

# CAPE TIMES



— FOUNDED 1876, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA [ WWW.CAPETIMES.CO.ZA ] — WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11 2026 —

METRO | P4

BUSINESS REPORT | P9

PROTEAS READY FOR FAMILIAR ENCOUNTER | P14

## FAMILIES PLEAD FOR SA MEN STUCK IN UKRAINE

AFP AND THAMI MAGUBANE

THE families of 17 South African men trapped in the epicentre of fighting in Ukraine's Donbas region have appealed to President Cyril Ramaphosa to intervene, saying their only hope lies in talks between him and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The men were lured into travelling to Russia and later coerced into fighting for Russian forces in Ukraine. In November, the South African government confirmed it had received "distress calls" from 17 citizens who said they had been tricked into joining mercenary forces and were unable to leave the conflict zone.

Since then, disturbing details have emerged about the conditions the men face, including allegations that some are being forced to continue working or fighting despite serious injuries. Family members say at least one of the men has been paralysed.

The presidency said Ramaphosa and Putin had pledged their support to a process aimed at returning South Africans fighting alongside Russian forces. It added that teams from both countries would continue engagements to finalise the process.

Ukraine's foreign minister said in November that more than 1 400 citizens from 36 African countries had been identified among Russian ranks. South Africa previously warned its citizens against recruitment scams after social media campaigns promoted employment opportunities in Russia that were later linked to alleged abuses. Families of the trapped men shared their ordeal during a media briefing in Durban. They made a direct appeal to Ramaphosa, saying they had been told by contacts in Russia that only presidential intervention could secure the

men's release. Their hopes were bolstered by news that a Kenyan national in a similar situation had been freed.

Phumla Zuma described her family's distress, saying many of the men came from her extended family. She said 19 people initially travelled, including two from Botswana who were last heard from around August 2025. Of the 17 South Africans, two were recently injured, one of whom remains in hospital.

Zuma said the men regularly warn their families about the danger they face and express gratitude for every moment they remain alive. She said unemployment and poverty at home made them vulnerable to exploitation. She described the anguish of communicating with her son, saying missed WhatsApp messages cause panic and relief only comes when replies arrive. During a recent phone call, she said, an explosion occurred nearby, forcing her to abruptly end the conversation.

Zuma spoke of the state of their children: "They are telling us how much danger they are in. They said they are thankful for each and every minute they are able to stay alive. Can you imagine hearing that from your child? This is why we are pleading with the president to intervene," she said.

Another family member, Delani Zuma, said the men were being treated in a manner reminiscent of apartheid-era discrimination. Families also fear the contracts the men signed may bind them indefinitely. They said they had been told the men were considered the property of those who recruited them and could not be released unless Ramaphosa intervened.

Relatives said they remain in a state of panic, uncertain of the dangers their loved ones continue to face.



CONTROVERSIAL forensic fraud examiner Paul O'Sullivan appeared in person before Parliament's Ad Hoc Committee investigating allegations made by Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi. | ARMAND HOUGH Independent Newspapers

NATION

## "I'm loyal to South Africa": Paul O'Sullivan rejects foreign spy allegations

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA  
mayibongwe.maqhina@i.nl.co.za

FORENSIC fraud examiner Paul O'Sullivan pledged his 'loyalty' to South Africa, saying he never performed any foreign agency activities in the country.

He has citizenship of three countries - South Africa, Ireland and the United Kingdom, it emerged when he testified before the Ad Hoc Committee probing the allegations made by KwaZulu-Natal Police Commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi yesterday.

He also confirmed that he had worked for the British army and military intelligence doing counter espionage and counter terrorism in the 1970s.

He said he had joined the army after he left school to study engineering.

"I realised this kind of work was not for me."

He said he was never a member of MI6 when probed by EFF leader Julius

Malema. Asked if he spied on people while working with military intelligence, O'Sullivan said: "I was never a spy."

When he became a South African, O'Sullivan already had citizenship of Ireland and the United Kingdom. He was born in England to Irish parents and was raised in Ireland.

"I have been in this country for 40 years. I can categorically state that I have not performed any foreign agent activities over those 40 years. My loyalty is to South Africa," he told the parliamentary inquiry.

O'Sullivan said he would consider it criminal for him to support any foreign government.

"Having taken the oath I am stating categorically clear that I have never acted as a foreign agent in this country."

Members of Parliament took issue with a paragraph in O'Sullivan's affidavit where he requested to not be probed about his background and busi-

ness interest in South Africa prior to 1990, for reasons of personal and family security.

He said there had been several attempts on his life and that he was entitled to protect himself and his family.

A certain Paul Gibson was taking care of his security and the parliamentary security team was scattered around the room and outside while the police provided additional escorts.

"This was necessary because of the threats made against me. I am satisfied," he told the Ad Hoc Committee.

"There have been 10 recorded attempts. There are people on trial for attempting to murder me for exposing their criminal conduct," said O'Sullivan.

Evidence leader Advocate Norman Arendse, SC said the committee was not bound by a witness's statement while Committee chairperson Soviet Legganyane ruled that any question could be asked, unless it compromised O'Sullivan's or his family's security.

NATION

## Vaccinations underway as province acts to curb FMD spread

STAFF REPORTER

WHILE the farm at the centre of a suspected foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Hartenbos operates as a "closed herd", concerns have been raised as there are communal cattle in the surrounding area, several abattoirs, as well as game farms within a 10 km radius of the suspected case. Several agencies this week convened to establish a coordinated way forward in response to a suspected FMD outbreak in Hartenbos, within the Mossel Bay municipal area, according to an update from the Garden Route District Municipality's Multi-Agency Command Centre. State Veterinarian, Dr Leana Janse van Rensburg, said samples have been collected from cattle displaying symptoms consistent with FMD on a dairy farm in Hartenbos. She further confirmed that several calves have died on the same farm. A provisional quarantine area with a 10km radius was also established around the suspected farm. Several control points have been set up and more control points are expected to be established.

"The only livestock allowed to enter the area are those for slaughter at any of the abattoirs," she said.

In addition, 600 doses of vaccines were received on Monday. The provincial government announced on Sunday it will set aside R100 million to procure enough vaccine doses to protect livestock. Agri Western Cape (AWC) and the Red Meat Producers' Organisation Western Cape (RPOWC) said with suspected cases under investigation in the Mfuleni, Makhaza, Kalkfontein, and Mossel Bay areas, all three cases have already been preventatively vaccinated.

"Samples from all suspected cases have been sent to the laboratory in Pretoria, and results are currently pending."

The infected animals in the Mbekweni area have been vaccinated and are being monitored by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services. The provincial mobility department, in cooperation with police and the Drakenstein Municipality established 24/7 roadblocks which are continuously monitored.

"Following information received by AWK and RPOWC on February 8 from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's State Veterinarian for the (Mossel Bay) area regarding a possible case, a roadblock was immediately established on the R328 at Sonskyn Road. Additional roadblocks will be implemented in the coming days."

BECOME A  
**LAWYER**

STUDY BACHELOR OF LAWS (LLB) WITH STADIO



START YOUR  
**LAW CAREER**

STUDY A HIGHER CERTIFICATE IN PARALEGAL STUDIES WITH STADIO

STADIO

HIGHER EDUCATION



APPLY NOW

APPLY NOW FOR 2026! | HELLO@STADIO.AC.ZA | STADIO.AC.ZA

