

Police Minister Cele calls on South Africans to turn in illegal guns

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POLICE Minister Bheki Cele addressing the National Press Club yesterday. James Mahlokwane Pretoria - Minister of Police Bheki Cele is calling on South Africans to make use of the upcoming firearms amnesty to turn in their illegal guns.

He told the National Press Club yesterday this was done to make South Africa safer.

Cele described firearms as “**the enemy of our society**” during the briefing at which he engaged media and firearms industry stakeholders.

The focus was on the importance of the six-month amnesty from December 1 to May 31.

The minister said he believed this period of amnesty would and must result in the reduction of the number of illegally possessed firearms in South Africa - and it was in the public interest to do so.

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He said: “The 2018/19 crime statistics released in September have once again confirmed what we know.

“Firearms are the instruments commonly used in the commission of crime, especially violent crimes. They are the biggest drivers of crime and murder on South African streets.

“In the Western Cape, the deployment of the SANDF to parts of the Cape Flats to tackle gang-related violence remains a temporary measure.

“The joint operations with the soldiers and SAPS have resulted in the confiscation of 36 firearms in the past week alone.”

Cele said since the start of the national festive season operation in October, almost 2000 firearms had been removed from the wrong hands in all nine provinces. More than 1000 of those firearms were seized in Gauteng.

He said just last month, the police destroyed and melted over 20000 illegal firearms confiscated during operations the previous year. “It is on this score that we as the police are calling on South Africans to heed the call to take part in the upcoming firearms amnesty.

“The declaration of this amnesty period is in the interest of the public. It is also the government’s endeavour to deal decisively with excess illegal firearms and unwanted firearms that end up in the hands of criminals, therefore increasing the proliferation of firearms.”

Cele said although amnesty meant an indemnity against prosecution for unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition, there would be no indemnity if firearms handed over had been used to commit crime.

He said those who surrendered their firearms during the period of amnesty would be required to present themselves to the nearest police station. The firearm owners who for whatever reason, failed to renew their licences should also take advantage of this amnesty period.

“Those with lapsed licences must hand in their weapons. They should surrender their firearms to apply for licences. “The person who applies for a firearm licence is required to physically hand in the firearm to the designated amnesty official and lodge an application within 14 days.”