

## **MEDIA ADVISORY DATED 19 OCTOBER 2014**

### **MEC MCHUNU CONVENED PEACE MEETING WITH FEUDING FAMILIES IN LADYSMITH FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF 15 PEOPLE**

KWAZULU-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willies Mchunu, today warned the stakeholders affected by conflict in Greater Ladysmith, including eZakheni and Esdakeni areas, to work together to achieve lasting peace.

Mchunu convened the stakeholders' meeting following the death of 15 people in Ezakheni last Saturday in two separate shooting incidents, the first of which caused a road accident that killed nine people.

The meeting today in Emnambithi Local Municipality's council chambers included the mayor Councillor Madlala, councillors, the Mabaso and Gamede families, SANTACO regional leadership and Kliprivier Taxi Association, SAPS, officials of both Transport as well as the Community Safety and Liaison departments.

It was clarified in the meeting that last week's shootings were possibly related to long standing village conflict involving the Mabaso and Gamede families.

"Since January 2014, nineteen people have been killed and eight survived attempted murders from both families and those related to them. It is absolutely clear that this cannot be allowed to continue, and our urgent task is to find a lasting solution today through dialogue," said Mchunu.

Amongst the nineteen people who have been killed is Constable Yende, a police officer, who was investigating some of the cases involved in this conflict.

Already eight cases of attempted murder are also being investigated by the police and more than six high calibre fire-arms have been recovered.

All in all a total of 138 illegal firearms have been recovered.

The meeting also heard that:

- The two families have been involved in long-standing conflict that started as a faction fight allegedly emanating from a killing that took place in traditional functions in the area;
- There are incidents of random killings of people in the area which have continued for some time;
- There are two senior members of each family involved in the taxi industry who have both relocated to live in other areas outside of Ladysmith;
- Those involved in violence usually get recruited in the taxi industry, mainly illegally;
- Alleged involvement of hitmen (izinkabi) and members of the SAPS in perpetuating the killings;
- There was a planned cleansing ceremony (ukukhumelana umlotha) between warring families which was postponed and never took place; and that
- The conflicting families are blood relatives.

Speaking on behalf of the Gamede family, Sgugula Gamede said: "As the Gamede family, we commit ourselves to working with the process the MEC has outlined. We are family and wish for peace to prevail."

"I really appeal to both families to really work together to ensure that the process the MEC has put forward is respected and implemented. Peace must prevail and we must embrace it," said Mbheki Mabaso, speaking on behalf of the Mabaso family.

"From this meeting, we need to embark on processes to ensure that we work together to ensure there is peace and stability in the area of Esdakeni. This will be achieved through the five-aside representatives of the families to work with the tribal authorities and government structures. In addition, we will beef up the police visibility in the area to ensure that there are no further killings. These are blood relatives and it is totally unacceptable that they should find themselves in unending conflict. The solution lies with them, working with both traditional and government structures," said Mchunu.

Ends.

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