Debate on Vote 22: Correctional Services (GHC)

Honourable Speaker,

We as a nation have come from a past where prison facilities were used as tools for torture, oppression and unjust punishment by a government that hated its own citizens. Almost 30 years into our democracy, one would have thought that we would have made big reforms to the correctional services systems that would seek to rebuild the very fabric that holds our citizenry together – that is to instil a sense of belonging, constitutional ethics and values amongst all of us.

This department has an important role to play in balancing the rights of victims whereby incarnating the offenders in its facilities but also rehabilitating them in order for reintegration into society with a better sense of moral and ethical values.

The IFP, notes with concern then the lack of funding and number of inspectors in prisons to conduct regular inspections. Additionally, In light of the recent events regarding the privately run correctional services facility by G4S, it is worrying that this department has taken a reduction of its overall budget.

As we have been reassured by the Minister of the Thabo Bester breakout ordeal and the department’s response plans to dealing with this matter, it does not leave one with a substantial amount of confidence in the correctional services system. The fact that an inmate broke out of a private facility is one matter but the government has served a 90-day notice to cancel the contract with the private security firm that manages the facility. The reduction of its overall budget obviously means that government will need to commit funds to either taking over the facility, building new premises and sufficiently staffing it.

Whilst we do applaud the consequence management decisions to cancel the contract, we think that better planning by this department is needed in order to correctly rehabilitate the inmates of the Mangaung Correctional Centre.

Honourable Minister, we look forward to your response explaining exactly how funds from this department will be used to cater for the inmates of Mangaung Correctional Centre and what is government’s plan to ensure that all human rights obligations are met?

The IFP supports the budget vote

I thank you