

South African Police News

Public 'have more faith in security guards than police'

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Durban: More South Africans place their trust in private security guards than in the police, according to new research. Professors Johan Prinsloo and Coen Marais of the University of South Africa's Department of Criminology said in their study that a "huge gap" existed between the police and the private security industry, with the security industry scoring "more efficiency points" than police. It had become increasingly clear that members of the public were more likely to come into contact with a private security officer than a member of the SAPS. The authors also pointed out that security officers were generally better able to respond to public requests for assistance than police. The survey respondents were asked to give their perception of the police's crime control function and the services provided by the private security industry. "We found that in the public's opinion, the security industry was more efficient in their crime control duties than the SAPS," said Marais. Marais said 36% of respondents rated the performance of the SAPS as "fairly good", while only 17% thought them to be "very good". Twenty three percent rated police efficiency as "fairly poor", with 24% saying "very poor". The efficiency of security officials in controlling crime was rated as "very good" by 28% and "fairly good" by 43% of the respondents. Marais said an overwhelming 80.7% of respondents believed it was a "good thing" that the private security industry was increasingly taking up certain policing and public protection functions previously entrusted to the state police. About 3% of the respondents were undecided about this situation and 15.6% found this to be a negative development. Prinsloo said it is argued that in a constitutional democracy, security is a "public good". In this context, he said, the private security industry was therefore "not a mere provider of security services within a private market context", but bore a specific public responsibility and constitutional obligation in terms of citizens' democratic right to equal protection and benefit of the law and "to have dignity respected and protected". Marais said the public as consumers of security services were the best qualified to evaluate such services. Prinsloo and Marais believe there should be limits to the level of "privatisation of the security function". This needs to be balanced, they say, between the public's right to safety and the state's inability to meet certain standards of security.

South Africa: Ten people wounded in protest march

The Mercury (South Africa)

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Several people were wounded on Monday when police opened fire with rubber bullets on protesters from the Siyanda informal settlement, near Newlands, in Durban. The group of about 500 people had barricaded Inanda Road in protest against construction of the new MR577 road which would necessitate the destruction of their homes. The road will connect Newlands to Pinetown. About

10 people were wounded by rubber bullets. Those who had sustained serious injuries in clashes with police were apparently taken to King Edward VIII Hospital. However, residents claimed that many injured people were either being held untreated at the KwaMashu Police Station or remained injured at the scene. When The Mercury arrived at the scene of the clash, three people with rubber bullet wounds were still at the scene and had received no medical attention. Dumisani Ndlovu was struck by rubber bullets on his hand and on his lower back. "I was talking to a police officer when he pushed me with the gun and when I fell he shot me," he said. Teenager Nosipho Sibiyi's left buttock was swollen and bleeding after she had also been shot by police but, like Ndlovu, had received no medical attention. Nosipho said she and many others had not been involved in the protest, but had been shot because police had entered the settlement looking for protesters.

"I was at home and ran out to find my younger brother when a policeman shot me."

Gladys Ndlovu, who escaped unscathed, said she and others had refused to move when asked to because they wanted someone to listen to their complaints. She said the police had hovered with a helicopter over the crowd to frighten people, but they had still refused to move. "The police told us that the march was not permitted and then started to shoot, but no one fought back. We were waiting for someone to hear our complaints. Those who ran were shot by police and some police followed people into the settlement and shot them. "No one returned fire. They dragged some of us, even a crippled man was dragged."

Ndlovu, who has lived in Siyanda for 15 years, said she wanted the house she had been promised but was now being offered hostel type accommodation near the settlement.

Others were being relocated to newly built houses at nearby Ntuzuma but were feeling threatened because people living in informal settlements in Ntuzuma were demanding those houses. Police spokesperson Gugu Sabela said the protest was illegal and police had asked the people to disperse, but they had refused. She denied that police were holding injured people. Those injured had been taken to a clinic and five people had been arrested. She said it was possible that police would have been unaware of other injured people who remained untreated at the scene.