

## **Police Minister, General Bheki Cele clarifies the misinterpretation of the apology to the Muslim community**

**28 April 2020**

**Pretoria** - Minister of Police, General Bheki Cele reiterates strongly, the condemnation of the recent Muslim gathering as it is indeed against the COVID-19 Disaster Management Act and must therefore be condemned at all costs.

Police arrested the congregants and there will never be an apology about the arrest however, the conduct of the police whilst executing their duties is one issue that we acknowledge could have been handled differently.

The Minister has noted with concern the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the statement issued in relation to the religious gathering, and has subsequently emphasized that no one is above the law and that the Muslim community is not receiving preferential treatment as opposed to other religions. If they, or any other religious group, host another gathering, police will arrest them again but without being blasphemous in executing their duties. This cuts across all gatherings be they religious, cultural or otherwise.

"Our members should always execute their duties in line with the South African Police Code of Conduct. From the beginning of the state of disaster through the lockdown, we have received reports/complaints of incidents where some of our members are alleged to have acted wrongfully. A number of these reports are being investigated both by the IPID and internally," said the Minister. Minister Cele is reminding all citizens of the country to always be conscious of the primary purpose of the COVID-19 Disaster Management Lockdown Regulations, which is to protect South Africans from the corona virus.

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