

WEBINAR

DEATHS IN POLICE CUSTODY

WHY IS IT STILL SUCH A PROBLEM?



FRIDAY, 23 APRIL 2021

10h00

Annual deaths in police custody remain consistently in the hundreds. In 2019, for example, 214 people were reported to have died while in the custody of the South African Police Service (SAPS).

This raises critical questions regarding why this problem persists, and why the responses put in place to address this problem have not resulted in a significant reduction in deaths in custody over time.

The factors that contribute to deaths in police custody are numerous and complex, and are both internal and external to SAPS. They include the treatment of suspects and detainees by SAPS members, the lack of health and other services available to detainees at station level, poor conditions of detention, and deficits in the effectiveness of both internal and external accountability mechanisms.

The recent establishment of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), with its proactive mandate to conduct unannounced visits to police custody, is a welcome development in efforts to improve the conditions and treatment of detainees. This has the potential to address a number of underlying causes of deaths in custody. Vitality, its role is complementary to that of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), which has a reactive mandate to investigate deaths. Internally, efforts have been made by SAPS to give clear direction to members on the treatment of persons in custody, through a series of newly adopted national instructions including No. 11 of 2019: *Arrest, treatment and transportation of an arrested person*, No. 12 of 2019: *Arrest and treatment of illegal foreigners*, and No. 13 of 2019: *Management of persons in custody of the South African Police Service*.

With clear internal instructions in place on the treatment of detainees, and both proactive and reactive statutory oversight of the custodial environment, why do deaths in custody in South Africa remain in the hundreds each year? How can the causative factors that exist both internal and external to SAPS be addressed?

The African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) together with the SAHRC are marking Africa Pre-Trial Detention Day on 25 April by presenting this webinar to provide a forum for the key stakeholders – SAPS, IPID, the NPM and civil society – to unpack these complex issues and identify a way forward.

Your participation in this event is important to us. Please confirm your attendance to Helene van der Watt – helene@apcof.org.za by returning the attached registration form by 16 April 2021 to receive the link.

This event is supported by **SIGRID RAUSING TRUST**