



North West Public Works and Roads Administrator and staff open criminal cases against local “Business Forum” members...

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The Administrator of North West Public Works and Roads, two of his support staff and Director have opened four separate criminal cases of intimidation with police against members of the provincial “Business Forum”.

The cases have been registered at Mmabatho Police Station. This followed a fresh live threatening stand-off caused by about 30 members of the Business Forum on Thursday after forcing their way past security personnel and besieged the office of the Administrator, Samuel Thobakgale and his support staff.

They were allegedly demanding to be awarded tenders. This was neither demand nor an interaction with the group. However it was the first time the group had been so rowdy and violent in their approach, even making death threats to the Administrator and his support staff.

Police had to be called in to defuse the tense situation.

The disruptive Forum members demanded a meeting with Thobakgale and in the ensuing fracas were overheard making-threatening remarks including, death threats during the commotion.

The group left after police intervention but were heard threatening to return late.

“I decided to open a case of intimidation with the police after me and members of my team were threatened with physical harm including being shot and killed,” said Thobakgale

He said the group demanded to be awarded contracts “on the spot” which was impossible as it would be in contravention of supply chain procedures.

The group also demanded to be appointed as sub-contractors in departmental projects, especially road projects, on the basis of 30 percent local contractor beneficiation.

“I believe by not reporting this incidents with the police, the unbecoming behaviour of this

group will continue unabated," said Thobakgale. The group has also disrupted departmental projects and tender briefings in other government departments.

"This has had a dire impact as it resulted in delays in the provision of services and led to either under spending as projects would not be completed in the allocated time period or in overspending as the department might have to pay contractors for standing time," Thobakgale said.

Furthermore, Thobakgale explained, the group's disruption of road projects, puts the lives of road users at risk as there was no time to put adequate safety measures in place whenever contractors were made to abandon sites in haste.

"To this end we are already trying to do much with the limited budget at our disposal to improve road conditions and it will be unacceptable for government to pay contractors for not doing any work because they were stopped by people who want to bypass the Procurement Policy Framework," Thobakgale said.

Thobakgale confirmed that 64 North West-based contractors have been appointed and the department has advertised to appoint a further 150 for the next three years as part of the contractor development programme.

The current contractors have been awarded renovations of departmental flats and health facilities, construction of sanitation projects in various schools in the province as well as rehabilitation of roads.

"We also insist as a department that main contractors, once appointed, source unskilled labours locally and procuring from local suppliers.

"I would like to encourage all local businesses to participate in advertised bids and look forward to working with those that would have been appointed as we thrive to empower local enterprises," said Thobakgale.

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