

CAPE 150 YearsTIMES

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WORLD WATCHES SA'S FIGHT AGAINST GBV

*UN and Amnesty International
raise alarm as police intensify efforts
to establish what happened*

ANITA NKONKI

THE murders of nine women in Ekurhuleni have drawn international concern with the United Nations and Amnesty International South Africa saying it was "deeply alarmed" by the crimes.

This as the South African Police Services (SAPS) yesterday confirmed that three persons of interest were called in for questioning as police try to get a handle on the gender-based violence crimes that have gripped the nation.

Acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia said a multidisciplinary team initially established under the provincial commissioner was now being led at national level by senior detective services and additional senior police officials supporting the operation. In addressing the media following an urgent meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) Cachalia said lieutenant generals Dumisani Khumalo and Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi were called up to assist.

"That team has subsequently been strengthened. It's now headed by Lieutenant General Sentamule, who's a lieutenant general, part of the national leadership. She's being assisted by General Khumalo, Head of Crime Intelligence, as well as General Mkhwanazi," he said.

The nine bodies were discovered across Ekurhuleni over the past two months. Cachalia said eight of the nine victims had now been identified, with seven families notified. One family had yet to be informed because investigators had not obtained an address.

But while police are pursuing possible connections between the deaths, Cachalia said investigators had not established that the killings were the work of a serial killer.

"These investigations have not confirmed conclusively that we are dealing with a serial killer because the cases are not all necessarily linked and there is some indication of a different modus operandi, as well as different motives," he said.

Responding to the crisis, the United Nations in South Africa said it was "deeply alarmed" by the killings, warning that they reflected the persistent and deadly violence faced by women and girls in the country.

"These killings are not isolated tragedies. They reflect the persistent and deadly violence faced by women and girls in South Africa. The killings are devastating families and communities, heightening fear and insecurity among women and girls, and undermining their



ACTING Police Minister Firoz Cachalia.
| BHEKI RADEBE ANA Studio

human rights, safety, well-being, and socio-economic advancement."

It called for the investigation to be prompt and thorough and for perpetrators to be held accountable.

Amnesty International South Africa has similarly called for action, with Executive Director Shenilla Mohamed saying women should not bear the burden of constantly changing their behaviour to protect themselves from violence.

"Women are tired of platitudes. We want to know what is going to be done to make women and children safe in South Africa. We do not only want condolences, but we want action," Mohamed said. Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga said the IMC had approved an emergency strategy that included increased law-enforcement visibility and environmental interventions in areas where women's bodies had been found.

The City of Ekurhuleni is expected to intensify grass cutting, clear overgrown open spaces, and remove illegal dumping, measures Chikunga said formed part of efforts to improve safety in public spaces.

"The City of Ekurhuleni will intensify grass cutting and de-pushing of open spaces and clearing of illegal dumping sites." She stressed, however, that community clean-up initiatives should not shift responsibility away from government. Businesses operating in public spaces were also urged to ensure lighting, security systems, and surveillance infrastructure were functional and to cooperate with police requests for information or security footage.

The police have also increased their presence in affected communities, with Cachalia confirming an operational deployment covering parts of Ekurhuleni, including Kempton Park.

"We need to do that to give our people in the affected communities the assurance that their safety is our primary concern," he said.

AFTER THE HUNT



A LIONESS rests after feeding on a zebra at Khaya Ndlovu Game Reserve in Hoedspruit, Limpopo. The image was captured during the WMA 2026 Sony Experience, hosted by Sony Alpha South Africa.
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ELECTRICITY

Pushback grows against Eskom's proposed tariff increase

ANITA NKONKI

CIVIL society and civic organisations is pushing back against Eskom's proposed 8.83% electricity tariff increase, warning that another rise in the cost of power could deepen pressure on households and small businesses already battling soaring living costs.

The public has until October 2 to comment on Eskom's proposed tariff structure as the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) considers the application. If approved, the proposed 8.83% increase for Eskom's direct customers would take effect from April 2027, while municipal bulk purchases would rise by 8.84% from July 2027.

The Better Governance Initiative (BGI), which has launched a petition opposing the increase, said electricity was consuming an increasingly large share of household and business budgets. "Residents simply cannot afford a further increase in the price of elec-

tricity," said BGI Founder and Director Sabelo Chalufu. "Our main concern is the cost of living and doing business, to residents primarily and small businesses secondarily. Electricity is consuming an ever-increasing proportion of our budgets, and it is hitting those most in need the hardest," he said.

