

Safety & Security Remembrance Day speech

The City Manager, Mr Lungelo Mbandazayo

Alderman Smith

Mayoral Committee members

Councillors

Mrs Heather Tager and members of the Civilian Oversight Committee

Cape Town District Commissioner, Major General Beaton

Officer Commanding: Army Support Base WC, Colonel Mchunu

Officer Commanding: Air Force Base Overberg, Lt Col Kobus Meyer

Members of EMT

Safety and Security Chiefs and Senior management

Family members in attendance

Members of the media

Good morning, on this occasion of honouring the men and women of our Safety and Security Directorate who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving the people of the city.

Every name that appears on that wall – the 39 heroes who died in the line of duty in years gone by and the 29 colleagues of ours who lost their lives to Covid-19 – each of them was a friend, a colleague, a son, a daughter, a mother or a father.

They're not just names on a wall. They were, and remain, a part of our lives here at the City, and they were all loved deeply by their families and their friends.

It means a lot to have some of those family members and close friends with us today. Please accept our continued condolences for your great loss, and know that we hold you in our hearts and our prayers.

Through this ceremony to honour our fallen colleagues this morning, we are not only recognising the courageous sacrifice they made while serving and protecting people they'd most likely never met, we are also remembering them for the people they were. Much loved, and deeply missed.

Many of them performed tasks every day that place them in a very select category of men and women.

Signing up for jobs in law enforcement or fire and rescue services or disaster risk management is not for everyone. There is an understanding that this work comes with risks, and that you might have to place yourself in grave danger for the sake of members of the community.

It takes a special kind of person with a deep sense of selfless duty to do this.

And while we speak of them as heroes when such a dangerous situation arises and they step up to the plate, the truth is that they were heroes long before that. They were heroes when they decided to take the job and accept the risks that came with it.

Today we thank them for their service and their sacrifice.

I am extremely grateful that we didn't have to add the name of another member of our Safety and Security team to this wall in the past year. That is a good year, and we pray for many more years like this.

But that does not mean the rest of the men and women gathered here today have not also had to face unimaginable situations in performing their jobs.

There have been over 60 attacks on City of Cape Town law enforcement agencies this year alone, including our Metro Police and LEAP officers.

Earlier this month, City Law Enforcement members supporting a SAPS response to a shooting incidence in Grassy Park came under attack from a group of people hurling stones at them from various directions in the dark of night.

I can think of few situations more terrifying than this, and I am so grateful that our Law Enforcement members and their SAPS counterparts managed to retreat from that attack without serious injury.

A similar attack occurred just the other day in Hanover Park, when law enforcement officers responded to a call for urgent help following incidents of gang violence.

There, too, our officers came under attack by members of the gangs, and one of our members had a brick thrown at his head.

I wrote to the incoming Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police, Mr Ian Cameron, this week to express my dissatisfaction that the four suspects arrested for the Hanover Park attack were granted bail at just R800.

These attacks on law enforcement officers need to be taken far more seriously than regular assault cases, and I asked Mr Cameron that this be taken up in legislation.

People who carry out these attacks hope to terrify and scare our officers away. They hope to make their turf a dangerous place, and thereby protect their own criminal enterprises.

But if they think this will work – if they think they can beat the Rule of Law through their violence and intimidation – they don't know what they're up against. They don't know the City of Cape Town's men and women in uniform.

We will not tolerate attacks on our Law Enforcement officers, just as we will not tolerate attacks on our staff who go into areas to repair infrastructure.

Three months ago, two security contractor personnel, who were escorting City of Cape Town staff to a site in Philippi where they had to repair a pipe, were shot and killed by local extortionists.

Thankfully our staff members escaped this ordeal, but those two guards did not deserve to lose their lives to criminals who think they can take over parts of our city and claim it for themselves.

We will not allow that happen. Ours is a city of law and respect and peace. Ours is a city where good men and women raise families in neighbourhoods where they should be able to feel safe.

And the only way they will feel safe is if we get rid of every last extortionist, gang member, drug dealer and violent criminal.

Those criminals are all known to someone in their community. They're not entirely anonymous, and we need the assistance – the eyes and the ears of good, law-abiding Capetonians – to help identify and put them away.

And so I call on all Capetonians to help us end these attacks on our communities and on our City colleagues by speaking up.

Whether it's an extortionist targeting a construction site, or a gang member attacking our colleagues while they perform their duty, the way we will end this is by saying 'Kwanele! Enough! Genoeg!'

To the men and women gathered here today, I want to thank you, on behalf of all Capetonians and particularly on behalf of the communities that are under siege from gangsters and extortionists.

Your dedicated service and the risks you take every day saves lives in our city. And we are deeply grateful for this.

We also mourn with you the loss of colleagues and friends today, and we display their names with love and pride here on our wall.

We celebrate their courage in life and we mourn their untimely passing.

I salute all Cape Town's fallen heroes. You will not be forgotten.