



MINISTRY OF POLICE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR POLICE MINISTER GENERAL BHEKI CELE  
ON THE OCCASION OF MINISTERIAL BRIEFING SESSION ON  
ILLEGAL MINING HOSTED VIRTUALLY ON THURSDAY 11 AUGUST  
2022**

Honourable Chairperson Amos Masondo;  
Deputy Chairperson Sylvia Lucas;  
Members of the NCOP;  
Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;  
Honourable MECs;  
Members of Parliament;  
Representatives of SALGA  
Ladies and gentlemen

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, three days before the commencement of Women's Month, eight young women were attacked robbed and brutally raped by a group of 20 men, in Krugersdorp, West of Johannesburg.

These women were part of a film crew recording a video near an abandoned mine, in West village.

The alleged perpetrators are believed to be illegal miners; also known as amaZama Zama, conducting illegal mining activities in and around the West Rand.

The West Rand is the epicentre of illegal mining in the Gauteng province.

Following this rape incident that has shocked the nation, members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) responded swiftly and made arrests.

Over 80 suspected illegal miners were arrested within hours of that rape incident; over a dozen of the men have been linked to the crime.

Police operations to shut-down illegal mining operations in the province continue and in some areas, such as the West Rand, have been intensified.

Most recently specialised units of the SAPS have been deployed to the area, to flush out amaZamaZama and shut down the illicit chain.

## **CAUSES OF ILLICIT MINING**

Chairperson

The root causes of the detected illegal mining activities may be attributed amongst others

- Unemployment
- Criminal exploitation
- Syndicates extending territories for financial gain

- Mining companies abandoning properties without rehabilitation
- Mining sectors inability to ensure adequate security deployment as to save cost

## **PROVINCIAL BREAKDOWN**

Illegal mining is unfortunately not unique to the Gauteng province.

While gold is the target for amaZamaZama in almost 30 locations in the East and West Rand of that province, illicit mining of chrome and gold is taking place in Limpopo.

Precious minerals such as gold chrome, platinum and diamond and coal are being mined illegally in both the Free State and in the North West.

Gold, sand and stone are the preferred minerals for illegal miners in Mpumalanga.

The Northern Cape which borders Botswana, diamonds are sought after.

## **POLICE OPERATIONS**

Often heavily armed and dangerous, illegal miners have been linked to number of serious crimes including:

- mass shootings and murder
- gang rapes
- tampering and damage to critical infrastructure
- theft of copper cables
- Corruption within the mining value chain
- Illegal electricity and water connections.

A two day illegal mining Imbizo led by the Police ministry and SAPS was hosted this past weekend in Krugersdorp and Kagiso respectively.

Community members laid bare their crime concerns allegedly at the hands of Illegal miners, who predominantly are from neighbouring Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Many are often undocumented and some are even minors.

Honourable Members,

While illegal mining threatens to undermine the authority of the state, I want to assure this August House and the nation that the police are not losing the battle against illegal mining.

I do also want to correct the perception that the SAPS has only acted on illegal miners now, following the Krugersdorp gang rape.

Operations to flush out this crime, that not only poses a national security, if left unabated have been ongoing in the identified provinces.

Illicit mining is a well funded, organised crime syndicate with a criminal value chain that starts from illegal miners, dealers, regional and national buyers right up sales to the international market.

This is why the SAPS approach in dealing with illicit mining activities rests on 5 pillars:

1. Intelligence gathering analysis and coordination
2. Proactive approach including high visibility
3. Combat approach through hard core policing
4. Reactive approach; tracking detection and prosecutorial led investigations
5. Communication; which includes increased public awareness

## **ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE TASK TEAMS**

The SAPS established of a multi-disciplinary Economic Infrastructure Task Teams made up of different specialized units of the SAPS.

The Task Teams are partnering with private security, government departments as well as business partners to prevent combat economic and critical infrastructure related crimes, including illicit mining.

### **DPCI**

Over and above the Task Teams, the intervention by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) has resulted in project driven investigations of national priority offences:

These include the illicit mining offences such as illegal import/export of precious metals, diamonds and chrome.

The DPCI is investigating robbery and theft cases of precious metals and diamonds at refineries.

The DPCI led teams are also conducting project-driven investigations to address level three to five of the illicit value chain.

The Directorate has also conducted disruptive operations at identified hot spots such as illegal gold processing plants, smelt houses, identified refineries and second hand goods dealerships.

Since April last year, **4 674** suspected ZamaZamas were arrested through multi-disciplinary disruptive operations, conducted by the Directorate, together with mine security and SAPS Detectives and Visible policing divisions.

Majority of the arrests took place in Gauteng which recorded 2 644 arrests.

The second and third most arrests took place in the Mpumalanga and the Free State provinces.

It is through the joint operations that items with an estimated value of over 184 million rand were seized.

These items include gold bearing material, pendukas, diamonds, diamond gravel, gold, platinum, mercury.

Equipment essential to the illegal operations such as spades, shovels, hammers & gloves excavators, trucks, food parcels, vehicles, gas bottles were also seized.

Police have also recovered firearms, ammunition, drugs and undisclosed amount of cash.

The DPCI is currently investiagtion several (11) major cases which are targeting the criminal value chain of illicit mining.

## **SANDF**

The call by some communities for the deployment of the army to deal with illegal miners and associated crimes is premature.

Specialised units the SAPS are on the ground in Gauteng as we speak and can be deployed in any part of the country to deal with this and other crimes, if the need arises.

I do however want to concede that Police alone will not be able to decisively deal with this crime of illicit mining.

A multi-departmental approach to this crime is no longer an option.

Keeping our precious metals away from criminal hands and keeping communities safe will mean;

- Strengthening Border control and emigration.
- Improved enforcement of applicable legislation by relevant Government Departments.
- Improved co-ordination and cooperation with Department of Justice and NPA.
- Enhance the capacity and skills of members involved in the proactive and reactive spheres of dealing with illegal mining.

Business too has a role to play.

Mining houses must take responsibility for the rehabilitation of unused mines after ceasing of their operations to minimize the risk of illegal mining.

- ensure that the land, property and space is fully secured and difficult to access.
- employ private security services to guard and patrol their properties and areas of operation to minimize opportunities for illegal miners

As I conclude,

Illegal mining destroys the social fabric of mining industry through bribery, corruption threats of violence against mine workers and management.

Illegal mining gives rise to prostitution, child labour and substance abuse and other crimes that adversely affect mining communities.

Illegal mining has a range of negative social and financial impacts on the state, business, the mining sector and the communities that once benefited from these mines.

I thank you