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MPUMALANGA

## Call for better security near Kruger National Park after death of German tourist

Staff Writer

The Federated Hospitality Association of SA (Fedhasa) has called for security and social interventions to be stepped up after a botched hijack attack on German tourists, one of whom was fatally wounded on the R538 in Mpumalanga.

In September, the government announced heightened security measures in the province, including at the Numbi gate near Hazyview, where a spate of robbery attempts had been reported and where the four tourists were attacked.

The tourists were on route to a Kruger National Park lodge on Monday afternoon when they were stopped by three armed

suspects. The driver was shot through the window.

The Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism is offering a reward of R50,000 for information leading to the successful prosecution of the perpetrators.

Rosemary Anderson, Fedhasa's national chair, called for "real commitment in dealing with the root cause of crime so that no family need ever endure this loss again".

In addition to the rapid mobilisation of security measures, she said that it required on-the-ground intervention involving all sectors of government, labour, society, NGOs and religious leaders "to put an end to the human suffering and job

losses that crime causes, particularly the latter in our tourism and hospitality sector".

The safety of tourists in Mpumalanga was addressed in September by deputy tourism minister Fish Mahalela at a stakeholder engagement.

Mahalela said Mpumalanga had experienced numerous incidents in Numbi Gate road,

which has since been identified as the main hotspot area.

The incidents included hijackings, attempted hijackings, robberies, motor vehicle accidents, attacks on tourists, break-ins and theft at tourism establishments.

"These incidents continue to be a grave concern and have the potential to discourage inbound tourism in the province.

"In addition, the condition of roads is poor. This creates not only road safety hazards but also serves as points where criminals target passing vehicles as they slow down to avoid potholes. Rehabilitation of the roads in the province is therefore highly recommended."

He said the Mpumalanga

Tourism and Parks Agency was working with the Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business Tourism and tourism safety stakeholders to combat crime.

A security firm had been appointed to assist in patrolling the Numbi Road while police had deployed the flying squad and a K9 unit and had increased visibility along the Numbi Road.

"However," Mahalela said, "we still believe that more needs to be done, including broader engagements with various communities to communicate the tourism value chain."

The deputy minister also said "there is a need for the identification and support of further product development in the area to promote job creation and economic development. The areas of importance are the projects supporting women and youth who are highly impacted by unemployment."

A broader government intervention involves training, mentorship and deployment of unemployed youth in tourism attractions and sites as part of a tourism monitor programme. Providing skills and practical work experience to unemployed youth using the Expanded Public Works Programme aims to enable them to become employable, he said.

Mahalela said 288 tourism monitors are deployed in Mpumalanga, with five at the Kruger National Park Numbi Gate.



**Security gaps:** The site where a German tourist was shot dead in an attempted hijacking near the Kruger National Park. /SA Police