



**GLOBAL  
INITIATIVE**

AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

# THE POLITICS OF MURDER

CRIMINAL GOVERNANCE AND TARGETED  
KILLINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA

RUMBI MATAMBA | CHWAYITA THOBELA

MAY 2024

## ERRATUM

This report, published on 20 May 2024, incorrectly stated in a timeline on page 14 that OR Tambo Municipality Speaker, Xolile Nkompela, was killed in a hit in October 2021. In fact, Nkompela survived the assassination attempt unharmed. Nkompela had previously survived an earlier attack in December 2015, during which his bodyguard, Zukile Nyontso, was killed.

Reporting on the 2021 incident, the *Daily Dispatch* quoted a municipal chief of staff as saying: 'Nkompela escaped the ordeal unharmed as he defended himself against this foiled attempt to assassinate him.'

The error came to light during proceedings on 21 October 2025 of an ad hoc parliamentary committee into Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi's allegations. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime promptly investigated and has corrected the report. (Our database of political killings correctly reflects that Nkompela survived.) We sincerely apologize for the error.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to several people, particularly Julian Rademeyer for his guidance, extensive comments and feedback during the drafting of this report; Kuhle Zondeka, who assisted with data collection and analysis; and Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane and Michael McLaggan for their assistance with the analysis and in formulating recommendations. This report would also not have been possible without Kim Thomas, Nina Kaysser and Mark Shaw, who built the foundation for this report over the years and developed the methodology upon which it is based. The authors are also grateful to the GI-TOC Publications team for producing this report.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Rumbi Matamba** is an analyst at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), working on assassinations in South Africa as part of the Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa and conducting research on organized crime in Africa under the ENACT programme (Enhancing Africa's Responses to Transnational Organized Crime).

**Chwayita Thobela** is an analyst at GI-TOC, working as part of the Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa. She is a University of Cape Town LLB and PGDip graduate, and holds an LLM degree from the University of Cape Town specializing in shipping law.



**SOUTH AFRICA**  
ORGANIZED CRIME OBSERVATORY

© 2024 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime  
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Global Initiative.

Cover photo: © *Shaun Swingler*  
Cartography: *Liesel Bohdanowicz*

Please direct inquiries to:  
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime  
Avenue de France 23  
Geneva, CH-1202  
Switzerland

[www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)

# CONTENTS

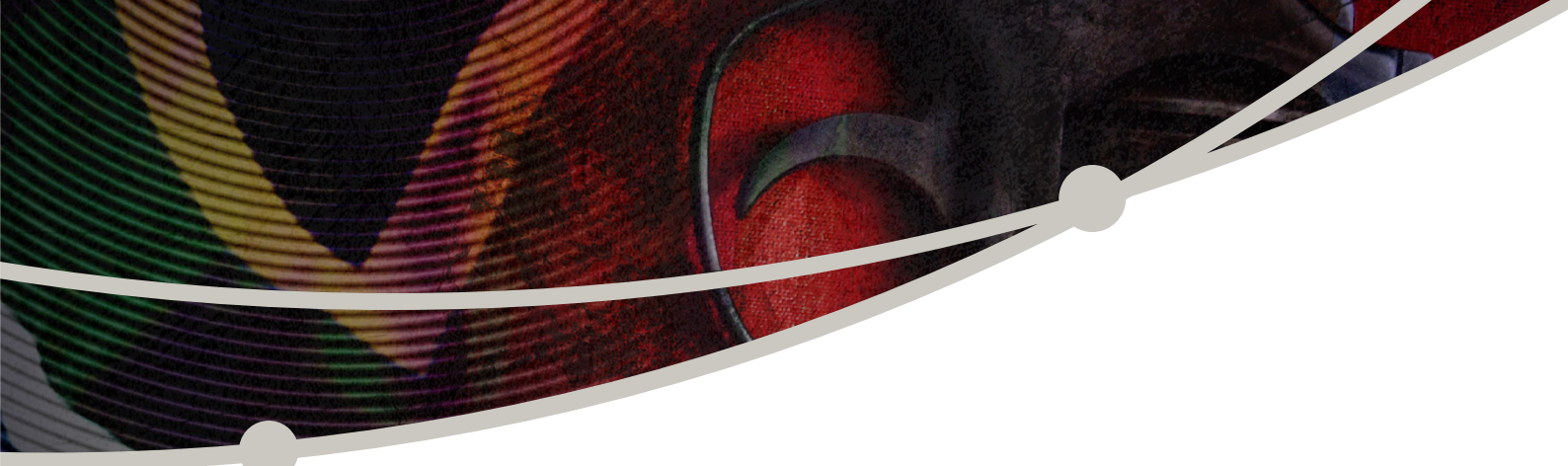
|                                                       |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Executive summary</b> .....                        | <b>3</b>  |
| Methodology: monitoring assassinations .....          | 5         |
| <b>Political assassinations</b> .....                 | <b>7</b>  |
| Election years and assassination rate.....            | 9         |
| Analyzing political assassinations by province .....  | 10        |
| Victims of political killings.....                    | 14        |
| <b>Assassination trends in other categories</b> ..... | <b>17</b> |
| Organized crime-related killings .....                | 17        |
| Taxi industry-related killings.....                   | 18        |
| Personal assassinations.....                          | 19        |
| <b>Conclusion and recommendations</b> .....           | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Notes</b> .....                                    | <b>24</b> |



