



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
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PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT
ON
THE ALLEGED KILLING OF 16 PRISONERS AT MUKOBEKO
MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON
BY
THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
HON. EDGAR LUNGU MP
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Following the Point of Order raised by Kasempa MMD Member of Parliament, Hon. Kabinga Pande, in which he alleged that a total of 16 Prisoners at Kabwe Maximum Security Prison were beaten to death by recruits after the escape of three condemned prisoners at Mukobeko Maximum Prison, I wish to inform the August House that the allegations are not only false but also malicious because no prisoner has been beaten to death at Mukobeko Maximum Prison in the circumstance alleged, or any circumstances for that matter.

Mr. Speaker

Facts surrounding this issue are that, as a result of an incident which occurred on 13th February, 2013 in which three condemned prisoners namely Bernard Kapaso aged 41, Derick Mwape aged 29 and Shadreck Phiri aged 32, escaped from lawful custody, a special search was conducted at Mukobeko Maximum Prison in all sections of the prisons.

The purpose of the search was to remove from the prison all prohibited articles as well as establish if there were any further threats to the security of the prison. A prohibited article is any article not authorised in prison such as

uncensored letters, mobile phones, offensive weapons etc. Officers discovered that the three escapees used a sharp instrument to cut the metal ratch which fastens the door of the cells and eventually escaped from lawful custody.

Mr. Speaker, the Prisons Act, Chapter 97 of the Laws of Zambia under Rule 198, subsection 1, 2 and 3, empowers Prison Officers to conduct thorough searches on prisoners and the cells where they are confined so as to rid them of all prohibited and dangerous instruments such as knives and many others, on the basis of the escape by the three prisoners. Basing on the way the three condemned prisoners escaped, officers conducted a search on the morning of 14th February, 2013. However, the search was met with resistance from inmates. They became unruly and in the process, they abducted one Prison Warder who they held hostage and demanded that officers discontinue the search as a condition for releasing him.

It was at this point that 300 recruits were brought in for reinforcement so as to rescue the one officer held hostage and also continue with the search and to secure the prison premises.

The officers were deployed as follows:

1. **Inside the Prisons** - 20 Prison Warders were deployed and beefed up by 100 Recruits.
2. **Outside the Prisons** - 30 police officers with 200 Recruits were deployed to secure the prison premises.

The abducted officer was later rescued with a lot of resistance from in-mates. The search, thereafter continued to all the sections of the prison.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to the statement made by Hon. Kabinga Pande that a total of 600 Recruits were deployed inside the prison, only 300 Recruit Officers were involved in the operation. It is important to note that the prisoners' population at Mukobeko is 1,980 of whom 366 are male condemned prisoners, which gives the ratio of one warder to three prisoners.

Mr. Speaker, the search yielded positive results. Various offensive weapons (like screw drivers, knives etc), dagga and many other prohibited articles were recovered at the end of the search.

Mr. Speaker, in his point of order, Hon. Kabinga Pande also asked government to clarify on the 15 minutes given to condemned prisoners for them to do physical exercises. Mr.

Speaker, the fifteen minutes given to prisoners for them to undertake physical exercises is in accordance with the provisions of the law. Prisoners sentenced to death are supposed to be kept in a cell during day and night and are only supposed to do exercises twice in a day for 15 minutes each.

Mr. Speaker Sir, based on what I have informed the August House today, deaths reported by Hon. Kabinga Pande are fictitious and may be the Hon. Member of Parliament kindly tell the house where he got that information from.

Mr. Speaker, as honourable Members of Parliament, it is important that before we give any piece of information to the house, we need to undertake thorough consultations and verify facts unlike raising issues based on rumours, gossip and malice. It is regrettable that Hon. Kabinga Pande did not verify this story and to make matters worse, he even went to the extent of tying false statistics to unverified allegations. The statement is alarming and indeed a threat to the security of the nation and also demotivating to our officers who conducted this operation professionally despite undertaking a risky task.

Further, this does not only send a wrong signal to relatives of the in-mates but also the nation at large, and indeed the outside world.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the house that currently, the situation at Mukobeko Maximum Prison has returned to normal and calm, the security is tight and there is no death that occurred at the prison.

The government, Mr. Speaker, has put in place adequate measures which will ensure the efficient and effective operations of the Zambia Prisons service. Currently, we have reached an advanced stage in completing the construction of the new Mwembeshi Maximum Prison which is earmarked to be opened in the first week of March, 2013. The opening of this prison, which has remained uncompleted since 1978, has been a priority by the Government. The new prison will help address issues of congestion and poor sanitation at Mukobeko Maximum Prison.

Mr. Speaker, we have realised that our prisons in the country have been neglected for a long time to an extent where they are ill-equipped. Therefore, government will soon procure modern equipment to ease the way officers manage the prisons. Additionally, about 638 recruits will be passing-out to beef up current staffing levels whose training curriculum

was revised, placing emphasise on correction rather than retribution.

All these measures outlined above show the determination of the PF government in its quest to address issues of overcrowding, good sanitation in prisons, adequate staffing levels and the improved welfare of prison officers to mention but a few.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, allow me to urge Hon. Kabinga Pande, Kasempa Member of Parliament, to conduct his research thoroughly and even make consultations to avoid issuing alarming statements to the house and indeed the nation. In this situation, Hon. Kabinga Pande could have easily consulted the Area Member of parliament who would have given him valuable and credible information as the area MP is likely to have a better understanding of the situation than himself.

Further Mr. Speaker, through you, we request that Hon. Kabinge Pande, MMD Kasempa Member of Parliament, retracts his statement as it is not only unfactual and unfounded but also misleading, alarming and should render

an appropriate apology for misleading the house and the nation.