

**MEC VR Shongwe's Debate at the National Council Of Provinces on the 04<sup>th</sup> of June 2015**

The Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality, Cllr SP Mathonsi

The Head of Department for DCSSL, Mr William Mthombothi

The Provincial Commissioner, Lt. General Mark Magadlela

Senior Management of SAPS and DCSSL

Police Officials

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

Program Director let me take this opportunity in particular to welcome the families of our police officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Kindly all receive my fraternal greeting and compliments of the New Year. We are meeting this morning to recognise and pay tribute to men and woman in blue who lost their lives while in the service of the people of South Africa.

It is indeed humbling that you have taken time to join us as we recognise their commitment to fight crime and criminals in society. Your loss, is our loss too, the country has lost. The Nation was robbed and as a result, we are all bleeding.

This was properly summed up by President Jacob Zuma at the occasion of National Commemoration Day of the South African Police Service Memorial on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2015.

The President said,

**"Today, we pay tribute and register our respect to fallen police officers who undertake the important task of fighting crime and defending our hard won democracy under taxing conditions.**

**We acknowledge the pain that their loved ones have gone through. We wish to express our heartfelt condolences today directly to the families, on behalf of all the people of our country.**

**Your pain is our pain".**

Therefore, on behalf of the Provincial Government of Mpumalanga, I want to assure the families that their pain is our pain too. These heroes and heroines lost their lives so that all of us can be safe in our homes, at work and in the streets.

They lost their lives trying to ensure that our children are safe, that women are not raped and abused.

They were killed Program Director, because they wanted peace and stability, because they were enforcing the law of the Republic of South Africa.

They were killed because they stood by the constitution of this country.

I normally say that, this police uniform represents the constitution of the country. This blue uniform represents the State.

That is why President Zuma went further to say that an attack on the Police is an attack on the State. It is an attack on the people of South Africa as a whole.

This sentiment by the President finds expression in our slogan in the Province that, **Wabulala Iphoyisa, Wabulala Umphakathi.**

We are using this slogan to mobilise society to understand that the killing of police officials will eventually give space to criminals to terrorise them.

There can be no peace and stability in a space where our police officers are killed. That can lead to lawlessness of maximum proportions.

Program Director, there is no country anywhere in the world that can thrive without law and order, without peace and stability, without proper policing and protection of the weak and vulnerable in society. Law and order is a precondition for growth and development.

We all know that some people will choose other careers in life such as engineering, teaching, law and so on. However, it is an open secret that, in order for them to be productive and efficient, they need security.

They need an assurance from the police that they are safe. **If this is true, why are police being killed?**

I am raising this Program Director because, teachers will not be able to teach in an environment of lawlessness, and business will come to a standstill. There will be a general shut down with criminals ruling our streets with impunity.

We all need police to ensure our safety so that we can go to our areas of responsibilities and be productive. Safety and security becomes a pre condition and police officers are tasked with giving us just that.

What kind of a society are we? We must never allow criminals to kill those who chose to put their lives at risks to protect us.

With the time I have spent in this Portfolio as an MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, I have come to realise that being a Cop is a calling.

It takes determination, commitment and hard work to respond to this calling. Every day brings new challenges and criminals consistently think of new ways to avoid being caught.

Criminals plan their activities very carefully; therefore police must always be a step ahead. Criminals will do everything to avoid being jailed and they are prepared to kill.

Program Director, I still maintain that corrupt police officers put the lives of their colleagues at risk of being killed. I have over the years insisted that those who are corrupt must be flushed out of the system.

We must unite our voices against the few police officers who are doing wrong things, we must expose them at all time before they put the other people's lives at risk.

We cannot have police officers who collude with criminals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Police officials are there to protect us and we have a collective responsibility as a society to ensure that they are protected too.

I noted a slight decrease in the killing of Police Officers, particularly here in Mpumalanga, considering that in 2010/2011 financial year, we lost 8 (eight) officers in the hands of criminals and during the 2014/2015, 5 (five) officers lost their lives.

The number is still high; we don't want even a single police officer to be killed by criminals in this Province. In order for that to happen, we need the involvement of all members of the communities to stop this act.

Our Prayers are with the families, particularly the children of our fallen heroes. Their loved ones lost their life in pursuit of justice, law and order. They gave criminals sleepless nights and as a result, they became targets.

Program Director, the call by the Minister of Police, Mr Nathi Nhleko, to build a united front to help and protect communities must find expression in our daily work. We must work with communities to close down the space for criminals.

As the sun rises in Mpumalanga, we work together with our communities for safer living environment. Police officers are looking after us, they protect us and ensure that we are safe at all times.

As a society, let's return the favour, let's look after them and work with them to build a crime free Mpumalanga Province.

Empumalanga Sithi **"Wabulala Iphoyisa, Wabulala Umphakathi"**

I thank you.