BGI is calling on NERSA to reject the increase, arguing that Eskom has shown it can operate sustainably on previously approved tariff increases.

AfriForum will also submit formal comments opposing the increase, with Local Government Affairs Manager Morné Mostert questioning it amid declining electricity sales and Eskom's multibillion-rand profit.

"Electricity sales fell by 6.2%, yet its revenue increased because of ridiculously high tariffs. Now Eskom wants to raise tariffs above inflation – again," Mostert said.

He warned that higher tariffs could push more households and businesses towards solar and other forms of

self-generation, further reducing reliance on Eskom. "Consumers are buying less electricity but paying more for it," Mostert said.

ActionSA Gauteng has also entered the consultation process, focusing on how Eskom would recover revenue rather than just the headline increase. Gauteng Provincial Chairperson Funzi Ngobeni said the proposed structure could result in lower-consumption households facing a larger effective increase than heavier users.

"The average increase does not tell the whole story. What matters is what people actually end up paying," Ngobeni said. ActionSA said a Homepower 4 household using 350kWh could face an 11.02% increase, compared with 7.32% for one using 1 500kWh. It also questions an R8.569bn gap between Eskom's proposed and approved revenue figures.

"We are not saying that this automatically means Eskom is unlawfully over-recovering R8.569bn. The infor-

mation before us does not establish that," he said. Energy analyst at Jaltch and Management Committee member of the South African Independent Power Producers Association (SAIPPA), Matthew Cruise, said affordability needed to be considered alongside Eskom's financial obligations, including debt and infrastructure investment.

"NERSA therefore needs to scrutinise not simply whether Eskom requires additional revenue, but whether the costs being recovered from consumers are efficient, reasonable, and allocated fairly between different customer groups," Cruise said.

Cruise warned that rising electricity tariffs could accelerate the shift towards alternative energy, as customers increasingly invest in efficiency, solar and batteries.

NERSA has invited written comments by October 2, ahead of a virtual public hearing on October 8.

Stakeholders seeking to participate must submit requests by October 2.

MADLANGA COMMISSION

Correctional Services acknowledges lifestyle-audit weakness, seeks SIU help

KAREN SINGH

CORRECTIONAL Services is seeking help from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to strengthen lifestyle audits after its national commissioner conceded that the department's current approach was a weakness.

National Commissioner of Correctional Services Makgothi Thobakgale told the Madlanga Commission that lifestyle audits were generally triggered by information emerging from financial disclosures, vetting or other concerns, rather than being carried out routinely.

"Ideally, we should be doing lifestyle audits regardless of the information that we are managing," Thobakgale said, adding that the process required capacity and resources. "But it is a weakness. We are entering into discussions with the SIU to see how the SIU can help us. We intend



CORRECTIONAL Services commissioner Makgothi Thobakgale. | FILE

to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SIU." Thobakgale said security vetting was generally valid for five years and repeated at the end of that period. A promotion did not automatically trigger fresh vetting unless the new position required a higher level of

security clearance. Financial-interest disclosures are made annually by specified categories of employees. Thobakgale said the forms and supporting documents were sent to the Public Service Commission for verification, after which findings and any recommended sanctions were returned to the department.

The commission heard that suspended KwaZulu-Natal Regional Commissioner Mnikelwa Nxele was the only senior manager who had not submitted the required annual financial-interest disclosure. Thobakgale said he had ordered a lifestyle audit and that the non-disclosure would form part of disciplinary charges.

Nxele is separately facing fraud and money-laundering charges arising from Bosasa-related allegations. Investigators allege that he received monthly payments while serving as chairperson of a special departmental bid adjudication commit-

tee. The case remains before court.

Correctional Services officials have warned that limited vetting requirements leave lower-level staff vulnerable to "undue influence, conflicts of interest, corruption, and improper financial relationships".

Thobakgale called for disclosures and vetting to extend to the lowest level of officials exposed to inmates, saying this was currently not happening. He said some recruits were found to have links to gangs while still at training college.

Public Service Commission chairperson Somadoda Fikeni also reportedly called for frontline criminal justice personnel to undergo vetting, citing their vulnerability to financial inducements. Thobakgale identified slow vetting of senior officials and limited resources as ongoing systemic constraints within Correctional Services.

