**ARE YOU HALLUCINATING TO THINK THAT MURDER AND FOR THAT MATTER OTHER CRIMES CAN BE PREVENTED BY THE POLICE? A DEFINITE NO, NO!!**

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| **During a briefing to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police on 29 September 2015, which was also the release of the 2014/2015 crime statistics, the Minister of Police made a remark that anybody who think that murder can be prevented by the police are hallucinating.** **This short article indicate that this is not the case and that the Minister’s remark may have an impact on police motivation, public safety and international confidence.**  |

**1) INTRODUCTION.**

During the approximate half an hour speech that the Minister of Police, the Hon. NPT Nhleko, made during the crime statistics briefing to the Portfolio Committee on Police, on 29 September 2015, in which crime statistics was effectively released to the world, he inter alia referred to murder as a social problem/phenomena and that those who believe that the police must prevent it are hallucinating. This remark, obviously made by the Minister to soften the blow of the third consecutive increase in murder after nearly 20 years of decreases, stayed with this analyst since then and constantly harassed his mind to be aired publicly. This analyst is really worried, because 20 years ago when he joined the SAPS in August 1995, docket analysis of his team of analysts at the CIAC (Crime Information Analysis Centre) for the next eight years found that up to 80% of murders are occurring between people knowing each other (acquaintances, friends, family, and colleagues) having an argument about money, infidelity, family etc., usually under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, in more private spaces which are not normally policed. These arguments sometimes turn into assault and the assault can result in murder. So yes most of the murders were social in nature 20 to 15 years ago which made it a less police able crime category but this analyst and his colleagues never said then that these murders cannot be prevented at all by the police, other departments, NGO’s and the community. They also emphasized that the 20% murders which is not social in nature can definitely be prevented by the police. It now disturbs this analyst that during the very frequent and frank discussions in meetings and on a one to one basis in the early two thousands the late National Commissioner Jackie Selebi, who fully understood the concepts of more and less police able crimes, warned about the use of the distinction because he was afraid that the police at operational level may use it as an excuse for rising crime levels. In the light of the 29 September remark of the Minister, one can just say what prophetic warning that “less police able” may suggest “not police able” not only to the police members at operational level but also to the Minister.

The question can be asked is the Minister fully informed by the SAPS , his Civilian Secretariat for Police, other intelligence structures and his advisors about the nature and composition of murder in South Africa( for example that an analysis of 2007/2008 murder dockets found that only 65% of those are social in nature and that an analysis of murder and attempted murder in the Greater Khayelitsha area in 2012 found that as many as 53% and 75% of respectively murders and attempted murders were not social in nature) and that he made the hallucinations remarks based on that. Or that he is not informed and he actually make it on the bases of what he heard over years and his own common sense. Or that he is fully informed but because of the embarrassment the increases of inter alia murder is causing him as a politician he tried the old political technique of just brushing this problem of as a social problem which government can’t address hoping that the public will just except it and then Government, himself and the Management of SAPS is safe till next year- excluding the approximately nearly fifty families which daily experience the pain and trauma, and devastation of murder. The answer to this will in all probability never be known.

2**) Murder can be prevented by a police service.**

The strongest indication that murder can be prevented by a police service is the murder trend in South Africa over the past twenty years. The fact that murder rates/ratios decreased between 1995/1996 and 2011/2012 with 54,5% from a rate/ratio of 67.9 per 100 000 of the population to 30.9 per 100 000 of the population can’t be by chance. Over this whole period the murder tendency decreased very systematically (like a flight of stairs) with the exception of two years. In 1998/1999 it increased with 0,5% and in 2006/2007 with 2,3% which can probably be explained by a upward pulse in farm and police murders in 1998/1999 and the very violent security guard strike in 2006/2007 which not only cost the life of security guards directly, but led to increased aggravated robbery with fatalities.

The initiatives taken by the late President Nelson Mandela towards the end of his administration, with the National Summit on farm killings in 1998 and an instruction to SAPS to do very comprehensive analysis of attacks on and murders of SAPS members in the same year, resulted in very focused strategies which reduced both these specific types of murders with at least halve to two thirds. In 1998/1999 there were 153 murders on farms and smallholdings, which decreased to an average of 86 per annum for the period 2003/2004 to 2006/2007 and then to 58 per annum for the period 2011/2012 to 2013/2014. Murders of SAPS members decreased from 187 in 1999/2000 to an average of 82 per annum for the period 2011/2012 to 2014/2015.

