

Citizen 04-12-2019

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## Cele denies gun renewal bottlenecks

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PREMIUM!



Minister of Police General Bheki Cele. Picture: EPA-EFE / NIC BOTHMA

**There are only 397,190 firearms for which renewal applications were not timeously done, not ‘an estimated one million’, Cele’s spokesperson said.**

Police Minister Bheki Cele yesterday denied he had ever said the Central Firearms Registry could “not currently control the normal flow of renewal applications” as claimed by Southern African Agri Initiative chairperson Dr Theo de Jager.

When asked to substantiate his claim, De Jager was unable to do so.

“The other issue was that there are only 397,190 firearms for which renewal applications were not timeously done, not ‘an estimated one million’,” said Lirandzu Themba, spokesperson for Cele. “This is because people simply do not present themselves on time. The application for a renewal has to be done 90 days before it expires.”

Themba also defended the attack on the amnesty announced by Cele, and said if a firearm licence had expired, it meant the firearm was unlicensed. This meant people had to apply for new licences, as renewal of an expired licence was not an option according to law.

“Your firearm is illegal by virtue of you not having an up-to-date licence,” Themba said.

Gun Owners of South Africa (Gosa) challenged this in the High Court in Pretoria late last year.

“Before me it was common cause and also on the papers, that the number of expired licences affected by the development following the Constitutional Court judgment about the threats and notifications issued by the police, comes to some 450,000,” Justice WRC Prinsloo said, according to a transcript of his judgment as published on the Southern African Legal Information Institute.

“If rounds of ammunition of 150 per firearm is added to that, one sits with a staggering figure of some 60 million rounds of ammunition and if it is about 100 rounds of ammunition per weapon, by way of an estimate, one would still have some 45 million rounds of ammunition which have to be surrendered, received, stored and destroyed or otherwise properly dealt with.”

Pretorius granted the interim interdict and directed the police commissioner and minister were “prohibited from implementing any plans of action or from accepting any firearms for which the licence expired at its police stations or at any place, for the sole reason that the licence for the firearm expired”.

Cele is appealing the interdict.