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SERIOUS CRIME

There's a shortage of cops in Athlone precinct - Cele

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POLICE Minister Bheki Cele said there was a shortage of detectives in the Athlone precinct, which was known to be "kidnapping and murder territory".

Cele was responding to DA MP Denis Joseph, who had asked for the current number of detectives as well as details of other staff shortages.

Cele said the police station, which had a detective complement of 28, had nine vacancies for the detective unit.

He said the police station had made 2 670 arrests in the past financial year.

"The capacitation of the detective



Bheki Cele

service remains a priority and is an ongoing process, with various dependencies," Cele said.

Cele said the police station also had a shortage of two support personnel.

He described the police station buildings as being in fair condition

and therefore no request had been made to the Public Works Department for upgrades. He said the community service centre at the precinct was painted last month.

Police Oversight and Community Safety MEC Reagen Allen said: "In essence, there is now a 24% vacancy in detectives at Athlone, which is significant given the number of serious crimes." Citing national police statistics covering April to June, Allen said the lack of sufficient human resources at Athlone, where there were nine murders and four kidnappings, was concerning.

"Attempted murder has increased

since 2019. Common assault has increased by 51%. Eighteen cases of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. We keep on hearing that 'the capacitation of detectives is a priority and is an ongoing process' – a song that has been sung for almost 30 years," Allen said.

"The national government is not committed to addressing SAPS under-resourcing in the Western Cape. This is an established fact. While we as the Western Cape government continue to lobby for greater and required resources allocation, we call for the devolution of SAPS to a capable provincial government such as ours."