## FROM VISION TO ACTION: A DECADE OF ANALYSIS, DISRUPTION AND RESILIENCE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime was founded in 2013. Its vision was to mobilize a global strategic approach to tackling organized crime by strengthening political commitment to address the challenge, building the analytical evidence base on organized crime, disrupting criminal economies and developing networks of resilience in affected communities. Ten years on, the threat of organized crime is greater than ever before and it is critical that we continue to take action by building a coordinated global response to meet the challenge.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) has documented a staggering 108% increase in targeted killings in South Africa, as observed through its South Africa Organized Crime Observatory (SA-Obs).<sup>1</sup> While South Africa has long grappled with high levels of violence, as evidenced by a per capita murder rate of 45 per 100 000 in 2022/23,<sup>2</sup> or approximately 70 murders a day, targeted killings have notably escalated since 2000, when the GI-TOC's data collection on assassinations began.

South Africa has a history of political violence. Political killings in South Africa can be seen as a function of criminal governance in the country. The number of politically linked assassinations has been rising steadily since around 2010, and in 2023 the GI-TOC recorded 31 incidents of political assassination. The analysis presented in this report is based on data collected on political assassinations in South Africa since 2000, with an update on overall trends in targeted killings analyzed using 2023 data.

The hitmen behind South Africa's contract killings have become more daring, incidents more public and victims more high-profile. The masterminds and the hitmen who carry out their orders appear to be emboldened by the minimal repercussions of their actions and the dwindling public outcry, as the sheer frequency of events diminishes the impact of individual tragedies. Contract killers also seem to show little regard for the collateral consequences of their actions, carrying out assassinations in the presence of children, as in the recent killing of Rand Water executive Teboho Joala,<sup>3</sup> and turning churches and restaurants into crime scenes. Coupled with the deficiencies in South Africa's overburdened criminal justice system, where only about 15% of all murders are solved, the picture that emerges is one of a situation that is barely contained.<sup>4</sup>

The SA-Obs recorded 131 targeted killings in South Africa in 2023, 10 fewer than in 2022.<sup>5</sup> This is certainly an undercount, however, as the assassinations database is populated with publicly available information, which is affected by accessibility, reporting fatigue and low coverage, among other factors. The 131 cases were grouped into four categories<sup>6</sup>: organized-crime related (46 cases or 35% of incidents), minibus taxi-industry related (45 incidents, or 34%), political assassinations (31 incidents, or nearly 24%) and personal assassinations (nine incidents, or nearly 7%). Overlaps between categories present a challenge in disaggregating the data, but what these figures nevertheless represent is the entrenched use of contract killers as a solution to electoral, business and romantic disputes, to commit insurance fraud or to silence those working to expose corruption.

