

ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
LAUNCH OF LIMPOPO SAFER FESTIVE SEASON OPERATION,
LEBOWAKGOMO

27 OCTOBER 2024

Programme Director,
The Acting Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality,
The Mayor of Lepelle Nkumpi Municipality, Cllr. Merriam Molala,
Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant General MT Hadebe,
Deputy Provincial Commissioner, Major General Manala,
District Commissioners,
HOD Mr. Matjena and your team,
SAPS members in general
Ladies and gentlemen.

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Good Morning, Goeie More

It is an honor to be here today at this vital launch of Limpopo's Safer Festive Season Operation, an event focused on ensuring the safety and security of our communities as we approach a season filled with celebration, joy, and, regrettably, the potential for increased crime. This operation reflects our commitment to the people of Limpopo, as we prioritize the well-being of each citizen through our efforts to make our streets, homes, and neighborhoods safe during the festive season.

Programme Director, today, we unite under the theme, "Combating Crime through Decisive Police Action and Robust Community Involvement." This theme encapsulates the message we must send to criminals and

lawbreakers: Limpopo is no place for crime. The police are here to serve and protect, acting impartially and without favor. Through our combined efforts—law enforcement working alongside vigilant community members—we are creating a safe and secure environment that benefits every resident.

This festive season, let us remember that safety is a shared responsibility. Law enforcement, community members, and various stakeholders must all play an active role in making our towns, villages, and cities safer. Through decisive police action and active community involvement, we can prevent the kinds of criminal activities that threaten the safety and security of our people.

Programme Director, Safer Festive Season crime combating operations are already in full swing, and I am pleased to announce that our dedicated police force has ramped up its efforts to monitor and patrol key entrance and exit routes to Limpopo. These main routes have become primary targets for illegal activities, as they are often used to smuggle illicit goods and drugs into our communities. By intensifying our surveillance and law enforcement presence at these critical points, we are sending a clear message to anyone considering transporting illegal items and stolen cars into Limpopo: you will be stopped, and you will face the full force of the law.

Our goal is not just to protect our province from external threats but also to reduce the internal risks posed by such activities. The movement of drugs and other illegal substances threatens the lives of our youth, undermines families, and fuels other forms of crime. Therefore, our commitment to monitoring these routes is unwavering, and we encourage the public to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activities they might observe along these transit points.

In addition to our hands-on approach to crime prevention, we are also advancing in our strategic use of technology to combat crime through the Safer Cities Project. This initiative aims to enhance the integration of law

enforcement agencies while maximizing the use of modern technology to increase our effectiveness in preventing crime. By adopting digital tools, surveillance systems, and improved data-sharing protocols, we are equipping our law enforcement officers with the means to respond quickly, work efficiently, and address crime more proactively.

Programme Director, our commitment goes beyond combating general crime; it includes a special focus on protecting vulnerable groups. Women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities are often targeted by criminals, especially during busy festive seasons when families and individuals are more likely to be distracted. As we enter this season, let us keep these vulnerable groups in our thoughts and actions. Law enforcement has made a firm pledge to provide additional support to protect them.

Our Community Safety Forums and Community Policing Forums are crucial partners in this mission. These structures allow us to work together, monitor high-risk areas, and quickly respond to potential threats. But it is not only formal structures that matter; every resident has a role to play. By watching out for our neighbors and reporting suspicious behavior, we can prevent crime and create a sense of security for those who are most at risk. This is a season for everyone to celebrate, not one to live in fear.

Programme Director, community participation remains one of our strongest tools in crime prevention. We urge every resident to engage with available safety structures and to understand that crime prevention begins within our own neighborhoods. When we talk about "robust community involvement," we mean the active participation of every citizen in looking out for each other and reporting any signs of crime or danger.

As we celebrate, travel, and spend time with our families, let us also be mindful of the safety of our fellow citizens. Criminals often take advantage of times when people are relaxed and less cautious. By staying vigilant,

avoiding risky behaviors, and helping law enforcement through timely reporting, we can make our communities no-go zones for those intending to do harm.

We must be aware, however, that some members of the community unwittingly enable crime by purchasing stolen goods or providing shelter to known offenders. This behavior must end. Buying stolen goods not only supports criminal activities but also puts our families and neighborhoods at risk. Let us be clear: there is no place for criminal sympathizers in our communities. Instead, let us all take up the mantle of responsibility and ensure that we are protecting, rather than harming, our communities.

To our police officers, we acknowledge that you are called to perform difficult and sometimes dangerous tasks. We are deeply grateful for the commitment, bravery, and discipline you bring to your work. However, we cannot ignore the challenges that sometimes threaten this commitment, including allegations of compromise when officers engage with lawbreakers. Today, I urge each one of you to act in a manner that upholds the reputation of the police force and the trust placed in you by the public. A single compromised officer can affect the work of an entire department, undermining our ability to keep our communities safe.

We must maintain a zero-tolerance stance toward any actions that compromise our commitment to law enforcement. As officers of the law, you are here to protect all citizens, not to favor anyone based on their status or wealth.

Programme Director, we are proud to announce that today, 62 new vehicles will be handed over to law enforcement teams across Limpopo. These vehicles represent a critical addition to our police force's resources, ensuring that officers have the necessary tools to carry out their duties effectively and respond promptly to any emergencies.

The community has spoken, and we have heard them loud and clear. Delays in police response times have raised concerns, with some residents expressing that, in moments of crisis, the police do not arrive promptly or at all. These new vehicles will directly address this concern by ensuring that officers can reach all parts of the province quickly and effectively. With these resources, we are making a firm commitment to improve police response times and demonstrate that we stand ready to protect every citizen.

In conclusion, as we launch the Limpopo Safer Festive Season Operation, we are happy to be welcoming 304 new SAPS members who have just recently graduated. We want to take this opportunity and welcome all of them to the family. Let us all go out and serve our people with renewed energy, increased resources, and a clear vision of what we want to achieve. Our collective goal is simple yet powerful: a safe, secure, and joyful festive season for all. We look forward to seeing police officers in action, community members united in vigilance, and a province where everyone feels secure.

Let us remember that crime prevention is a collective responsibility. With police and community members working together, we have the power to make Limpopo a safe and welcoming place for all who live here or visit. As we enter this festive season, let us work together to protect each other, uphold the rule of law, and ensure that every family can celebrate without fear.

I thank you. Together, we can achieve a safer festive season.