



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Address by Deputy Minister of Correctional Services,
Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa (Ah! Dilizintaba), MP, on the occasion of
Launch of National Safer Festive Season Campaign 2019/20,
East London Correctional Centre, Eastern Cape
2 December 2019**

- **Programme Director**
- **Chief Operations Commissioner**
- **Regional Commissioners, Area Commissioners and all officials**
- **Our Esteemed Colleagues from the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster**
- **Stakeholder Representatives**
- **Members of our Communities**
- **Members of the Media**
- **Distinguished Guests**

We gather at the beginning of a critical period of the year. For some, it is a period of thanks giving and family. For us as a department, it is also a period of reconciliation. We must be able to create a society where reconciliation is central to conflict resolution, as former President Tata Mandela put it when he said: **“You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”**

For some amongst us, this is a period of opportunity which in turn translates into a great deal of work for law enforcement agencies. It is common cause that this is the period where as a nation we tend to experience high levels of criminality. We therefore urge everyone to not only be on high alert, but also embody the advice of a great hero across the globe, Dr Martin Luther King Junior when he said: ***History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamour of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.***

In other words, we cannot sit by and watch criminality of any form manifests itself in our communities. I say any form because our communities must internalize the principle that everyone is equal before the law. Even the police officer who solicits a bribe at a roadblock must know that his or her conduct will not be condoned as it is a treachery against the state.

As we urge society to stand against violence on women and children, I call upon men to introspect deeply about their conduct. Let us internalize an existential fact that women do not owe us

With the December holidays upon us, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is leaving nothing to chance when it comes to security at South Africa's 243 correctional centres. We are making a concerted effort to ensure *"A safer festive season for you!"*

To this end, we are gathered here to officially launch the DCS National Safer Festive Season campaign for 2019/20. As part of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster, we are particularly pleased that our intensified crime-fighting operations will see increased cooperation with various other law enforcement agencies. For this, we want to convey our sincere gratitude to all our colleagues in the various JCPS Cluster Departments.

As DCS, we are continuing to ensure a reduction in the number of escapes from correctional facilities across the country. According to the latest DCS (2018/19) annual report, the Department managed to reduce escapes to 0.034% with 99.97% of the country's 162,875 inmates remaining safely behind bars. Fifty six (56) escapes were reported last year (2018/19), compared to 50 the previous year (2017/18), and the majority of these escapees have been re-arrested and are back behind bars. This represents a decline, from as high as 1,244 escapes per year in 1995. The efficiency, and effectiveness, of our safe and secure custody programme, at correctional centres, cannot be compromised.

The majority of our Correctional Officials must be commended for this achievement. We know that there are a small minority of unscrupulous officials, who themselves are criminals masquerading in DCS uniform,

who will sacrifice these noble goals, for a safer and secure South Africa, for a “quick buck” on the altar of greed. We want to repeat our warnings to such officials that your days are numbered, and you will not only be investigated, disciplined and dismissed but will be criminally prosecuted, and will have to swap your brown uniform for the orange ones.

In the past months, we have witnessed an increase in members of the public aiding inmates to commit further criminal offences. We would like to once again, warn members of the public that in terms of the Correctional Services Act, no person may without lawful authority, supply, convey or cause to be supplied or conveyed to any inmate, or hide or place for his or her use any document, intoxicating liquor, dagga, drug, opiate, money, or any other article. Further, any person who assists an inmate in escaping, or attempting to escape, from any correctional centre or from any place where he or she may be in custody, is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine, or to incarceration, for a period not exceeding ten years or to such incarceration without the option of a fine or both. We also want to extend our gratitude to communities, some of whom are present here today, that have upped their cooperation with law enforcement agencies to improve our safe, and secure, detention. We call upon you to provide no sanctuary for fugitives from justice in any corner of our country. We are calling upon citizens to do their part in this regard, and report any suspicious activity immediately, as Corrections is a Societal Responsibility.

As part of an integrated security systems approach, our security improvements include implementation of security technology systems at centres, implementation of the Back to Basics campaign, security

awareness campaigns in regions as well as training on the implementation of various crime-fighting strategies. Body scanning equipment at identified centres, as well as cell phone detection systems in new-generation correctional facilities, are also beneficial. A number of specialized teams and structures have also been established to implement various solutions to deal comprehensively with safe custody in our correctional facilities. We continue to explore appropriate solutions in partnership with our sister departments, as well as other stakeholders, to work together with us in this process. We are also looking at tightening the implementation of existing laws to achieve our security objectives, as well as possible amendments to legislation and policies. The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa clearly states that "a comprehensive security strategy is a prerequisite for correction and rehabilitation". Hence, we are working towards implementing a comprehensive, and integrated, security system which will substantially improve safety and security at all our facilities 24-hours-a-day.

The December/January holiday period is, generally, a time during which inmates are desperate to escape for various reasons, which include, amongst others, to participate in criminal activities or simply to be with family or friends. It is for this reason that special emphasis is placed on security measures in correctional centres, with increased visibility, and involvement, of managers at all levels in the operational activities.

Focus areas for a Safer Festive Season include tightening security measures at correctional centres, increased supervision of officials as well as decreasing idleness amongst inmates.

From 2 December 2019 until 10 January 2020, we will step up security in all our facilities with more limitations on offender movement as well as certain food and other items. Offenders will participate in a range of indoor activities and games. The festive season is not a period where we lock the centres, and throw away the keys until January. It is for this reason that various managers, from Head Office, Regional Offices and Area Offices, will visit correctional centres to ensure that not only is security in place, but that inmates are meaningfully absorbed.

Programme Director, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, I also wish to, unequivocally, emphasize that correctional services alone can never achieve the ideals of an effective correctional system. An important facet is our partnership with communities. One of the challenges facing correctional services is low levels of inmate visitations by families. This reduces the requisite emotional, and psychological, outlook of inmates, which is critical for effective rehabilitation and social re-integration. The Department, therefore, wants to encourage families, and communities, to visit, and maintain contact with, inmates.

In conclusion, we want to extend our thanks, and appreciation, to all our role-players.

We want to specifically acknowledge our various stakeholders, partners and, particularly, our communities. The JCPS Cluster, including DCS and all law enforcement agencies and emergency services, will be even more vigilant, ensuring that people in South Africa are, and feel, safe this festive season.

Finally, together, let us make this *“A safer festive season for you!”*

I thank you!