

MEDIA ADDRESS BY MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE MEDIA BRIEFING ON POLITICAL TOLERANCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL, 18 APRIL 2011 AT DLI HALL, DURBAN.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to extend a special word of gratitude to all of you for having honoured our invitation to this media briefing. This briefing is a platform to offer us an opportunity to share with you some of the political developments in our province as we are approaching local government elections.

Towards the end of last year and at the beginning of this year, our Province witnessed a number of political assassinations in our communities. In some instances families have been altogether wiped out and councillors killed.

In an effort of promoting peace, democracy and social cohesion, on the 10th of March 2011 the Provincial Government, led by the Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize, staged an important summit that featured political leaders from all political parties in the Province, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Police, as well as the traditional and the religious leaders.

The summit participants resolved, amongst other things, to reaffirm their commitment to the provisions of the Electoral Code of Conduct; to promote political tolerance, unity, peace, freedom of choice, expression, association, before and during elections as well as to form a Multi-political party committee which I am privileged to be leading together with other leaders who are representing all political parties in our province.

The committee has since prioritised areas which are perceived to be hot-spots, for intervention. These include Estcourt/ Mbabazane precinct, Ulundi/ Nongoma precinct, Maphumulo /Mandeni precinct and hostels in and around Durban.

In addition to these areas, any proactive measures with regards to any area, where imminent action is required will be attended to by this committee. We had reports of incidents at uMlazi T section (Seventini) and Lindelani outside Stanger recently, the IEC is working in facilitating engagements with political parties who are believed to be involved to resolve those issues. We also noted the killing of Elias Dube who was the NFP candidate at kwaNyavu and the killing of Moses Nkosiwabekwa Chili who defected from the IFP to join the ANC in KwaMashu.

In all the above cases we are confident that police will work with speed to bring perpetrators to book. We also appeal for calm in the affected communities and parties.

I am pleased, however, to say that we have had engagements in all these areas. As government we are pleased with the cooperation of all political parties. We want to commend the collective spirit demonstrated while engaging with leaders and various stakeholders.

I must say with confidence that all political parties contesting elections in KZN are committed to work for peace, political tolerance and promotion of free political activity in the next elections.

We all agree that the promotion of peace, tolerance and mutual respect is an everyday task for all communities to build a caring and compassionate province.

It is our hope that from now on, our strategy of pursuing co-operation and peaceful engagement will result in the normalisation of political activities in a number of areas engulfed by political conflicts.

I take this opportunity to also acknowledge the work by our police in KwaZulu-Natal. They have performed a remarkable feat in dealing with local government election cases.

From the month of February until yesterday, 88 election related cases had been opened in our province's police stations. From those, 137 arrests were made, 26 cases were still under investigation, nine were withdrawn and 40 were still going to court.

These cases range from murder, attempted murder, assault GBH, common assault, intimidation, *crimen injuria*, defamation of character, defeating the course of justice, removal of posters to public violence, pointing firearm, incitement to commit public violence as well as advertising on road signs.

It is unfortunate that the trend is that KwaZulu-Natal is always the worst province in the country when it comes to HIV and AIDS, road carnage, taxi violence and other criminal activities, but every year statistics put us on top of the list.

This committee has resolved to stage prayer rallies in all of the above precinct that we have visited. This will help to promote tolerance as we encourage party members to wear their t-shirt. More than all, we believe this will go a long way in promoting peace and stability in KZN.

Since the inception of democracy in South Africa 1994, we have been the only province where by-elections results were questioned because voters were intimidated and assaulted. It is here where a person has been sentenced by the court of law for defrauding the election.

It is therefore important ladies and gentlemen that we appeal to the members of the media to also partner with us in our mission to change the mindset of our people.

We call upon all our media houses to come on board and ensure that we clean up our province through reports that are not provocative but rather conciliatory.

I thank you