Media Statement
20 April 2020

A call for inmates to strike is irresponsible and reckless

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has taken note of mobilization efforts by Miles Bhudu and other individuals, instigating inmates to revolt against the State. This is totally irresponsible and reckless, and there is no need for such. DCS is currently engaging with relevant law enforcement agencies to take necessary action.

Following this incitement, inmates at Baviaanspoort Medium Correctional Centre (B Unit, Cell 7), in Gauteng, became disruptive, with one inmate lying on his back and refusing to move into his cell. Correctional officials had to use minimum force in order to bring about amity and order was restored.

Reports of an inmate being shot at are only a fabrication as our officials do not utilise firearms inside the centres. Two inmates were treated for minor injuries by our Health Care officials and they are back in their cells. This incident has been reported accordingly to the relevant authorities and investigations are currently underway.

We will continue embarking on random search and seizure operations across the country to confiscate contrabands from inmates and to ensure that rogue officials who aide the smuggling of those contrabands in our facilities are exposed and ultimately prosecuted.

The Department of Correctional Services must reiterate its deep concern over this form of mobilisation, propagating for chaos inside centres. An action of this nature is unwarranted as DCS has been regularly updating the nation on progress in terms of the implementation of our COVID-19 Disaster Management Response Strategy.

Our approach is focused on prevention, containment/treatment and disaster recovery. The Department activated Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures at all management areas with specific directives to ensure that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is availed and has pushed for the sanitisation of reception areas, cells, offices, vehicles and ablution facilities.

There has been screening at our centres and supplies are being provided continuously, both for inmates and officials. Improving personal and environmental hygiene, provision of personal equipment, sanitisation and decontamination interventions is what we have been doing and continue to do. Where shortages are experienced, the Department has a system in place to assist correctional centres in need of stock whilst awaiting delivery. Centres have a flexibility to share resources and we continue to engage with our officials and inmates.

Therefore, reports purporting that inmates are not protected against the virus cannot be sustained. Since the suspension of visits to correctional centres on 16 March 2020, only one centre in East London, out of the country's 243 correctional facilities, has confirmed COVID-19 cases for inmates. DCS acted promptly by activating containment and treatment measures where necessary, and enforcing prevention.

We are committed to our task at hand and we will continue to remain transparent in our activities.

Ends.

Issued by: Department of Correctional Services

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