The three most significant annual decreases in murder ratios since the introduction of crime reduction targets in 2003/2004 were in 2009/2010(-8,5%) which was the Confederation Cup year, in 2010/2011(-6,6%) which was the World Cup year and 2004/2005(-6,4%) which was the implementation year of the contact crime reduction targets and the National Crime Combatting Strategy to achieve it. The reduction target for each contact crime including attempted murder and murder were 7 to 10 % per annum. The murder rate/ratio reductions of respectively -6,3%, -2,6%, -5,0% and -3,1% for the years 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 were brought about by a) concentrating on all the non-social murders like robbery murders, taxi murders, vigilante murders and faction fights and preventing them as far as possible through intelligence led visible policing and b) in the case of the social murders to address it through,1) projects/campaigns against knifes and the abuse of alcohol and 2) improved prosecution by protecting and supporting the victims.

It is only since 2011/2012 to the latest release of crime statistics 2014/2015(for three consecutive years) that murder increased from the 30.3 per 100 000 of the population to 33.0 per 100 000 of the population. That is an increase of 8,9%. In the same three years South Africa lost the opportunity to reduce murder with an average of 3,4% per annum. In all probability, if during 2015/2016 a decrease in murder can be achieved, which is highly unlikely, given the current level of instability in SAPS, it will take at least five years to achieve the murder rate which South Africa could have achieved by 2014/2015(for more information about the trend see De Kock,C, Kriegler,A, and Shaw,M.2015. A citizen’s guide to SAPS crime statistics: 1994 to 2015. Centre of Criminology, University of Cape Town on website [www.criminology.uct.ac.za](http://www.criminology.uct.ac.za) )

In all probability the increase in murder and attempted murder over the last three financial years for which statistics was released, correlate with ratio increases in:(a) street/public robbery of 24,2%, (b) carjacking of 28,8%, (c) house robbery of 15,7%, and (d) business robbery 14,9%. There was also a truck hi-jacking figure increase of 55,8%. The much more numerous street/public robbery (which forms 58,4% of aggravated robbery) which affects especially the workers which are dependent on public transport from and to work between the mega-townships and informal settlements are known to be more fatal than carjacking, house- and business robbery for various reasons. From 2004 when a 7-10% reduction target were implemented for each contact crime, special attention and prevention efforts by station commanders of the CBD (Central Business District) stations and mega-townships/informal settlements decreased the street/public robbery from 227.7 per 100 000 of the population in 2003/2004 to 112.4 per 100 000 of the population in 2011/2012- that is a 50, 6% decrease. Then came 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 and street/public robbery increased with 24, 2%. In all probability most of the 8,9% murder increase in the same period is due to this more violent/ fatal type of robbery and the resultant vigilante reaction.

The question can also be asked why the increase in the last three years in all the robbery sub-trends while in the previous three years there were very significant decreases. In all probability this can be explained by one or a combination of the following:

* A lack of leadership and direction in the top management of the SAPS, and specifically when it comes to crime combatting, because of the internal conflict, squabbles and fears. One don’t need any inside information to make this deduction since basically not a day past without media reporting on these issues.
* A lack of motivation and accountability as a result of the constant lowering of crime reduction targets. For 2014/2015 it was lowered to such an extent that basically it can’t be missed (but even then they missed most).
* A lack of strong-minded political leadership when it comes to crime. The only time one hears the Minister speaking about crime is when he present all the possible excuses why there is no reductions even before he releases the crime statistics. At least on the surface it does not seems that serious violent crime is a burning issue to Government.
* Intelligence led/focused visible policing as during the Confederation and World Cup years of 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 and the immediate aftermath had literally disappeared during 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 and even now, eight months into the 2015/2016 financial year.
* Basically every analyst will agree that in the last three years there was a deterioration of socio –economic circumstances and that this is conducive to crime. But then it must immediately be said that this is not the first time in the past 20 years that there were economic hardship and it is especially during such circumstances, that policing has to be reinforced to protect development.

**3) Why the Minister of Police should not say something like this.**

a) In a country with exceptional levels of especially violent crime the Minister of Police who is responsible to do everything in his power to reduce levels of violent crime cannot afford to say that prevention is not possible. That is defeatism it its worst form. It is also said by the Cabinet Minister with one of the largest shares of the National Budget. Why is there a police service if it can’t fight murder?

