



## ***Response*** ***October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

### **Crime Statistics 2017**

On 24<sup>th</sup> October Police Minister Fikile Mbalula released the crime statistics covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. They point to a slight decrease of 1.8% in the commission of serious crimes nationally but, as the Minister pointed out, such a miniscule decrease “is not felt by people.” He went on to say that “behind the numbers are real feelings, real lives, real harm and real loss.”<sup>1</sup> 2 129 001 serious crimes were reported during this period. This marks an increase (of 0.12%) from the year before when 2 126 552 serious crimes were reported.

An overview of the detailed statistics shows that murders increased nationally by 1.8%, translating into 52 per day. One in five murder victims is a woman or child. 109 rapes were reported daily. By way of comparison: the murder rate is five times higher than Mexico<sup>2</sup> and ten times higher than India.<sup>3</sup> To make matters worse, civil society organisations hold that as many as nine rapes are not reported for each one that is. 46 hijacking victims were noted daily, while 386 people were robbed each day.<sup>4</sup> Hijackings were up 14.5%; home robberies showed a significant increase of 7.3% compared to 2.7% in the previous year; and business robberies showed an increase of 5%, which translates into 57 business robberies a day. Drug-related crimes were up 12.9% and the possession of illegal firearms and ammunition increased by 9.22%. Gun control experts have warned that this increase is in fact at the root of the increase in violence in the other crime categories. A greater effort in curbing the leak of legal guns, and annihilating the numbers of illegal firearms, will contribute to creating a safer environment.<sup>5</sup>

There were decreases in some of the other contact crimes. Gauteng saw the highest number of murders, followed by KZN. The Eastern Cape was third and the Western Cape came in at fourth. Despite the increase in murders, contact crimes generally were down by 2.4%. Attempted murder saw a decrease of 0.4%, sexual offences reported to the police were down 4.3%. Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm declined by 6.7%. Common assault saw a 5.2% drop and common robbery came down by 1.3%. Despite reports of kidnappings and talk of this new phenomenon on the South African crime landscape, no figures were provided for this. Nor was there a special category in the report for political murders. However, the Minister revealed that between 2009 and 2017, 45 councillors had been killed. 24 of these ostensibly politically motivated murders had taken place in KZN.<sup>6</sup> The Minister also provided no statistics for farm murders or attacks. In May this year in a debate various parties gave widely differing statistics, and civil society estimates that some 65 such murders have occurred thus far in 2017.<sup>7</sup>

Commentators have pointed out every year that in order to get a realistic picture of the crime situation, these statistics ought to be accompanied by statistics relating to crime convictions. There is a nagging sense that convictions for serious crimes remain very low. It is also generally accepted that for confidence to be restored in public policing, people must see reported crimes being solved. Statistics on convictions would go some way in this regard.

In his speech the Minister lambasted lazy, incompetent and corrupt police officials. It was “indicative of the lazy efforts by the police to detect such crime and make SA a safer place to live in.” It is an indictment on a department with a budget of R87 billion that some of the basic leadership skills and suitable appointments to top posts have seriously compromised the work of the police force. In particular, as a leading article in the

Cape Argus pointed out, “the failure to appoint a National Commissioner with experience and integrity is the root cause of the problem.”<sup>8</sup> It underlines the fact that, unless the problems in the police force are tackled head on, the crime statistics for years ahead will only be worse. A recent survey reported that six out of ten victims of robberies did not report these crimes to the police as they had no confidence that the police would do anything about them.<sup>9</sup> This has led many, including the Minister, to believe that the police, despite many hardworking and sincere personnel, are part of the problem.

But this raises the question as to whether the Minister has the political will, the stamina and the courage to tackle this herculean task, especially given the way interests of factions within the governing party have crept into and bedevilled the institutional life of the police force. We have noted his promise “to revive specialized units, have competent police officers who know how to investigate crimes, make arrests and ensure that cases are so solid that we secure convictions.”<sup>10</sup> It has long been argued that the failure of the intelligence units and the high levels of suspicion, distrust and collusion by individuals and groups, have opened a space where organised criminals can act with impunity, thus perpetuating an almost invincible criminal culture. It is worth noting, in this regard, an excerpt from an article in the Daily Maverick: “When asked about the 1 448 SAPS members found with criminal records as far back as early 2016, SAPS deputy national commissioner for human resource management, Lieutenant-General Bonang Mgwenya, rattled off statistics that actually revealed how little was done. A total of 17 were dismissed, 89 are currently before disciplinary hearings, while 296 had retired without consequences and others were allowed to resign. In 277 instances the police officials’ criminal records were expunged, while in another 148 cases the SAPS was ‘purifying the information involved.’”<sup>11</sup>

It must also be noted that the statistics in all provinces show that crime is mostly concentrated in the poorer areas and that it is thus the poor who carry the heavy burden of criminal activities. This raises the question of the allocation of personnel and resources and whether poorer areas receive the benefit of adequate resources. At the end of the day policing, crime, violence, aggression and extremism are linked to questions of sharing resources, justice and human rights. They are all interlinked and we need to be careful to not analyse crime in isolation. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Pope Francis commented as follows: “The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence yet, without equal opportunities, the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and will eventually explode.”<sup>12</sup> We would do well to bear that in mind.

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**Director**

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<sup>1</sup><http://polity.org.za/article/sa-fikile-mbalula-address-by-minister-of-police-during-the-release-of-201617-crime-statistics-parliament-cape-town-24102017-2017-10-24>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/editorials/2017-10-25-editorial-hard-to-feel-that-crime-is-down/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-10-25-crime-stats-analysis-the-saps-while-seeking-solutions-is-part-of-the-problem/#.WfJaKbpuI2w>

<sup>4</sup><http://polity.org.za/article/saftu-saftu-says-violent-crime-out-of-control-and-the-poor-pay-the-price-2017-10-25>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2017/10/24/crimestats-mbalula-doesn-t-understand-the-danger-of-guns---gun-free-sa>

<sup>6</sup><https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/207087/south-africa-crime-stats-2017-everything-you-need-to-know/>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/justice-safety/crimestats-outrage-as-farm-attacks-and-murders-ignored-11695563>

<sup>8</sup> The Cape Argus editorial. 25/10/2017 p.8

<sup>9</sup><http://polity.org.za/article/saftu-saftu-says-violent-crime-out-of-control-and-the-poor-pay-the-price-2017-10-25>

<sup>10</sup><http://polity.org.za/article/sa-fikile-mbalula-address-by-minister-of-police-during-the-release-of-201617-crime-statistics-parliament-cape-town-24102017-2017-10-24>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-10-25-crime-stats-analysis-the-saps-while-seeking-solutions-is-part-of-the-problem/#.WfJaKbpuI2w>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/10/18/pope-francis-religions-must-not-be-ambiguous-peace/>