

Mthethwa vows to strengthen public order policing

Public order policing in South Africa needs to reflect the ethos of human rights and dignity, Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa said today.



(Image: GCIS)

"Police cannot use maximum force in a situation requiring minimum force," Mthethwa said at a New Age business briefing in Johannesburg this morning.

His comments come amid recent confrontations between the police and protesters in several areas in the country, including the Western Cape and the Free State.

Four people were reportedly killed as police tried to contain a violent protest in Sasolburg last week, while scores were arrested during a farm strike which turned violent in the De Doorns, near Cape Town, earlier this month.

"... We must be able to... uphold and enforce the law... Recently, unresolved social issues have resulted in some members of the public expressing themselves through structured and non-structured public gatherings, marches and sometimes public protests," Mthethwa said.

Arming of protesters will not be tolerated

He cautioned that while police would act responsibly at all times, the carrying of weapons by protesters, as seen recently, would not be tolerated.

"Police have a duty to uphold the rule of law and protect citizens, and they have a duty to disarm anyone who is armed.

"We reiterate that police shall respond to these protests within the spirit and context of a community orientated policing model. However, we also call upon society to desist from causing havoc [in the guise of] public protest."

Mthethwa, who was accompanied by senior police management, including National Commissioner Riah Phiyega, said police have begun transforming their service by prioritising several areas including strengthening their crime intelligence unit, focusing on crime against women and children and building new police stations.

The approach to transformation should speak to the type of police service South Africans wanted to see.

"Within this service, we want police officers who respect and uphold the Constitution and who do not tolerate disloyalty and ill-discipline, and enforce the law without fear or favour."

Changes to private security to improve safety

Speaking at a the same business briefing Mthethwa says the proposed amendments to the laws governing the private security sector seek to improve the manner in which the industry functions.

The Private Security Industry Regulation Amendment Bill, which was approved by Cabinet, aims to introduce significant changes to the manner in which the private security industry is currently regulated, notably when it comes to recruitment.

"There have been a number of problematic instances of abusive, corrupt and incompetent behaviour and in some instances, even outright public scandals involving private security personnel in many countries during the past years, clearly demonstrating the pressing need for regulation," Mthethwa said.

Mthethwa said the private security industry should be regulated with a view to ensure that it performed its functions in a manner that was "constituent with democracy".

"It must be an accountable and effective private security industry that can help increase security and safety."

According to the latest figures, there are over 1.78 million private security officers registered in South Africa.

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