

Press Release



**South African
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Police 'out of touch with reality' over Gugulethu murder

As international and local media agencies have reported a British national and his wife were attacked in the township of Gugulethu on the urban periphery of Cape Town while honeymooning in the city. The couple were kidnapped by armed robbers and the wife was later found murdered. In response to media coverage the South African Police Force has released a statement expressing shock at the murder.

Data in the possession of the South African Institute of Race Relations shows that over 700 people have been murdered in Gugulethu since 2005. In the year to March 2010 some 110 murders occurred within the Gugulethu police precinct.

This amounts to one murder every two and half days for five consecutive years. How under such circumstances can the police claim to be 'shocked' or surprised at what happened to the British couple? If they are truly shocked it suggests that the police's senior management is out of touch with the reality of life on the ground for people in areas such as Gugulethu who have been left to run the gauntlet of violent crime on a horrific scale.

There is a lot of data on hand that shows that poorer urbanized areas suffer from considerably higher levels of violent crime than wealthier areas which have turned to private security services in the absence of effective policing by the State. It would not be unfair to say that areas such as Gugulethu have been neglected and forgotten by the Government when it comes to the maintenance of law and order. It is revealing that it took the murder of a foreign national for the police's senior management to take stock of the state of affairs in Gugulethu.

While overall murder levels in the country have come down significantly since 1994 the South African Police Force continues to suffer from significant skills shortages, poor morale, high levels of corruption, lax discipline, and violent behavior by many officers. Despite these shortcomings issues such as employment equity and demographic representivity continue to dominate the police's strategic planning efforts. On the political front the deployment policy of the ANC means that the South African Police Force has not been led by a policeman for more than ten years. This may be a primary reason behind the decline of the force and is certainly a slap in the face to the many dedicated officers who continued to serve under corrupt and inept leadership.

For many poor South Africans, who cannot afford the services of private security companies, the South African Police Force remains their primary resource in creating a safe and secure environment. Many of these communities rightly deserve to feel deeply let down by the performance of their Government and insulted when it feigns shock and surprise at violence that has become commonplace across South Africa's poorer urban peripheries.