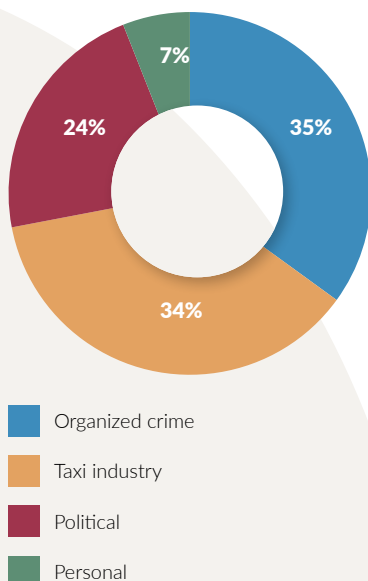
The personal impact of these killings on individuals, families and communities is of course incalculable, but politically motivated assassinations have a particularly detrimental effect on governance and democracy, with violence used as a means of silencing opponents, controlling the struggle for succession, infiltrating local governance and influencing political outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Understanding this impact is particularly critical in the context of South Africa's 2024 general elections. Previous analysis has shown that



Targeted killings have become increasingly common in South Africa over the past decade, with local government employees and the minibus taxi industry particularly affected. © Brenton Geach/Gallo Images via Getty Images

there are always spikes in political assassinations during election years, particularly in long-contested provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).<sup>8</sup> The 2024 elections, the sixth national election in the country's 30 years of democracy, have been earmarked as a potential watershed moment, with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) facing challenges in securing its National Assembly majority. Recent changes in what has long been a stagnant political landscape include a rise in coalition governments and the formation of several new political parties, most significantly the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, whose campaigning has been led by former president Jacob Zuma.<sup>9</sup> The MK party already holds substantial support in Zuma's home province of KZN, a former ANC stronghold, where it threatens to dilute ANC votes. The ANC's waning influence, on the back of high unemployment and crime rates, cost of living increases and widespread government corruption, including unaddressed state capture revelations, means that the 2024 elections could see several political power shifts.<sup>10</sup>

While 131 cases were recorded in 2023, targeted killings are still occurring on a regular basis in South Africa, with 35 cases recorded in the first four months of 2024 alone. The database aims to not only quantify the killings, but also analyze possible trends, uncover motives and identify prevention mechanisms.



**FIGURE 1** Breakdown of assassinations in South Africa in 2023.

While there are some 64 elections being held the world over in 2024, South Africa's elections stand out for the very real threat of violence that they bring, a cumulation of the influence of criminal networks and state-embedded actors in driving criminality.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, targeted killings in South Africa are interconnected with criminal networks and state-embedded actors, with flare ups in violence from competition in the minibus taxi industry, gang dynamics and electoral disputes. Targeted killings affect who can contest in municipal elections, lead to increased violence in gang-afflicted communities, influence transparency and accountability in state-owned enterprises, and affect the provision of essential services such as water, electricity and sanitation. Targeted killings are a manifestation of the extent of criminal governance in South Africa, with criminals filling the gaps left by the state, with particularly devastating consequences for a relatively young democracy.<sup>12</sup>

## Criminal governance

**C**riminal governance refers to the control of a territory by individuals or groups engaged in illegal activities. It usually emerges in situations where traditional governance mechanisms have broken down or where the state has failed to meet citizens' needs for security, service delivery and dispute resolution. Criminal organizations take advantage of situations of limited economic opportunity and social inequality, using coercion, corruption and violence to gain and maintain power and influence.<sup>13</sup> Criminal governance manifests itself in different ways, depending on the relationships between communities, criminals and the state, but there are, broadly speaking, three categories of criminal control<sup>14</sup>:

- **Criminal disorder:** where there is conflict between disorganized gangs or armed groups.

- **Divided governance:** where criminal actors compete with the state for control of territory and exercise some form of control in the areas where they operate.<sup>15</sup>
- **Collaborative governance:** where there is active collusion between criminal actors and the state.<sup>16</sup>

Political assassinations in South Africa can be understood as part of a system of collaborative criminal governance, involving local politicians and government administrators colluding with criminal actors to eliminate rivals. Under a system of collaborative criminal governance in South Africa, hitmen typically kill because there is a financial incentive for them to do so. This is different from the divided form of criminal governance seen in places such as Mexico, for example, where hitmen kill as part of competition with the state for territorial control. ■

The cumulative effect of political assassinations is felt across society, from instilling fear in citizens to affecting service delivery and disrupting governance and democracy. By recognizing politically motivated violence as more than an isolated phenomenon and acknowledging its complex intersections with other illicit markets, such as the taxi industry, authorities can adopt more effective strategies to enhance law enforcement efforts, dismantle criminal networks and work towards establishing a safer and more secure society.

