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**Page:** 5

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BACK FROM THE DEAD

# Police intensify search for fugitive after double murder



POLICE are searching for wanted fugitive, Linda Hlongwa, who is linked to a double murder of mother and daughter in Nazareth, Pinetown. | Supplied

STAFF REPORTER

THE police in KwaZulu-Natal have reinforced their search for a fugitive who's been on the run since last year and who is linked to a double murder of a mother and daughter in Mariannhill, Durban.

Linda Hlongwa who goes by the aliases of Mjinja and Putin was arrested in July 2020 for charges related to illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition. He has evaded the police since he skipped bail.

Rumours circulated that he had died in an exchange of gunfire with the police after the KZN SAPS put him on the most wanted list in September last year. However, the murder of his 22-year-old girlfriend and her 52-year-old mother in Income Road, Nazareth in Pinetown on March 18, has prompted an intensified search for him. The two were shot dead in their home. Hlongwa is also linked to

a string of murders in Mariannhill and surrounding areas.

He rose to notoriety for his criminal empire of extortion which targeted many businesses from rental properties, taverns, shisanyama, spaza shops, general dealers, hardware stores, taxis and e-hailing services.

Police are appealing to community members to assist in locating Hlongwa to curb his killing spree.

Hlongwa's warrant of arrest was issued by the Pinetown Magistrate's Court on September 9, 2024.

"He was released from custody pending ballistic results. Since then he has ignored summons to appear in court to face charges," KZN Saps spokesperson, Colonel Robert Netshiunda was quoted as saying at the time of issuing a warrant of arrest.

The Mariannhill Police Station has no permanent structure and operates from refurbished buildings. It serves six wards over a vast area including,

Mariannridge, eMpola, Dassenhoek, Nagina, St Wendolins, Savannah Park, Klaarwater and Demat.

In April last year, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government recommended the establishment of a multi-agency task team that will fast-track the construction of a new police station in Mariannhill.

The then-Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs MEC, Siboniso Duma, made the announcement during his oversight visit to the Mariannhill Police Station.

Duma was leading the provincial government delegation during the Premier's Crime-fighting Imbizo, held at KwaNdengezi sport field.

Duma said the move to build the new police station follows then-premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube's announcement on drastic interventions to take the war to criminals and build safer communities, made during the State of the Province Address.

Mariannhill made headlines for several years now due to acts of extreme violence and wanton shootings of people by brazen criminals.

Some of the communities live in fear of extortionist gangs who rob, kill and rape. There have been several incidents of some of the suspects dying in the exchange of gunfire with the police. However, the deaths have not deterred the criminals who continue to terrorise the community and businesses.

Last year, Duma said the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure Development, together with eThekweni Municipality, have identified land to build a new police station in Mariannhill.

■ Anyone who might have information about the whereabouts of Linda "Mjinja, Putin" Hlongwa is urged to contact Colonel Sikhakhane on 079 696 3546 or call the Crime Stop number 08600 10111.