



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media Statement by the National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Makgothi Samuel Thobakgale at St Albans Management Area

11 April 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen.

As the National Commissioner, one of my key responsibilities is to conduct regular operational visits to correctional centres across the country. These visits are not merely procedural; they are crucial for ensuring that all centres operate in full compliance with the Correctional Services Act. They provide me with an opportunity to engage directly with the realities on the ground, assess operational challenges, and address concerns affecting our facilities, officials, and inmates alike.

Correctional Services in South Africa is a vast and complex institution. With over 162 991 inmates housed in 243 correctional centres across the country, supported by a dedicated staff complement of 37,000 employees, it is imperative that our systems remain agile, responsive, and aligned to the evolving demands of the correctional environment. Operational coherence, vigilance, and accountability are not optional, but essential.

As part of our continued efforts to stabilise and strengthen Correctional Services, the Department is actively addressing critical vacancies and ensuring that key leadership positions are filled. These strategic appointments are essential to reinforce governance, operational efficiency, and service delivery across all regions.

We are currently focussed at filling vacancies at the Management Area level, as Area Commissioners are tasked with day-to-day functioning of our correctional centres. St Albans Management Area has been identified as a key focus area, and the process to appoint an Area Commissioner is well underway and expected to be concluded soon.

Despite the constraints brought about by national budget cuts, the Department remains resolute in its mission. Our correctional centres continue to work diligently, and as senior management, it is imperative that we come closer to the ground. This includes actively engaging with facility operations, supporting our officials, and seeking innovative solutions to deliver on our mandate, even amidst financial limitations.

Hence, today's visit to the Eastern Cape Region is not only focussed at St Albans Management Area but the entire Region. Nevertheless, it has to be said that St Albans

Management Area has been doing a phenomenal work intercepting attempts to smuggle contraband into the facility.

While this reflects positively on our internal security mechanisms, it is equally troubling that individuals, of advanced age, are being manipulated or coerced into participating in these illegal activities. For instance, just last weekend, a 58-year-old woman was arrested attempting to smuggle dagga, medication, mobile phone accessories, and other prohibited items into the facility.

These incidents highlight the persistent and evolving threats we face, including tactics such as throwing packages over the perimeter fences, targeting inmates working in agricultural fields. Such actions demonstrate a coordinated effort by external criminal elements seeking to undermine our security infrastructure and compromise the integrity of our centres.

In light of recent misleading reports on the preferential treatment of Timothy Omotoso, I must firmly state that these allegations are entirely false and represent a gross misuse of the media platform. It is deeply concerning that individuals with dubious backgrounds, who disappear when confronted and reappear only when controversy offers them visibility, are given space to perpetuate unfounded narratives.

We expect and welcome scrutiny, and where errors occur, we are committed to rectifying them transparently. However, it is incumbent upon media outlets to uphold ethical standards by vetting sources, verifying claims, and avoiding the amplification of misinformation. Giving airtime to individuals who have previously deceived the public only serves to enable their misconduct and mislead the nation.

The Department has been conducting targeted security operations in our correctional centres to ensure safety by removing illegal items and contraband. In parallel, we have intensified our efforts in monitoring parole compliance, which remains a top priority. Our most recent monitoring exercise took place on 28 December 2024 in Zwelitsha Township and the surrounding areas of King William's Town. These operations are crucial, as the parole system is under increasing public scrutiny, particularly in cases where parolees reoffend.

Currently, we are dealing with a serious incident in Elliotdale, where a parolee has absconded after allegedly assaulting a caregiver. This case highlights the importance of ensuring that caregivers are fully informed about their responsibilities, and the steps to take when faced with potential risks.

Therefore, it is important that we urge caregivers and members of the public to immediately report any parolee who is behaving in a manner that violates the conditions of their release. Timely reporting allows Correctional Services to take swift action to protect communities and uphold the integrity of the parole system.

In closing, I wish to reaffirm the Department's unwavering commitment to rehabilitation and upholding safety within our correctional system. Despite the challenges that do emerge from time-to-time, we remain firm on building a correctional system that aligns with the visionary future we aspire to as a nation.

Ends.

Enquiries, Singabakho Nxumalo on 079 523 5794

Issued by the Office of the National Commissioner of Correctional Services