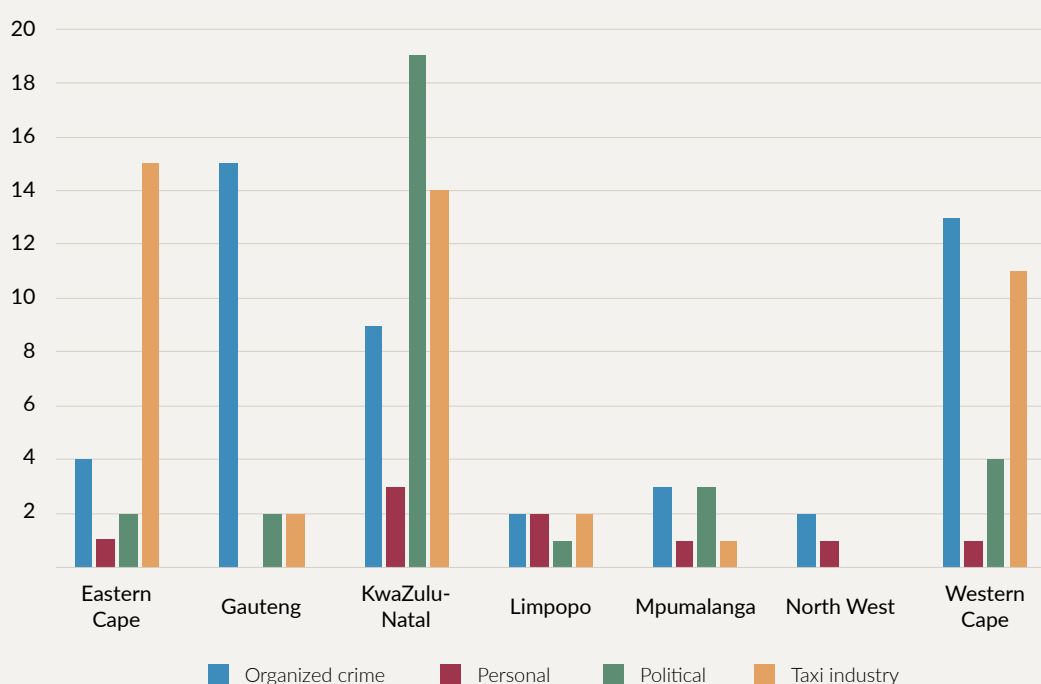
## Methodology: monitoring assassinations

As in previous reports that derive their data from the GI-TOC database,<sup>17</sup> this report drew on the resources of SABINET, a mainstream media database covering local and national news. This was supplemented with searches of electronic news sources.

The following criteria had to be met for an incident to be recorded as a targeted killing. First, the police, criminal justice agencies or, in a limited number of incidents, the friends or family of the deceased, must have declared the killing to be a hit (although in several cases this also emerged from coverage of subsequent court proceedings). Second, the circumstances must have been such that it was relatively clear from the facts of the case that an assassination or attempted assassination had taken place. In other words, the incidents had to be identified as targeting one person or, in a handful of cases, groups of people, and a transaction (financial or otherwise) had to be involved. The assassination database records as hits those cases where the victim was killed, those where the attempt failed (i.e. the intended target was only injured) and those that were prevented by law enforcement. The resulting data is undoubtedly an undercount, as the database records only cases reported in the media that are identified as hits, contract killings or assassinations.<sup>18</sup>

The assassinations database is also constrained by a lack of comprehensive coverage in mainstream local and national media. Certain hotspots known for high levels of violence may struggle to attract adequate journalistic attention, with reporters having become overwhelmed or desensitized by frequent exposure. This is exacerbated by media houses facing a shortage of reporters, particularly as a result of cost-cutting measures in a challenging economic climate. Moreover, news articles often lack sufficient detail or are incomplete, making it difficult to immediately categorize incidents as targeted killings. For example, a case where a person dies and investigations only later reveal that the cause of death was poisoning for a life insurance payout may initially be missed under our methodology – such a case would then be subsequently recorded and categorized as a personal hit. Recorded cases do not always fit neatly into the distinct categories outlined below, and categories sometimes overlap.<sup>19</sup>

