

MEDIA STATEMENT (for immediate release)

18 September 2009

MEC MCHUNU APPOINTS A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR TO PROBE TAXI DEATHS

A private investigator is to be appointed to ascertain the root causes of the ongoing taxi related deaths and injuries in the Umlazi MNR taxi route, the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison Willie Mchunu has announced.

Mchunu was addressing a meeting on Friday (18 September 2009), he had convened with the taxi operators in a, "last ditch effort to bring order and stability after five murders and five injuries occurred since June". No one has ever been arrested in relation to the murders.

The appointment of a private investigator follows that of a Provincial Police Task Team assembled to conduct special investigation into unsolved murders. The Provincial Police Task Team was appointed amid claims of police negligence including the allegations that at some stage a police officer was caught fiddling with evidence on the crime scene. The task team excludes the Umlazi Police and the MNR Police Taxi Task Team Investigating Unit.

Explaining the role of a private investigator, he said: "The investigator will also look into numerous allegations, chief among these being the alleged existence of Izinkabi (hitmen), Police ineptitude, and the contribution of leadership squabbles to the current conflict within the NMR Taxi Association ranks".

He added: "The private investigator will also probe the role played by the Police, and the private security companies enlisted by the taxi operators at the height of the killings".

Mchunu made it clear to all taxi operators that he is committed to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. "Negotiations must never end. Our first prize is to see no more deaths as a result of this conflict".

However, Mchunu was firm on what ought not happen: “Let us not allow the law of the jungle to dictate the taxi business operations. Kill or be killed, and conquer or be conquered has no place in the business operation, and, in our democracy. No matter how slow, and painful, we must bring an end to anarchy in this industry. It must flourish, and we will continue to support it.”

“If any person harbours an illusion that the current MEC will be soft, simply because he is soft spoken, that person is mistaken. We will use any legal means available to us to ensure the preservation of lives of our people. And, in the process, we will bring about peaceful co-existence in the taxi business,” Mchunu warned.

Issued on behalf of the MEC for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison, Hon. Willies Mchunu.

For further information, kindly contact the MEC’s spokesperson, Bhekisisa Mncube on 079 699 5755