**POLICE AND PRISONS CIVIL RIGHTS UNION**

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**POPCRU’S CONTRIBUTION TO COSATU’s RESPONSE ON THE MTBPS**

Submission prepared by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union

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**1. Background**

POPCRU has noted the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) delivered by the Minister of Finance, Honourable Enoch Godongwane on the 11th of November 2021, which inevitably effected budget adjustments on different national departments and other institutions within the country. This budget statement was delivered few months after the unprecedented uprisings since the advent of the democratic dispensation, which left trail of destructions to our ailing economy when properties and shops were burned and destroyed in two metropolitan provinces of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng. These two provinces are the hubs of the economic activities of our country. This budget was also partially informed by the country’s continued efforts to response of the COVID-19 and its subsequent economic and social impacts. This submission is focused on two departments; the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). It is therefore structured as follows:

* 1. **The South African Police Service**

POPCRU noted an additional allocation made to SAPS budget, especially in response to the public unrests that erupted in July 2021 in the provinces of KZN and Gauteng. We have noted an insubstantial allocation of 250 million made for visible policing as a respond to these public unrests, which undoubtedly put the numerical capacity and competency of the SAPS on the spotlight. We have repetitively argued that the only way that, as a country, we can be able to fight crime and realise the ambition of the National Development Plan (NDP) of building safer communities is by employing more police officers to ensure police visibility within the community.

The reality is that our police ratio to population is deplorably low, far below that of the United Nations (UN) of 1 officer to 220 persons.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Police Minister revealed that our police ratio to population is 1 officer to 413 persons.[[2]](#footnote-2) During his testimony at the South African Human Rights Commission (SHRC) hearings, the National Commissioner Khehla Sitole acknowledged that a glaring shortage of police capacity contributed to the July unrests to spread unabated. The data sourced from the internal administration system of the SAPS shows that as of 15 March 2021, a total of 5,128 officers left the Police Service over the previous financial year.[[3]](#footnote-3) The main reason for leaving the service was resignation (1,733) and retirement with pension (1,009); 719 members of the service passed away, whilst 343 members were dismissed.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Moreover, during the period between April 2020 and 31 March 2021, 34 police officers lost their lives.[[5]](#footnote-5) This number keeps surging. This is despite the commitment made by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA) that SAPS will recruit 7 000 police officers in the 2020 financial year.[[6]](#footnote-6) We want to reiterate our call that police must be allocated more budget such that more police officers can be recruited to augment the already depleting police workforce, and those that are at national and provincial offices with requisite expertise to fight crime must be deployed to the ground where the actual crime prevention takes place. Additionally, police stations must be adequately resourced (e.g. vehicles) to effectively respond to the fight against crime.

It is therefore on this premise that POPCRU is of the view that the allocated budget will not make any meaningful impact as long as the SAPS is continuously haemorrhage personnel whilst also severely lacking the required resources of effectively fighting the scourge of crime

Meanwhile, we welcome with caution the announcement made in parliament by the Deputy Minister of Police, Honourable Cassel Mathale, that SAPS is intending to recruit 10 000 new police officers in the next financial year. In the same vein, we submit that this announcement should indeed be realised as there is already a significant shortage of personnel with a substantial adverse effects towards the combating and prevention of crime.

* 1. **The Department of Correctional Services**

We have noted the R7.580 million and R56.977 million adjustments made to administration and incarceration programmes in the department respectively to precisely procure uniforms for officials and the security equipment and uniforms for emergency support team members.[[7]](#footnote-7) Lack of tools of trade, amongst others uniforms, has been a long standing challenge in the department; we thus believe that the budget allocation made will improve the situation, especially on security infrastructure as there are continuous reports of prison escapes which are attributable to poor security infrastructure and overcrowding.

At the Umzinto Correctional Centre in KwaZulu-Natal, the inmate fell to his death from the roof top when trying to escape from the centre with a group of other inmates. Another incident of escape was reported on 10 September 2021 at the Leeuwkop prison when the inmates opened a hole in the fence at the prisons courtyard to escape.[[8]](#footnote-8) Although physical security can be viewed as not so relevant to the management, safety and security of our members depend mainly on the infrastructures they are deployed at. Hence POPCRU strongly calls for more budget allocation towards the construction of new correctional centres with reliably strong security features and refurbishing the current ones to safeguard the safety of our members whilst also curbing the long standing challenge of overcrowding within the correctional facilities.

Furthermore, POPCRU submits that inmates must be provided with appropriate rehabilitation programmes and training which will equip them with relevant skills instead of idling around and plotting attacks on our members. This will ensure that offenders are turned into valuable economic role players upon their reintegration back into society. This will be of a pivotal role towards the reduction of recidivism within the country.

1. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, whilst we welcome the additional budget allocation for the two departments, we further urge the National Treasury to provide adequate budgets to enable these departments to effectively execute their functions in accordance with their constitutional mandates. The reality is that the crime rate is exponentially rising, which signifies the poor numerical capacity and lack of other resources besetting these departments. These persistent challenges found in both SAPS and DCS can be mitigated by the provision of sufficient budgets to address all the challenges impeding service delivery within these departments.

POPCRU further wants to seize this opportunity to applaud dedicated police and correctional officers for their resilient commitment towards the execution of their mandate despite the hazardous working conditions, lack of resources and other challenges they are confronted with.

1. <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/reports/south-african-police-minister-cites-dubious-un-standard-he-calls-60000-more> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/reports/south-african-police-minister-cites-dubious-un-standard-he-calls-60000-more> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/481649/saps-to-rehire-old-police-officers-as-it-faces-budget-cuts/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/481649/saps-to-rehire-old-police-officers-as-it-faces-budget-cuts/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/theres-something-wrong-with-sa-where-killing-police-officers-is-the-norm-cele-20210906> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-2020-state-nation-address-13-feb-2020-0000> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/mtbps/2021/aene/Vote%2022%20Correctional%20Services.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/this-is-how-two-murderers-escaped-from-sandtons-leeuwkop-prison-before-kidnapping-a-baby-688bb14f-1b8b-4bec-8d20-03e59c8a32f5> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)