

Beat: Local

Media Statement by the Acting National Commissioner of the South African Police

Security Update & Western Cape Firearm

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USPA NEWS - The South African Police Service has just concluded a three-day National Management Forum meeting, a forum constituted by the Acting National Commissioner, Deputy National Commissioners, Divisional Commissioners, Regional Commissioners and Provincial Commissioners.

Since our last briefing, a number of incidents have taken place which have involved unruly behaviour, criminality, the destruction of property and public violence, amongst other acts. The South African Police Service has just concluded a three-day National Management Forum meeting, a forum constituted by the Acting National Commissioner, Deputy National Commissioners, Divisional Commissioners, Regional Commissioners and Provincial Commissioners.

The National Management Forum was established to promote cooperation and coordination in the Service and is also presided over by the National Commissioner. The forum ensures the deputy national commissioners, provincial, divisional and regional commissioners are actively involved in decision-making processes that determine the strategic direction of the service and the National Commissioner is fully informed of developments in the provinces and divisions.

Amongst other issues reflected on, the current protests in terms of the #FeesMustFall campaign were discussed.

We deemed it fitting to hold a media briefing after the closure of the NMF, to provide an update on policing matters relating to #FeesMustFall. These briefings are conducted in the spirit of transparency to ensure that media representatives and the communities we both serve are accurately kept abreast of policing and security matters in this regard. We also consider it very critical to place in the public domain the facts around policing, especially around the Fees Must Fall policing challenges, on a regular basis.

Since our last briefing, a number of incidents have taken place which have involved unruly behaviour, criminality, the destruction of property and public violence, amongst other acts. It is thus important for the SAPS to highlight some of the concerning incidents.

On Wednesday, 26 October 2016, a protest march was held in Cape Town under the #FeesMustFall banner and was reportedly attended by approximately 2000 people. The protest turned violent in and around the Parliamentary precinct and the Cape Town CBD. SAPS members responded by using stun grenades to disperse the gathering. Among the acts of criminality committed was an incident caught on camera of a young man breaking the windows of a police vehicle. A 33 year old male, who was clearly shown in photographs which went viral on social media, was arrested today at his place of work in Observatory and will appear in court on Monday facing a charge of malicious damage to property. This suspect is a cleaner contracted by a university and is not a student. A number of other law enforcement vehicles were damaged by the unruly crowd, as were shop windows. The police on duty during this march were clearly persistently provoked by, inter alia, having a burning mock coffin thrown into their midst and by people showing utter disrespect for the rule of law by clambering over moving and stationary police vehicles.

Over this past week, a number of incidents of arson have been reported, causing destruction of property and damage to vehicles, including a police vehicle on routine patrol which was set alight in Braamfontein. Two suspects were arrested in connection with this case of arson. Over this past week, two buses were also torched, including a bus carrying students. It is very fortunate that there were no casualties in any of these incidents. There have, in addition, been instances of fires being set on campuses, including a tennis clubhouse being torched at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, books being burned at a library in Wits University and a petrol bomb being thrown into the financial building at the CPUT campus in Bellville at 04:00 this morning.

Last Friday night, three men accused of burglary at the Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape were stoned and beaten with sticks, allegedly by students. One man died on the scene, one died in hospital and one is still critical. This incident highlights that the calls for tolerance and a lack of brutality must be upheld and respected by all role players.

Wits University continued to be characterised by incidents of criminality, intimidation and attacks on law-abiding citizens, including the police officials, who were constantly on the receiving end from protestors. These acts included setting vehicles on the campus alight and intimidating those wanting to study and write exams by persistent disruptive acts such as throwing fire crackers into classes. These actions prompted responses from the police on duty. Protesting students, innocent bystanders and police officials continue to sustain injuries which are regrettable.

A week ago, a march from Church Square in the Pretoria CBD, which had not been authorised, was allowed to continue as long as it was conducted in a peaceful manner. The SAPS ensured the policing of the march and monitored proceedings through the city to the Union Buildings. Unfortunately, after a memorandum was handed over at the Union Buildings, the protestors began pelting the police members present with rocks and stones. This unruly behaviour necessitated appropriate police action and the dispersal of protestors.

After highlighting but a few incidents, the question again arises ““ has the legitimate #FeesMustFall initiative by students been taken over by the criminal element to a large extent?

SAPS management must again emphasise that there is no room for police brutality. Police actions in responding to the challenges faced with, can never be defined or characterised by brutality on the part of the police. Any person who feels that their rights have been violated by any police action or member, is invited to make a complaint to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) for investigation. We must however, again thank and commend police officials on duty across the country who have continuously acted with restraint and within the confines of the law, heeding our call for maximum restraint and the use of minimum, proportional force.-----

There are those who have bombarded us with calls to withdraw police officials from university campuses. We reiterate that it is the violence and criminal acts being committed on those campuses that have invited the presence of the SAPS. We respect the vice chancellors of the universities, and their executive councils and security management in the execution of their mandates and will support them to prevent the acts outlined, to ensure a climate conducive to studies and examinations. It is not the intention of the SAPS to securitise the institutions of higher learning or to take operational control over such institutions. The SAPS will not be apologetic in the execution of the mandate provided for in the Constitution of our country. It is a pity that some police officials have been targeted via e-mails, social media and other means, because they represent security and order. This form of intimidation will never succeed. The SAPS remains operationally ready to police all planned protest actions to ensure that they remain peaceful and that the democratic rights of others are not trampled upon in the process. We congratulate those students who have heeded calls to focus on their studies while their legitimate concerns are being dealt with by the relevant authorities. We wish them well with their studies and examinations.

Moving off the topic of #FeesMustFall, we would like to congratulate the Western Cape police who, during an intelligence-led operation earlier today, discovered an arms cache at premises in Valhalla Park, Bishop Lavis. Although police investigators and experts are still busy on the scene, we can at this stage confirm that over 250 firearms, ammunition and an undisclosed amount of cash have already been seized and are being processed. Four individuals have been arrested. The scene is still being processed and an update will be given in due course. We are confident that this cache will assist us in clamping down on the scourge of gangsterism and in reducing the stubborn contact crime trends which affect our communities, such as murder and vehicle hijacking. The South African Police Service has resolved to intensify its operations over the festive season towards the realisation of the safe and secure people in South Africa. We urge all communities and sectors of our society to work together with the SAPS in ensuring that #CrimeMustFall becomes a reality."

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