In 2011 Minister Nathi Mthethwa and General Bheki Cele during the release of the 2010/2011 crime statistics in the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria were adamant that the previous two years significant reductions in especially some robbery sub trends, murder and attempted murder were not because of a special effort during the Confederation Cup of 2009/2010 and the World Cup of 2010/2011. But as a result of a new approach which will generate further major reductions over the next few years. They had a new recipe, but it seems that the next management of SAPS either did not receive the recipe, did not like the recipe because it was not theirs or lost the recipe and now four years later the Minister of Police of the very same Government accept defeat.

b) If there is one arena where the motto “Prevention is better than cure.” is very appropriate it is in the arena of crime combatting. In policing it should always be prevention first, where crime still occur detection kicks in and if detection is successful and the perpetrator are convicted it becomes prevention again through deterrence. All of this is based on crime intelligence. If the sequence and emphasis of this process is disturb, which happened on a few occasions in the past 20 years in SA with abnormal emphasis on only the detection function, any country will found itself in a crisis where crime will escalate. The docket-load of detectives will become unbearable with such stress levels and time constraints that they will either collapse or leave for greener less stressful pastures. If detection and actually the whole criminal justice system is under pressure, the conviction rate will fall to very low levels, with virtually no deterrence to criminals, which will just generate more crime. If we say we can’t prevent murder, we can only wait for it to occur and then detect, arrest, prosecute and convict this country is already far down the slippery slope of vigilantism and eventually anarchy.

c) Whenever there was a decrease in crime and especially violent crime the police had time and again claimed the success. A good example of this is the SAPS Strategic Plan 2014-2019 where on page 9 the reduction successes of SAPS over the previous period (2009/2010-2013/2014) are celebrated and indicated as achieving the JCPS( Justice, Crime Prevention and Security) Cluster outcome of: “People are safe and feel safe in South Africa.” So the strategic plan by using the trick of longitudinal comparison (see De Kock, C.2015. The 2014/2015 Crime Statistics-hope or despair? In: Servamus, November 2015) indicate that on the objective dimension of security people are safe and that this influenced the subjective dimension of security that more and more people feel safe. The strategic plan, duly signed by inter alia the Minister Hon. NPT Nhleko, then promised: “Between 2015 and 2019, the Department will continue to strategically and judiciously invest its resources and initiatives in ensuring that the above-mentioned picture improves towards the realization of the vision: In 2030, people living in South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime. They are at school, at work and they enjoy community life free of fear. Women can walk freely in the streets and children can play safely outside.”(p.10). One can just wonder what happened between what was promised here to the people of South Africa through Parliament and the view that SAPS can’t do anything to prevent the ultimate crime of murder.

d) Globally murder is seen as the crime trend with the highest degree of validity and reliability (a high degree of data-integrity) and also a good indicator of the degree of stability/peace in a country. The question can be asked how it will impact on South Africa as an investment and tourist destination if after 20 years of very systematic reductions, murder suddenly increase over three consecutive years. The Minister of Police of this country than also during the annual release of crime statistics, attended by many international journalists and media organizations, fatalistically declare that those who think the police can reduce crime live in their own dream world. And that, shortly after the serious damage to tourism caused by the abridged birth certificate debacle which was also based on the wrong crime information.

It should be remembered that although South Africa through its nearly 55,0% reduction in murder between 1995/1996 and 2011/2012 significantly improved its international position on murder it is internationally still in a very bad position in 2014/2015. So for example it was in in the eight position from the top, out of 162 independent states (which include 99,6% of the world population) with a homicide rate of 31.0 per 100 000 of the population on the 2015 Global Peace Index. It is only beaten by Honduras 90.4, Venezuela 53.7, El Salvador 41.2, Guatemala 39.9, Jamaica 39.3, Lesotho 38.0, and Swaziland 33.8(see Institute for Economics and Peace. 2015. Global Peace 2015 Index (GPI).Ninth edition.p.32). As a result of South Africa’s poor performance on homicide as an indicator of peace and stability South Africa score 2.376 on the overall peace index and are placed at position 136. With Iceland with a score of 1.148 in the first position. South Africa with its violent crime and resultant murders/homicides are very near to the four countries which are placed right at the bottom of the GPI and are all in a state of war (159. South Sudan score 3.383, 160.Afghanistan score 3.427, 161.Iraq score 3.444 and 162. Syria score 3.645).

