

# Army not suited to civilian work

IT stands to reason that Police Minister Fikile Mbalula is extremely passionate about his job as political head of his department.

I am fully convinced (based on his energy and enthusiasm) that he wants to protect civilians from crime as a security threat.

However, of late the minister has been found wanting in public on a number of occasions.

First, Mbalula made a statement along the lines that police officers needed to make criminals drink urine and instructed his staff (in uniform) to crush the private parts of those who were breaking the law.

As it stands, this statement is a violation of human rights and tantamount to police brutality.

Human rights are the life blood of democracy.

I am not implying that criminals should do as they please or get away with murder.

All those engaging in criminality need to be brought to book.

Nonetheless, two wrongs don't make a right.

Subjecting human beings to this treatment (police brutality) is a violation of a right to human dignity as stipulated in the constitution (Section 10).

Second, Mbalula has introduced a new culture of communication in public (as a member of the cabinet) of vulgarity.

## In my View



**Ntsikelelo Breakfast**

Some of his voice clips, swearing on public platforms, have been circulating on social media.

This behaviour is shocking and brings his office into disrepute. There is absolutely no need for a leader to be rude when conveying a serious message on fighting crime.

Third, Mbalula, alongside Western Cape Premier Helen Zille, has argued that

members of the SANDF, in particular the army, need to be deployed in gang-affected areas in the Western Cape to assist in fighting crime.

Again, one does acknowledge that gangsters in those problematic areas are doing as they please and are running amok, but the minister's strategy on fighting crime will have a negative spill-over effect.

For instance, the training of police is different from the way soldiers are trained.

Even the military police in some of the military units do not coordinate crowd control.

In addition, the military police uses force in resolving conflicts.

Members of SAPS in uniform are trained to fight crime and to do things like crowd control.

It must be borne in mind that SAPS functions at an operational and tactical level.

Hence, it has its own intelligence service, namely crime intelligence;

which is completely different from defence intelligence or the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

Moreover, SAPS in its work focuses on protecting human security as opposed to national security.

This view is supported by Professor Sandy Africa, of the University of Pretoria, when she argues that human security is about the protection of human dignity, individual freedom and side by side with physical safety.

On the contrary, national security is about threats to the state.

For instance, things like terrorism and coup d'etat feed into the national security strategy of the country, despite the fact that South Africa does not have a national security strategy at the moment.

The constitution also provides a definition of national security in Chapter 11, Section 198 (though this definition is not clear).

With regard to the defence force, fighting crime is not the function of the military.

The core function of the military is to protect national security.

The military is the last line of defence in any country.

Moreover, the military operates at a strategic level not at an operational level.

Military officers also are trained to shoot to kill when manoeuvring on the battlefield.

Military strategist Sun Tzu, in his classic work titled *The Art of War*, states that one needs to understand the terrain before waging a war against the enemy or something.

According to him, though one might have the resources, without understanding the terrain or landscape, one will lose the war.

Mbalula might have good intentions to fight against crime.

However, without understanding the environment of crime and how it differs from the realm of the military he might lose the war against crime.

There is no need for the minister of police to be on the crime scene when criminals are caught.

Command and control resides with the generals, not the minister.

In the main, the role of the minister is to provide a strategic direction to the department.

This is done by developing a coherent vision for the institution.

Over and above that, the government needs to design induction programmes for members of the cabinet to assist them on the ins and outs of their departments.

Being a senior leader of a political party does not mean that one has the skill to run a department.

Inducting politicians at the executive level will help them how to communicate in public.

Crime intelligence needs to be beefed up in pursuit of its mission.

At the moment, crime intelligence has been failing to intercept information on the operations of crime.

If needs be, crime intelligence can be assisted by the NIA (because the NIA has a wider scope) in gathering data on crime.

*Dr Ntsikelelo Breakfast is senior lecturer in military political science at the University of Stellenbosch. (He writes in his private capacity).*