, the Government, the political players and the law enforcement agencies swung into action and developed measures to stabilise the province and ensured that people were able to cast their votes freely.

The Office of the MEC re-activated the Multi-Party Political Intervention Committee, which met almost on all Mondays leading up to the elections. These meetings were attended by the management of the law enforcement agencies, including the leaders of the intelligence community in KwaZulu-Natal.

Another key player was the Independent Electoral Commission, whose leader in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Mawethu Mosery, deputised in chairing the meetings. At these meetings, we did not only get a commitment to work for peace from political leaders but threat analysis was also conducted and proper plans to deal with these threats were hammered out.

The Multi-Party Committee intervened and brought peace in a number of areas identified as hotspots, including holding prayer meetings in KwaMashu hostel and in Wembezi.

Significantly, the Office of the Premier and the IEC hosted platform and a briefing session where leaders of all political parties contesting elections publicly pledged to work for peace, free and fair elections.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Honourable Speaker, the Department of Community Safety and Liaison, in partnership with the law enforcement agencies developed an integrated 2016 Local Government Elections Monitoring and Law Enforcement Plan for the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The integrated plan provided for –

- The provision of 170 accredited independent private sector lawyers as a legal resource to resolve legal questions and disputes within voting stations on the voting day;
- Monitoring of police deployment and policing on the voting day by departmental officials;

- Monitoring of potential challenges within communities during the election period by crime-prevention volunteers and community safety structures.

The Department further activated all community safety structures such as the Community Policing Forums (CPF), KwaZulu-Natal Community Crime Prevention Association (KZN CCPA) to report any potential challenges.

In addition, the Department of Community Safety and Liaison, deployed 1 300 crime-prevention volunteers throughout the province to work in partnership with the law enforcement agencies.

Also, a Departmental Central Operational Centre was operational at its offices for purposes of central coordination, trouble-shooting and reporting to the MEC, SAPS and IEC.

SECURITY IN HIGH RISK VOTING AREAS

Here in KZN, there were about 5 411, 237 registered voters with more than 6 500 voting stations. The IEC deployed more than 50 000 IEC workers.

The SAPS ensured that there was adequate personnel in 17 clusters with 194 police stations.

The SAPS maintained static deployment in 162 high-risk voting stations. This ensured the prevention of politically-related violence.

Furthermore, the SAPS also ensured that all routes to and from the voting station were safe and that escort was provided for IEC sensitive materials such as the ballot papers. There were also a contingency plans for natural and man-made disasters.

There was a further deployment of the following personnel:-

- About 423 members of the Road Traffic Inspectorate
- About 250 Metro Police from eThekweni Municipality
- The Department of Health has deployed 180 personnel from Emergence Medical Rescue Services.

Importantly, a total of 14 944 trained SAPS personnel were deployed in voting stations throughout the province.

Over and above this, there were 170 members of the South African National Defence Force on standby. However, it never became necessary to activate them.

POST-ELECTION INCIDENTS

Despite the fact that the province held peaceful elections, we saw a disturbing trend of violence in the province post the elections. From the 18 to the 22 of August, about 12 people were brutally killed in the province. These incidents occurred in Intshanga, Swayimane, Melmoth, Nongoma and Ndwedwe. What made these incidents even more painful is that the victims included women and children.

It is important to indicate that at this stage there is no evidence linking these incidents to the elections. The law enforcement agencies have made some arrests in connection with these murders and the Department is now working flat out with communities to prevent further escalation of such incidents.

CONCLUSION

Madame Speaker, Honourable members and honoured guests, despite some unfortunate incidents of violence in the pre- and post- election periods, there is no gainsaying that KwaZulu-Natal delivered peaceful, free and fair elections.

This is, indeed, a loud and clear statement that KwaZulu-Natal has turned its back on conflict and violence and is en route to peace, stability and peaceful political co-existence.

For this, we wish to thank all the people of KwaZulu-Natal, including the law enforcement agencies, political parties and all key stakeholders, including the Independent Electoral Commission, for ensuring that the province delivered peaceful, free and fair elections.

We say to them the way we behaved ourselves has laid a solid foundation for continued peace, stability and development in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

However, as leaders, we still have a huge responsibility of deepening the democratic culture and tolerance in the people. This means that it is not yet the time to rest on our laurels until all hung municipalities have

been finalised. Police have been placed on full alert until all the work connected with the elections is finalised.

The other reality is that, given the unfortunate murder of some candidate councillors, we may see ourselves going through by-elections in another three months. Your leadership and commitment to peace will still be needed. I trust that you will make yourselves available when you are called upon.

Thank you.
