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**JCPS CLUSTER BRIEFING STATEMENT ON THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE REGULATIONS OF ALERT LEVEL 3 AND ADHERENCE TO THE SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

**WEDNESDAY, 15 JULY 2020**

Fellow South African citizens and members of the media

The JCPS Cluster is deeply concerned by the rising number of COVID-19 infections. We all know of someone who tested positive, or we have a family member who has bene infected. We have all seen the devastation that COVID-19 has brought on lives, health, jobs and business.

This pandemic is indiscriminate, no one is immune. It even attacks those entrusted with protecting us. A number of JCPS cluster officials have tested positive, the good news is that many of them have fully recovered and are back in the front line serving their communities. Their recovery has been largely due to them scrupulously doing what their medical care workers told them to do. The SANDF has deployed over 60 military health practitioners from various medical disciplines to augment the health response in the Eastern Cape Province

It is the same for all of us South Africans: if we are responsible, if we do respect one another, if we work with those serving us during this pandemic, we will overcome it – and we will break its transmission. As the president has told us, the answer is in our hands.

We also want to send our sincerest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Judge Patrick Jaji who, at the time of his passing, diligently served on the bench of the Eastern Cape Division of the High Court.

We also send our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of two of our permanent magistrates, another newly retired magistrate who was in an acting position and another acting magistrate, all of whom passed away recently. There passing is a great loss to our courts and the administration of justice.

On Sunday, the president announced a series of new measures to curb the runaway rate of infections. These are not arbitrary measures designed to limit the freedoms of ordinary people, but very real definite curbs to social movement to prevent the spread of the disease.

The JCPS Cluster is responsible for ensuring that everyone complies with the regulations announced by the Honourable Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. This will include increased police visibility, roadblocks and patrols where applicable in streets, malls and other areas where people ignore social distancing protocols.

There will also be random stop and search operations to ensure that the prohibition on the trade of alcohol and tobacco is not being subverted. Throughout all of this, law enforcement officials will be dependent upon the cooperation of community members to ensure these operations are handled in the best possible spirit and with the least disruption.

**INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION USED TO FIGHT COVID-19**

Our intelligence services have been working throughout the /pandemic to help track and trace, providing valuable information on trends, patterns and manifestation of COVID-19, both at home and abroad, which has helped further refine and inform government’s consolidated response to combating the spread of the virus.

At an international level, our intelligence services have also been conducting comparative analyses on how other nations are responding to this pandemic, especially their strategies to alleviate the social and economic impact on the well-being of their citizens, since the well-being, safety and security of our own people is paramount in our strategic response.

**HOME AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES**

The Department of Home Affairs continues to provide essential services to many people in their time of need. Home Affairs has registered births, issued birth certificates, death certificates, temporary ID documents and passports for those involved in the cross-border transportation of essential goods. Home Affairs has partnered with the Department of Basic Education to issue IDs to matriculants from 16 June 2020.

Since the start of the lockdown period on 27 March, 2020 until 09 July 2020, nearly 800 000 people visited the Home Affairs Offices. More than 260 431 births were registered. 116 759 replacement birth certificates were issued, as well as 143 604 temporary identity certificates, 130 452 death certificates and 6 801 passports to those in export and cargo transport. More than 136 677 smart ID Cards, which were applied for before the imposition of the lockdown, have been collected.

South Africa’s international borders remain closed for non-essential travel. In the period from 27 March 2020 to 13 July 2020, immigration officials facilitated nearly 540 000 movements through the borders. The bulk of these were either South Africans returning home or those returning overseas to their jobs or their places of study, or reuniting with their families. A significant number of the total movements represent essential transport workers ensuring the region had access to food and medicines.

Other movements included deportations, the repatriation of foreign nationals, medical evacuations for life-threatening conditions and learners from neighbouring countries who attend school in the Republic. These learners are allowed entry and exit subject to strict compliance with set protocols.

This means that a number of people account for multiple movements across the border.

**COVID-19 IN CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is continuing to implement its COVID-19 Disaster Management Response Strategy to mitigate against the ravages of the pandemic across all of its 243 correctional centres in the country.

The strategy has enabled DCS to ensure the wellbeing of inmates and officials. All inmates have access to quality healthcare in line with the provisions of the United Nations Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners or, as they are called, the Nelson Mandela Rules.

As at 13 July 2020, the Department of Correctional Services recorded a total of 3 688 confirmed COVID-19 cases compromising of 2 203 officials and 1 485 inmates. The number of cases for inmates represents 1.02% of the inmate population.

We have also recorded 2 235 recoveries, of which 1 231 cases are for inmates. Therefore, there are 239 active cases for inmates. Unfortunately, 15 inmates and 31 officials have succumbed to COVID-19.

As DCS, we profoundly appreciate the fact that we have officials dedicated to flattening the curve of COVID-19 in our correctional facilities. We will continue working towards eliminating all active cases.

There is some misinformation that also needs to be corrected. Some organizations which claim to represent inmates have unfortunately resorted to exaggerating COVID-19 cases in our centres in an effort to instigate inmates. We are taking measures to address this. With regards to such planned instigations, most inmates have ignored this agenda as they are familiar with the preventative measures in all our centres.

The Department is also making progress in terms of placing low-risk inmates on parole as per the parole dispensation announced by the President.