- **Organized crime-related:** Also categorized as economic interest-related, these killings involve the use of targeted violence to influence an economic outcome. They include hits on high-level criminal figures, gangsters and businesspeople related to disputes in the criminal underworld. This category tends to have the highest number of hits because most hits are related to organized crime because of the motives behind them, making it something of an overarching category.
- **Taxi industry-related:** These hits are usually connected to competition over lucrative transport routes and power struggles within taxi associations. They include hits on taxi bosses and drivers, members of taxi associations and sometimes bus drivers.
- **Political assassinations:** These killings target individuals holding a political or administrative position, almost always in local government. Victims include whistle-blowers, councillors and government employees.
- **Personal assassinations:** These hits are carried out for personal reasons, usually as a result of relationships dynamics, such as love triangles. The category also includes hits arranged for insurance payouts.



**FIGURE 2** Targeted killings in South Africa, 2023, by category. Total: 131.

# POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS

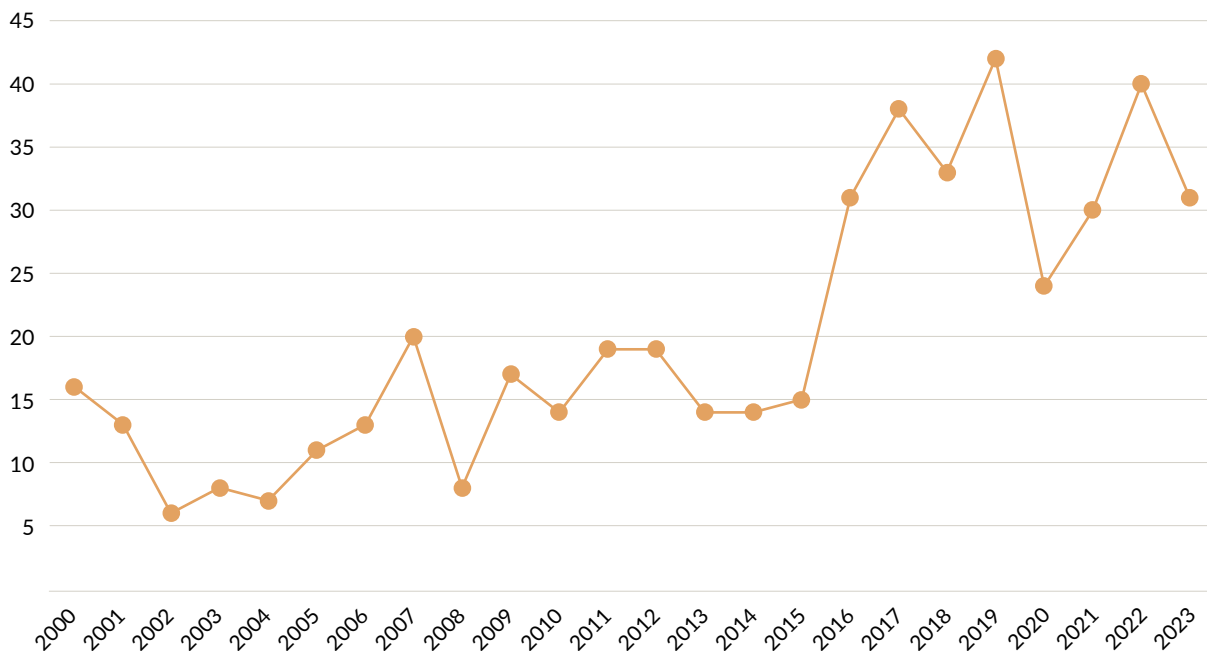
**T**he term 'political assassinations' refers to the targeted killing of politicians, councillors, public servants and administrators, political activists, whistle-blowers and other members of civil society for ideological or strategic reasons. In South Africa, this phenomenon is epitomized by the figure of anti-apartheid activist Chris Hani, who was assassinated during the period of heightened unrest and uncertainty that preceded South Africa's transition to democracy. While this was a particularly violent period in South Africa's history, the threat of political violence persists today. A total of 31 incidents were recorded in 2023, making it the third most prevalent type of targeted killing, just behind hits associated with organized crime and the minibus taxi industry.

