

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 31 OCTOBER 2018

RE: THREE LIFE TERMS FOR FORMER SANDF MEMBER

Last week, the High Court sitting in Delmas convicted and sentenced Mandlenkosi Joseph Shezi (44) from Thandukukhanya Location in Piet Retief to three life sentences for three counts of murder, arson, and malicious damage to property.

The deceased in count 3 was an aunt of the deceased in count 1 and a sister of the deceased in count 2. The perpetrator was a member of the SANDF. The deceased in count 3 and the accused were in a romantic relationship and staying together with the deceased in count 3 since August 2017.

The court heard that on 20 October 2017, Shezi was driving a combi belonging to the 4 SA Infantry Military Base in Middelburg. He had transported the patients to 1 Military Hospital and also drove to Potchefstroom to fetch one of his colleagues who were attending a course there. Inside the combi, there were 2 x 25 litres of petrol which Shezi was supposed to use to refuel the combi of which he only used 1 x 25 litre container to refuel.

On his return to Middelburg in the evening, Shezi travelled straight to the deceased's home and found the deceased with a young boy, took out the petrol that remained from his trip, made petrol bombs and burnt the house with all deceased inside. Two minor victims died instantly at the scene and the girlfriend died the following day at the Middelburg Hospital.

The perpetrator was arrested after he was identified by the community members to the police. During trial, Shezi pleaded not guilty. He told the court that the deceased were struck by lightning. However, Advocate Sonja Ntuli led evidence of a crime scene expert who attended the crime scene and discovered remnants of an accelerant from the samples collected inside the burnt house which was done with the assistance of the

sniffer dogs. Also the evidence of the deceased's brother who found one dead body in the burnt shack. The state further led testimonies of the neighbours who told the court that they covered the deceased with a towel because she was naked, burning, and screaming for help. Shezi was found guilty as charged.

Handing down the sentence, the court found no compelling and substantial circumstances to deviate from the prescribed minimum sentence and the accused was sentenced to life imprisonment on each count of murder, three years imprisonment for arson, and another three years for malicious damage to property. The presiding officer ordered the sentences in count 2, 3, 4, and 5 to run concurrently with the sentence in count 1. Effectively, Shezi will serve 25 years imprisonment behind bars.

The NPA welcomes the conviction and sentence.

Kind Regards,

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