The Global Peace Index are supported by the 2015 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Sub-Category Insights: Personal Safety, which also indicates that South Africa scores very low on personal security which have an impact on South Africa overall position on governance. South Africa’s personal safety which decreased with 3 points on a scale of 100 since 2011 stood on 31.6 which placed it in 45 th position in Africa. Botswana and Rwanda which are in positions 5 and 6 scored respectively 63.1 and 59.9 out of 100. At the bottom five positions were Sudan( position 50,score 16.7), DRC( position 51, score 14.4),South Sudan( position 52,score 9.4),CAR( position 53,score 8.3) and Somalia( position 54,score 1.3). Clearly South Africa’s violent crime situation place it in nearly the same instability situation as countries which are in a state of war and where South Africa is involved in peace-keeping operations.

As already indicated in section 2, South Africa already lost a minimum of 17,0% of murder/homicide reduction during the last three years which could have moved it to at least position 12 ( together with Brazil) on the homicide dimension of the Global Peace Index. Now the Minister of Police fatalistic view of murder prevention as hallucinations complicated the situation further.

4**) Conclusion.**

The above should be more than enough to make every reader realise that although not all types of murder are equally police able there are those types, like robbery murders, vigilante murders and taxi murders, which can be prevented by police action and even the social murders can be prevented by the actions of and full cooperation/partnership of the police, other government departments, local government, NGO’s and the community (Bogota in Colombia is a good example). The police themselves can also prevent the social murders through deterrence by successful detection and prosecution. Those who believe that no proportion of murder can be prevented by policing are the ones which in all probability are hallucinating.

It is high time that the advisors and analysts of the Minister and the Government advise them as above, or if that was already done, advise them on the damage done to crime combatting, by politicising it. As was done with the most comprehensive and in-depth report on policing and crime ever produced in South Africa, namely the Khayelitsha Report (see O’Regan,C. and Pikoli,V.2014. Towards a Safer Khayelitsha. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of Police Inefficiency and a Breakdown in Relations between SAPS and the Community of Khayelitsha.). Maybe for a start the Minister and the Government and their advisors should just for a moment forget that the report was as a result of a DA (Democratic Alliance) initiative and see it as the result of a community outcry for help. A community which live in a sea of murder and other violent crime for decades, with Nyanga, Gugulethu, Delft, Mfuleni, Khayelitsha( Site B) and Harare as respectively the number 1,4,5,6,7, and 8 murder stations in 2014/2015 in South Africa. After accepting the fact that this report is at least the best existing answer to the outcry of those and similar communities spread throughout this country( Inanda and Umlazi for example was the number 2 and 3 murder stations in 2014/2015) start by reading only pages 386 to 388 to realise that at least up to the middle of 2014 the SAPS in Khayelitsha Site B, Harare and Lingelethu West did not make any distinction between different kind of murders(e.g. vigilante, gang, robbery, social/domestic, homophobic and xenophobic murders). The Commission thus make the following recommendation on page 446, under the bullet 23 of section 18: “ collect and monitor crime statistics in respect of the three Khayelitsha police stations, and the FCS Unit, not only in relation to the twenty most serious crimes, but also in relation to crimes related to domestic violence, youth gangs, vigilantism, homophobic violence and xenophobic violence to enable adequate intelligence-led policing strategies to be developed to address these particular forms of crime…”

This single finding and recommendation of the Khayelitsha Report, which one wonder if it was implemented, lies at the heart of the failure to ever see Nyanga, Inanda, Umlazi, Gugulethu, Delft, Mfuleni, Khayelitsha and Harare move significantly down the South African murder ranking. It is also not only in these stations or only when it comes to murder when this finding and recommendation is relevant. The same is true for example when it comes to carjacking where Booysens is the top station for over a decade and Honeydew where the same apply when it comes to house robbery. Intelligence led policing and especially prevention can only manifest and result in reductions if the station operational management know the what (specific subcategory of crime), where (specific spots where it occur), when (the time that this specific type of crime occur at what spot), why (why it occur at that spot at that time) and if possible the who. If the station management has this information and they can operationalise it, it will really be strange if in one or two years there is no significant reductions and change of the station position.