We have released a total of 6 128 inmates thus far. This requires a meticulous process which involves victim-offender mediation and the taking of DNA samples by the South African Police Service. Inmates who are released are those who have undergone the relevant rehabilitation programmes aimed at correcting their offending behaviour.

**THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION**

The role of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development is to ensure that Special Investigating Unit Proclamations received comply with the prescripts of the SIU Act and the law.

In view of the impact of investigations of this nature, the resources spent on such investigations and the need to recover stolen assets, the initial Proclamation must be unassailable.

Any successful challenge against a Proclamation will result in setting aside an entire investigation, which often takes years, jeopardising recoveries and allowing wrongdoing to go unpunished.

The Department has received requests for Proclamations to investigate COVID-19 related matters. These matters have been considered and there have been fruitful engagements with the SIU to craft a motivation for an all-encompassing investigation.

We are confident that, by the end of this week, a Proclamation will be finalised and submitted to the President for approval.

**WEARING OF FACE MASKS**

As the President has announced, the wearing of a cloth face mask or homemade face covering item that covers the nose and mouth is mandatory for every person when in a public space. Wearing of a mask serves in public is the new normal and we encourage all South Africans to adhere to this. Wearing a mask protects the wearer and those in proximity to that person from being exposed to the virus – irrespective of who is infected or symptomatic.

No person will be allowed to use, operate, perform any services on any form of public transport, enter or be in a building, place or premises, including government buildings used by the public to obtain goods and services or be in any public open space if he or she is not wearing a cloth face mask.

Drivers and operators or public transport and shop keepers will be responsible for ensuring that anyone who boards their vehicle or who enters their premises is wearing a mask. If they fail to do so, they will be committing an offence and can be charged accordingly.

**ALCOHOL BAN**

Alcohol may be consumed in private but it may not be transported, sold or dispensed at any liquor outlet, whether bottle store, bar, shebeen and restaurant. People are allowed to drink alcohol in private, inside their homes or their yards but not in public spaces, on pavements or in their vehicles.

Law enforcement officials have been instructed to act resolutely to enforce compliance with the regulations, arresting those who breach the regulations and ensuring that they are successfully prosecuted. Convictions will result in either fines or jail terms depending on the discretion of the court.

The cluster is appealing to the public not to buy any alcohol during this time as all alcohol sales are currently illegal. If anyone is caught doing so, they will also be prosecuted.

The cluster is urging communities to work with law enforcement agencies and officials to continue reporting anyone transgressing the regulations.

It is critical to remember too that the sale of cigarettes, tobacco products and e-cigarettes remains prohibited at this time – and subject to the same sanctions as those found selling alcohol.

**AFTER TEARS PARTIES**

The cluster has noticed an increase in social gatherings before and after funerals. The night vigil before the burial and the so-called “After Tears” following the burial, remain prohibited gatherings. No alcohol may be consumed at the actual funeral either.

**ENFORCEMENT OF THE CURFEW**

Members of the South African Police Service, South African National Defence Force and Traffic Departments will be enforcing the 21:00 to 04:00 daily curfew. Those who work at night or early in the morning will have to produce a permit of movement when they are requested to do so by law enforcement officials. The cluster once again urges the public, especially those who do not have to be out of their homes for work, to stay at home. Breaking curfew without a permit or a valid reason will be a breach of the regulations and be prosecuted as such.

Public parks remain closed, except for when exercising which is subject to health protocols. No gatherings are allowed in public parks. Beaches still remain closed and gatherings on beaches are prohibited.

**INCREASE IN VIOLENCE AND CRIME**

The cluster is deeply concerned that criminal elements have used the cover of Coronavirus pandemic to increase their attacks on the public. This state of affairs is not acceptable. The cluster commits to ensuring that all members of the community are protected against all forms of crimes. We urge everyone to be vigilant and to protect themselves from the criminals. The cluster will be partnering with community policing forums and community safety forums to fight the surge of crime.

The JCPS Cluster has also noted the destruction and damage of social and public infrastructure, some of it critical in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Destroying and damaging public infrastructure is a criminal offence and anyone found to be damaging public property will be arrested and prosecuted.

We condemn the recent violence against foreign nationals, especially in the trucking industry, but we fully appreciate the frustration that our people are experiencing. We need to continue to look for solutions that will address the plight of our local citizens while we make every effort to combat the violence associated with this.

COVID-19 has worsened the social and economic impact on people’s livelihoods not only in our country, but across the continent and the world at large. As government, we need to work harder with our regional counterparts to address these challenges.

**FIGHTING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE**

Over and above the general crime and violence that increased after the relaxation of the lockdown regulations, the JCPS Cluster has also noted with concern the increase of the attacks and murder of women and children. Last week, as the Minister of Police, I instructed all members of the South African Police Service to ensure that they prioritize the fight against Gender Based Violence throughout the pandemic and beyond. We are urging all officers to improve their responses to crimes committed against women, children and other vulnerable groups.

**CLOSURE OF POLICE STATIONS AND OTHER SERVICE CENTRES**

In conclusion, we want to announce that some of the police stations, law enforcement centres and Home Affairs offices where we deliver various services to communities have been temporarily closed for decontamination and deep cleaning. The temporary closure is one of the procedures that we have to follow if a single staff member who works in the centre tests positive for COVID-19 to ensure the safety of the public. We want to assure the public however that contingency measures such as the provision of the mobile units and the use of nearby buildings have been put in place to ensure minimal service delivery interruptions. We apologise for the inconvenience resulting from these temporary closures.

I thank you.