

KZN Premier commends life terms for two hitmen

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Senzo Mchunu has welcomed the life sentences handed to two hitmen, who murdered ANC councillor Jimmy Lembede in Estcourt last year.



(Image: Jonund, via I-Net Bridge)

The two murderers were sentenced on Friday, 13 December by the eMadadeni Magistrate's Court in Newcastle.

Kithi Mlele (26) and Sihle Ndimande (25) were found guilty on four counts - one of murder and three of attempted murder. On the murder count, the court gave a sentence of life imprisonment to each man and 10 years to each on the count of attempted murder. The sentence in all cases will run concurrently.

Lembede was murdered in his home on 17 August 2012, and his wife and two children sustained serious injuries. This was viewed as a politically motivated murder to force a by-election, as there was no political party with an outright majority in uMtshezi Municipality. UMTshezi is known as a political hot spot, with numerous pending cases of intimidation and the killing of political party leaders still being investigated.

"As government, we condemn intimidation and violence against any member of any political party. Importantly, we denounce all provocative and retaliatory action taken by any individual.

"The fact that next year we will be hosting the general elections, coinciding with 20 years of our democracy, we must ensure that we have peaceful, free, and fair elections.

"Leaders of political parties must educate their members to view political debates, campaigns and elections not as deadly contests but as democratic tools aimed at enhancing a healthy competition of ideas and as the best form of fast-tracking service delivery," said Mchunu.

Mchunu said negotiations of the Multi-Task Committee, led by MEC for Community Safety and Transport Willies Mchunu,

were being revived to secure peace, safety, and security.

"We reassure the public that our security machinery will take all necessary steps to ensure that peace prevails, and that any unruly elements found to be violating the rights of others will face the might of the law."

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