

EDITOR'S VIEW

Swift action needed

EVERY year we are bombarded with chilling and horrifying crime statistics as further evidence that we are not winning the war against crime.

Crime experts are always quick to remind us that among the many solutions that can be employed to reverse this spiralling crime trend are visible policing and effective deployment of cops to crime hot spots.

But how can the police be expected to effectively execute this mandate if the powers that be remove cops from crime fighting to guard a house occupied by a government minister?

The Mercury reported this week that the South African Police Union (Sapu) criticised the deployment of public order police outside Minister Nathi Nhleko's northern KwaZulu-Natal home, describing the action as "an abuse of police resources".

The report further stated that eight police officers and a nyala armoured vehicle were guarding the public works minister's home in which his son, domestic worker and a groundsman live.

We agree with the union's provincial secretary Nurse Mdletshe that such a function is the responsibility of the police's VIP protection services, and that

the public order police had no business being there.

By tolerating the abuse of power by elected representatives we, as a society, are sending a message that it is acceptable for people in positions of power to break the law and get away with it.

Throughout the country, the government is struggling to deal with service delivery protests. That is where the policing expertise of the public order police is needed the most, and not in the backyard of a minister's house.

Those who sanctioned this deployment knew they were breaking the law but they persisted because of the prevailing culture by those in positions of authority to subvert the law to suit their own needs.

Minister Nhleko cannot keep quiet about this matter and hope that it will go away. He has to provide answers as to why the police were being used as bodyguards for his son.

We are glad that the police management acted quickly to remove the officers from the house.

However, we demand that action be taken against those responsible for this despicable abuse of taxpayers' money.