



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

17 March 2026

REARREST OF ESCAPED OFFENDER THULANI GCALEKA

The Department of Correctional Services confirms the rearrest of escaped offender, Thulani Gcaleka, in the early hours of Tuesday, 17 March 2026, in the Gauteng Province.

Offender Gcaleka had been on the run since his escape on 5 February 2026 from Sevontein Correctional Centre, under the Pietermaritzburg Management Area in KwaZulu-Natal. At the time of the escape, the offender was part of a cleaning work team assigned to duties at the prison farm. Thulani Gcaleka is serving a life sentence for serious offences, including attempted murder, attempted rape, rape, common robbery, and housebreaking with the intent to commit an offence.

The National Commissioner, Mr Makgothi Samuel Thobakgale established a dedicated Track and Tracing Team within his office to focus on high-profile and high-risk escapees. This specialised team works to augment and support existing regional capabilities, ensuring a coordinated and intensified response to such incidents. The rearrest of offender Gcaleka is a direct result of these strengthened efforts.

The Department reiterates that escaping from lawful custody is a serious offence and will not be tolerated. Escapees pose a significant risk to public safety, and the Department remains resolute in ensuring that all those who evade custody are swiftly traced and returned.

Offender Gcaleka will face additional criminal charges arising from his escape from lawful custody. Internally, he will be reclassified to a higher security category and transferred to a maximum-security correctional facility.

Furthermore, the Department confirms that disciplinary processes related to the circumstances surrounding the escape are ongoing, to ensure that appropriate action is taken against those found to have been negligent or complicit.

ENDS

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