

Budget Vote on Police

UCDP : Hon IS Mfundisi

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E249 at 14:00

Chairperson,

There are many challenges facing the department, a strategic level headed approach is certainly needed especially from the executive head. The fight against crime requires not only political commitment but strategic approaches and an ability to identify strategic partners. The goal of combating crime can never be achieved unless and until the police realise that their primary partners in this fight is the society, the community, the ordinary citizens. They must know that we all want the same thing, to be safe in the streets and in our homes, even those that act in a way that makes our streets unsafe, they themselves still want to be safe in those streets.

One good element with our constitution is that except for the Bill of Human Rights, it makes provision for checks and balances. The Independent Complaints Directorate serves to keep the Police in line as does the Secretariat for Policing.

Police brutality in handling citizens serves nobody any good. In fact it aggravates the issues and crime itself, because every time police use unwarranted force against civilians, they are committing crime which they are mandated to combat. Its an absolute shame that civil cases emanating from police brutality, have pushed contingent liability to R7.5 billion in the past financial year. ICD's 2011 annual report shows that our police are more violent than they have been in 10 years. There is a notable departure from the police service not force as envisaged by the constitution.

Even though the number of people shot down by police had gone down from 612 in 2009 to 566 in 2010, this number is still too high. It says 566 people that should have been protected by the police actually did not just die in their hands but were killed or murdered by the police.

It is time that selection to join the police be done meticulously and ensure that these men and women know that fighting crime does not necessarily require brawn, but brains too. Taxpayers money goes down the drain when courts find against the Minister for acts of foolishness by some police officers such as incarcerating a bleeding drunk suspect who dies in the cells. The police budget is expected to grow a further 6.6% on average in the medium term until 2014/2015. This is in line with the current inflation rate and therefore means that they will no longer enjoy real increases in their budget for the foreseeable future. The SAPS will therefore need to become more efficient rather than rely on spending more money to achieve their objectives. Current plans reflect a focus on building more police stations, improving the detective services, strengthening forensic capacity, and improved overall skills and working conditions. However, the key challenge will be to strengthen police management capacity and internal accountability systems of the SAPS. If this is achieved, South Africans can look forward to better policing in the future.

Another plaque to the Police Service is corruption in its ranks. As the existence of corruption signifies a critical weakness of senior police officers' ability to exercise control over the police agency, there is a strong temptation in the senior ranks to deny or play down its existence. Although acknowledging its existence is a step in the right direction, it does not follow that the action taken to deal with it will necessarily be useful or effective. The extent of this problem is difficult to ascertain due to the nature of how these cases occur, nonetheless it still needs to be rooted out in order to have an effective police service that complements the justice system. For example, an incident of police corruption occurs when a detective accepts money from a criminal suspect who wants to ensure that not enough evidence will be gathered to lead to a conviction in court. In such a case, as in most other incidents of police

corruption, neither the corrupt police member nor the criminal suspect will report the incident as both are liable for criminal sanction. The victim of the crime might suspect a problem but would not have any evidence that such a deal had been made. It follows that few incidents of police corruption see the light of day.

The wrangling among the heads of police in recent weeks has been cause for concern, we hope they will heed the warning from cabinet and desist from such counterproductive conduct. One area of great concern is that of subjective promotion. Bad blood rises among the ranks of police if they perceive that some are favoured.