

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 8 July 2012

TO: All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors/Reporters

NDEBELE CALLS FOR SUPPORT TO REINTEGRATE OFFENDERS BACK INTO SOCIETY

Correctional Services Minister Sibusiso Ndebele has called on communities to play their part in ensuring that offenders are successfully reintegrated back into society.

The Minister's call follows the closure on Friday (6 July 2012) of the ten week process in which a total of 43,789 offenders qualified for early release from Correctional Centres and the system of Community Corrections, following a special remission of sentence granted on 27 April 2012 by President Jacob Zuma to specific sentenced offenders, probationers and parolees. Those who posed a serious risk to society, particularly offenders declared to be dangerous criminals, were excluded from remissions.

"Corrections is a societal responsibility. Societal support for those who have served time in a correctional facility is critical to helping them back into a normal way of life. Society is guaranteed a victory against crime and re-offending if we all begin to understand the role we must and should play in helping those who are vulnerable among us lead positive and productive lives. In essence, we are talking about a partnership between the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and communities to assist in preparing inmates for successful social integration.

"DCS is fully committed to a caring and just society, enjoining all of us to afford those who err against society the opportunity to correct their ways under humane conditions. We are going all out to rehabilitate those seeking opportunities for change in their lives. We are passionate about galvanising understanding for our transformative agenda from prisons to corrections, and preparing offenders to be reintegrated as functional members of society. Corrections is an integral part of the Integrated Criminal Justice System, and the value chain in the fight against crime and criminality. We have moved away from the legacy of the past of serving solely as an instrument of retribution to actively pursuing lasting solutions to the societal challenge that is crime by showing those in conflict with the law that there are alternatives to a life of criminality and self-destruction.

"The White Paper on Corrections enjoins us to pursue this objective by changing the circumstances of those entrusted in our care, through not only offending behaviour altering interventions but also through skills and training. Skills development and educational opportunities offer us immediate solutions to providing those serving time within our facilities,

to at least attain a new set of tools for tackling life better once released through parole or completion of sentence,” said the Minister.

Among those released on Friday (6 July) was Mthuthuzeli Gontshi who attained numerous qualifications since he was sentenced to 14 years in 2005. Gontshi completed his matric in prison, and is now in the final year of his Bachelor of Commerce degree with specialisation in law. Since 2005, he has attended HIV related programmes as well as psychological and sexual orientation programmes. Gontshi has been in custody since he was arrested in 2003 for hijacking a car.

Other offenders who benefitted from the corrections programme, and were successfully reintegrated, include:

- Andile Jara, who was actively involved in the Marimba Band and a musical group at the Amathole Management Area in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, is now temporarily involved in a Drama Project at Rhodes University.
- Another remission offender from Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape is Fredoleen Isaacs who, was serving his sentence at St. Albans in Port Elizabeth, has now been absorbed at her family business as a manager of the Pharmacy.
- Moeketsi Koko, who was released from Bloemfontein Community Corrections in the Free State, received a bursary from Capricorn Training to study under the Institute of Safety, Health and Environment.
- Goodwill Mofokeng, from Kroonstad Management Area, who is now employed by the Department of Education at Boromelo Combined School as a teacher.
- Kassavan Naicker from Pietermaritzburg Correctional Centre, KwaZulu-Natal is now his own boss. He is an electrician who is capitalising on the skill he learned while incarcerated.
- Vumokwakhe Mkhize from KwaZulu-Natal who now owns a panel beating company. He also acquired his skills in prison.
- Paul Evans from the Western Cape who fruitfully used his time of incarceration to acquire a qualification in IT through Unisa. He is now the Head of IT at MED Advertising.

Ends.

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