

23/04/18 TMA Pg 1 MUSAAPS neutral

32 held for Mahikeng unrest

THIS COMES AS NORMALITY IS SLOWLY CREEPING BACK IN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

ELFAS TORERA

ALTOGETHER 32 have been arrested for looting, arson and destruction of property in a violent protest that has rocked Mahikeng since Wednesday last week.

Nine of these have already appeared in court and were released on a warning until May 29. The rest are due to appear in court today for a number of charges.

This comes as normality is slowly creeping back to the provincial capital. North West police spokesperson, Brig Sabata Mokgwabone said police were on high alert and would maintain a large presence in Mahikeng.

Mokgwabone said they recorded the last acts of violence on Friday evening.

"In the first incident, a petrol bomb that caused minor damage, was thrown at a house belonging to a traffic official in Magogwe 'lar' village. No one was injured during the incident.

"In the second separate incident, a petrol bomb that was apparently meant to cause fire damage to Mmabana Foundation building failed. This is the same building that was burnt the previous day," he said.

Traffic was flowing smoothly yesterday morning but a number of people were crying over a shortage of basic food items. Some garages were selling bread for prices ranging from R20 to R27, taking advantage of the limited supply.

In villages, most people complained that they could not buy electricity, air-time or food. "I don't have anything at my house," one elderly woman from Mohlaleng village said. The granny said she felt for people whose businesses were destroyed but said that communities would pay for their debts.

"These (luck shop owners) were helping us but what did we do, looted and destroyed. If they take long before

reopening their shops, we will be in for it," she said.

Those who smoked were complaining that they could not get cigarettes.

Business owners, mainly Somalis, Ethiopians and other foreign nationals said they suffered huge set-backs and they might never be able to go back to the places they used to operate from.

In town, shops were beginning to cautiously open for business and long winding queues were seen everywhere.

"We were put in this situation by uninformed young people who, on the whim of faceless politicians, caused this damage. It will take years for Mahikeng to recover," one resident said.

The popular call during the protests was for Premier Supra Mahumapelo to step down. However, President Cyril Ramaphosa deflated the mood after he called for people to be calm and allow due processes to unfold.

The ANC in the North West thanked the people for heeding Ramaphosa's call and putting an end to the violence.

Acting provincial secretary Susan Danjile said: "As a caring organisation we would like to thank the SANDF, whose members have already arrived in the province to help our people with the essential healthcare they need.

"We call on Premier Mahumapelo to take more action to intervene in the ongoing health workers' strike led by Nethawu and Denosa and to ensure that our clinics and hospitals get all the required medicines."

The ruling party said workers should go back to work, schools be reopened and the city return to the calm it is usually known for.

It is expected that a decision by the top ANC leadership on the fate of Mahumapelo will be communicated soon.

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AFTERMATH: A petrol station was damaged during the protests in Mahikeng. **INSET:** An ATM was damaged during the unrest that took place in Mahikeng. PHOTOS: IWF

23/04/18 TMA Pg 2 NIOSAPS POS
3 in court for illicit firearms

ELFAS TORERAI

THREE people arrested for possession of illegal firearms will appear in the Brits and Mmabatho magistrate's courts today.

In the Brits case, two men were arrested after Lethabile police conducted an intelligence-driven operation in the Lethabile and Maboloka

communities near Brits. North West police spokesperson Lt-Col Adèle Myburgh said: "During the operation two suspects were arrested after a firearm and ammunition were found in their possession."

In Mahikeng, a 25-year-old man was also arrested for illegal possession of a firearm in Mogogoe Tlhabologo village.

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23/04/18 TMA Pg 8 NIOSAPS Neg.

Mmabana arson 'an inside job'

'There is nothing for an ordinary member of the public to loot in an office, it's people who knew what they wanted'

ELFAS TORERAI

MANAGEMENT at Mmabana Arts and Culture Foundation said the looting of the music centre and the arson of offices could be "an inside job".

The cultural centre's head offices were ransacked and torched in the commotion that engulfed Mahikeng since Wednesday last week. Every item that was in the music centre was taken and about five vehicles were set fire while files and computers were taken before the building's ground floor was burnt.

"We all know there has been friction between the board and CEO. Audits were being prepared for submission and people who have something to hide took advantage of this mayhem to steal and destroy," one senior manager said on condition of anonymity.

"There is nothing for an ordinary member of the public to loot in an office, it's people who knew exactly what they wanted", the manager said.

It is not for the first time that the offices have been either burnt or broken into. The New Age went inside the



DESTRUCTION: The ground floor of the Mmabana Arts and Culture Foundation centre was set alight. **PUBLIC LIBRARY**
 smouldering building and was shown around the offices that were targeted, including that of CEO Dr Ousile Nisoane. Indications are that after failing to open the door, the looters used blunt objects to destroy it and entered the office through a big hole in the door. The office was turned upside down with files strewn all over. One elderly member of the commu-

Some members of the public whose children use the cultural centre after school said they were devastated.

"Our children used to spend time while waiting for us but now what will we do because some of us cannot afford helpers?"

This is criminality that should be punished severely," one mother said. Others blamed the police for "guarding the Mega City while turning their backs on Mmabana".

"How is it possible that police guard groceries at Mega City while leaving a cultural centre to burn? This is like burning a church while guarding a tavern, is it because people who own Mega City have more money?" one community member said.

However, North West police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone said they guarded Mega City because that was where the threat was.

"It was impossible for us to be at every government building, including Mmabana but the threat was at Mega City," he said.

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