

Media Statement



Tel: +27 12 845 6000

Email:
media@npa.gov.za

Victoria & Griffiths
Mxenge Building
123 Westlake Avenue
Weavind Park
Silverton
Pretoria

www.npa.gov.za

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 13 JULY 2018

RE: LENGTHY JAIL TERM FOR BANK CARD FRAUDSTER

Yesterday, the Elliotdale Regional Court sentenced Sikelela Bhanya (32) to eight years imprisonment after convicting him on two counts of fraud and two counts of contravening the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 25 of 2002.

The court heard that on 19 October 2016, near Elliotdale taxi rank, Bhanya approached an unsuspecting 65 year-old Pati Sunduza who was about to withdraw money from an ATM. Uninvited, the fraudster assisted the elderly man and in the process managed to swap his card with another. The pensioner noticed the trick, raised alarm and commuters at the rank chased Bhanya, who ran towards a getaway vehicle parked nearby. The vehicle, however, sped away leaving him behind as angry commuters were in hot pursuit. Bhanya was caught and assaulted by the mob but managed to escape, ironically, into the court building that would eventually hear his trial.

Police officers in court rescued him from the mob, and promptly arrested him when they found in his possession many bankcards. They included the one belonging to the elderly Sunduza and one of 60 year-old NoAmen Nyamakhulu, who had fallen prey to the fraudster a day before in Cofimvaba, some 200 kilometres away.

During trial, Bhanya pleaded not guilty but the state led the evidence of his would-be elderly victim, and that of Nyamakhulu. The granny told the court that she had lost R2500, which was withdrawn from her account minutes after she had been assisted by a man she positively identified as Bhanya. Investigating officer, Warrant Officer Mzolisi Mbiza also told the court that other bankcards found in Bhanya's possession belonged to other victims who could not be traced because their accounts had already been deactivated by banks.

Praying for a lengthy direct imprisonment, State Advocate Gcinusapho Busakwe informed the court that this form of crime is prevalent in the country and most of the times vulnerable elderly persons are the targets. The state also presented a South African

Banking Risk Information Centre (SABRIC) report, which states that between March 2017 to April 2018 banks have suffered a loss in excess of R200 million to offences similar to those committed by Bhanya.

The NPA welcomes the sentence given by Magistrate Sizakele Sihlahla with the hope that it will serve as a deterrent and cause the desired dent in the crimes involving bankcard fraud.

Kind Regards,

Luxolo Tyali

Regional Spokesperson: DPP Mthatha

Enquiries: ltwali@npa.gov.za

047 502 2630