

MEDIA STATEMENT

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REPRIEVE FOR NONGOMA TAXI OPERATORS: RANK WON'T BE CLOSED JUST YET

MEC Willies Mchunu for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison in KwaZulu-Natal has read the riot act to Nongoma taxi operators following taxi killings that have claimed about 25 lives since 2007.

Mchunu lambasted the operators saying they have allowed the law of the jungle to reign in the industry. "You have brought dishonour to an important area of our province – the Royal Palace," he said. He added that even good police officers who investigate taxi killings are sometimes themselves killed or given "Isaka". "Isaka" means a bundle of bribe money. "You guys are involved in the subversion of justice. Enough is enough. One more death and all routes and the rank will be shut permanently – make no mistake – this government won't be held ransom by a few".

Mchunu was addressing a meeting of all taxi operators in Kwa-Nongoma, about 300 km north of Durban yesterday. He told taxi operators that the closure of the rank has been delayed to allow other processes to take effect. "Make no mistake – I am not a coward. By not closing the rank today – I am not doing you any favours".

He said: "Make no mistake; we won't hesitate to close down the rank permanently if these killings continue unabated. You're getting a reprieve now simply because our consultations with other key stakeholders are still in progress".

He announced a package of interventions aimed at bringing order, stability and arresting run-away criminal activities in Nongoma. These include:

- Extraordinary deployment of multi-disciplinary police force members,

- Beefing up the detective and intelligence capacity of the existing team that is investigating taxi killings,
- Special operations to be conducted to hound criminals and, a special focus on recovering illegal weapons,
- Further consultations with taxi operators from Dambasi area only – it is believed to be the epicentre of taxi killings, and crime.
- A meeting with all leadership structures of Dambasi area to listen to the voices of people at the coalface of problems.
- Further meetings with a team that was formed by the Nongoma Taxi Association during the height of the killings. The team was charged with a task of finding the root cause of the killings.

Mchunu also met with the Nongoma SAPS top brass, and made his displeasure known to them regarding low rate of arrests, crime detection, crime prevention, and investigations. “You have now an opportunity to come and present to my office your side of the story. We want you to answer the key questions – Are you effective and efficient in your core business of fighting crime? Why is it that most arrests for Nongoma crimes are effected by teams sent in from the province and other areas?”

Ends

Issued on behalf of the Hon. MEC Willies Mchunu. Contact MEC’s spokesperson, Bhekisisa Mncube on 084 928 4412.