

Message of Condolences of the Acting National Commissioner, Ms. Nontsikelelo Jolingana, at the Rooigrond Correctional Centre Memorial Service for five deceased officials

Thursday, 5 May 2014

Programme Director Mr Teboho Mokoena

Executive Mayor of Mahikeng: Your Worship, Councilor Lina Miga

HOD of Human Settlement and Public Safety: Mr Baily Matlhakoleng

All Chief Deputy Commissioners and Regional Commissioners and DCs

Deputy Regional Commissioner of LMN: Ms. Sharon Kunene

Area Commissioner of Rooigrond: Ms. Dineo Mokgoetsi

Members of Motsamai, Lesejane, Sekgobela, Thangela and Moruledi families

All traditional Leaders and Members of the Community

Managers and officials of Correctional Services

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocol is observed

I greet you all in the mighty name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This morning I bring to you heartfelt condolences from the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Advocate Tshililo Masutha and the Deputy Minister Mr. Thabang Makwetla. I stand here on their behalf and on behalf of every correctional official in this Department, who is currently engulfed by immeasurable grief.

To the Moruledi, Motsamai, Sekgobela, Tshangela and Lesajane families, I am sure no amount of words, touches or expression of compassion can take away your pain. Words cannot explain the pain I am also feeling right now. Losing a loved one is indeed a personal feeling that cannot be shared or extended. We say to you all: *“Aluhlanga lungehlile, duduzekani.”*

Often times when people around us go through this difficult path, as individuals we get drawn to memories of our loved ones who passed on and this usually brings overwhelming feelings of loss and grief. This tragic incident reminds me of a true story that happened many years ago where a very successful lawyer and devout Christian by the name of Horatio Spafford went through a similar occurrence of death that robbed him of his loved ones in a cruel manner. Spafford lived in Chicago in the United States with his beautiful wife and four young girls in a modest house. Following fire devastation in their country in 1873, the family decided to move to England. On their way there, their steamship was involved in an accident and their four children died. Overcome with despair at the loss of his children, and moved by the experience, Spafford wrote this hymn, *‘IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL’*, which expressed his faith. The lyrics of the song go like:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul”.*

Indeed it will be well with our souls.

In times like this, I often fail to find the right words to express myself because of the pain I'm feeling due to the loss of our departed officials and moreover the pain the family and loved ones are feeling right now. Death is indeed an enemy. It takes away loved ones, husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, companions, friends, colleagues and leaves us all shallow and speechless. My thoughts and prayers are with you during this time of grief.

As a Department of Correctional Services, we are extremely saddened by the sudden passing of our colleagues who dedicated their long and loyal service to Correctional Services. Together, they have contributed in the progressive realization of a more peaceful and safer South Africa through effective and humane incarceration of inmates.

We are very proud of the combined 101 years of service that our departed dear comrades rendered to this Department and the people of South Africa. We are also thankful to you, as families because you stood by them through thick and thin, during the difficult times that are inherent in the management of any correctional system. We thank you for sharing with us their most productive stages of their lives.

A life of a Correctional Official is not an easy one. It is often filled with trials and tribulations. When everyone else has failed in society to build an upright or reform an offending character, a Correctional Official has to step in, hold an offender by hand and lead him or her to an upright path that transforms him or her into a worthy and responsible citizen of our society.

Our facilities house different types of offenders from murderers, rapists, thieves, women and child abusers, etc. Some of them have committed crimes so heinous that you cannot phantom how a human being can ever do such things. These heroes have been a pillar of our strength, adapting to various challenging environments. They embodied patience, humbleness, kindness and compassion while they were serving the people of this country, victims of crime and also perpetrators. They knew that the universe makes no mistakes. In serving as correctional officials they lived their life purpose. We are here, because these heroes mattered in our lives and in the lives of all South Africans. The outpouring of grief literally across all South Africans following their tragic death bears testimony to this.

The Apostle Paul in the book of 2 Timothy 4:7 says:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day”.

Indeed our departed fellow officials have run and finished their race and are waiting for their crowns. It is now up to you and me to journey on. Part of our journey must be making of a pledge to spare neither effort nor strength to change the misfortunes of our country, which has the sixth highest number of deaths from road accidents in the world and the worst country in Africa, in terms of the World Health Organisation records. This horrific accident has left heartbroken widows, children, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and friends. We appeal to you to all not to harm yourselves, but to leave all to our saviour Jesus Christ.

Indeed it can never be easy, as sometimes the road might be steep, filled with potholes, stones, mountains and hills. Despite all these situations, we need to learn to say: *It is Well with My Soul* and ask God to carry us through.

May the good Lord bless all the families of the departed. May He shelter you under His wings and bring light while going through this dark cloud in your lives. We trust and believe He will carry you through this difficult time, help you lay your loved ones to rest with dignity, and be with you as you recover from this loss. May He embrace you at all times, keep you safe and heal you over time.

I thank you

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