The SA-Obs recorded 488 politically motivated assassinations in South Africa between 2000 and 2023 (see Figure 3). The number of assassinations started steadily increasing in 2010. While this is attributable to several factors, including greater media visibility and more stringent record keeping, it coincides in particular with the rise of factionalism within the ANC following the events of its 2007 National Elective Conference.<sup>20</sup> The conference saw Thabo Mbeki and his supporters defeated by Jacob Zuma and his faction, marking the first major division within the ANC since the advent of democracy and signalling the ascent of populism.<sup>21</sup> The significance of the ANC's factional politics is that the overwhelming majority of the cases in the GI-TOC database were killings of ANC members (mostly commissioned by other ANC members, making it largely an intra-party problem), while an average of just two cases per year involved other political parties. However, this has changed in recent years (since around 2022), with members of other political parties being assassinated, indicating a mixture of both intra- and inter-party political contestation in what has been described as 'a recent appetite for killing politicians'.<sup>22</sup> Although South Africa has historically recorded high numbers of politically motivated murders, the number of assassinations was still far lower than it is today.

In the first four months of 2024 alone, the SA-Obs recorded 10 politically motivated assassinations, an average of at least one hit every two weeks between January and April. The incidents continue the grim pattern of previous years: the killings are brutal, often

Political assassinations are important to monitor in the context of the 2024 general elections, which are likely to bring significant party realignments and a real risk of post-election violence. © Waldo Swiegers/Bloomberg via Getty Images





**FIGURE 3** Political assassinations in South Africa, 2000–2023.

carried out by hitmen with little regard for bystanders and frequently targeting high-profile individuals. The killings have also become more brazen, with victims targeted at public gatherings, often in front of children and community members. The persistently high number of political assassinations over the past decade is alarming, especially given that there is no significant resistance to the government.

The breakdown of hits by province follows the pattern of previous years, with the highest number of political assassinations in 2023 recorded in KZN (19), a province particularly affected by violence targeting local councillors. Significantly fewer cases were recorded in Gauteng (two), the Eastern Cape (two), Limpopo (one), Mpumalanga (three) and the Western Cape (four). The motives behind these killings in KZN and elsewhere vary, but include eliminating political rivals, intimidating voters, removing competitors for local government contracts, targeting municipal workers responsible for awarding these contracts, and silencing those who speak out against corruption, particularly in local government. This violence not only violates political and civil rights, but also undermines democracy by allowing criminal elements to influence or control government functions.

## Political violence in South Africa

South Africa has a long history of political violence, from the brutality of colonialism and the frontier wars, to the militant struggle against apartheid, violent service delivery protests, factional battles and political assassinations. But events from the final years of apartheid and the interregnum period have somewhat shaped the current landscape, including the intense inter-party violence between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the ANC and the United Democratic Front (UDF) during the 1980s and early 1990s,<sup>23</sup> and the run-up to the first democratic elections in

1994, when KZN, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape emerged as hotspots of political contestation and unrest.

Political violence has since remained part of the fabric of democratic South Africa.<sup>24</sup> In July 2021, the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma led to one of the most violent riots in recent history, starting in KZN and spreading to the Gauteng province. Shopping malls were looted, vigilantes shot people in the street, and armed vigilante groups were formed to protect shops and businesses from being looted.<sup>25</sup>

More than 350 people died in two weeks. An expert commission found that the police and intelligence services had failed to stop the violence and, despite arrests since then, most of the main instigators have never been prosecuted.<sup>26</sup> Since then, more than 3 000 political protest events have been recorded, mostly sparked by grievances over service delivery and governance failures, and many of them violent.<sup>27</sup>

History may now be repeating itself, with the 2024 general elections marked by a similar 'instability and unpredictability' that surrounded the first democratic elections in 1994, when the IFP and ANC vied for control.<sup>28</sup> There are fears that this could lead to unrest erupting after the polls, particularly given the volatile nature of politics in KZN, where the MK party

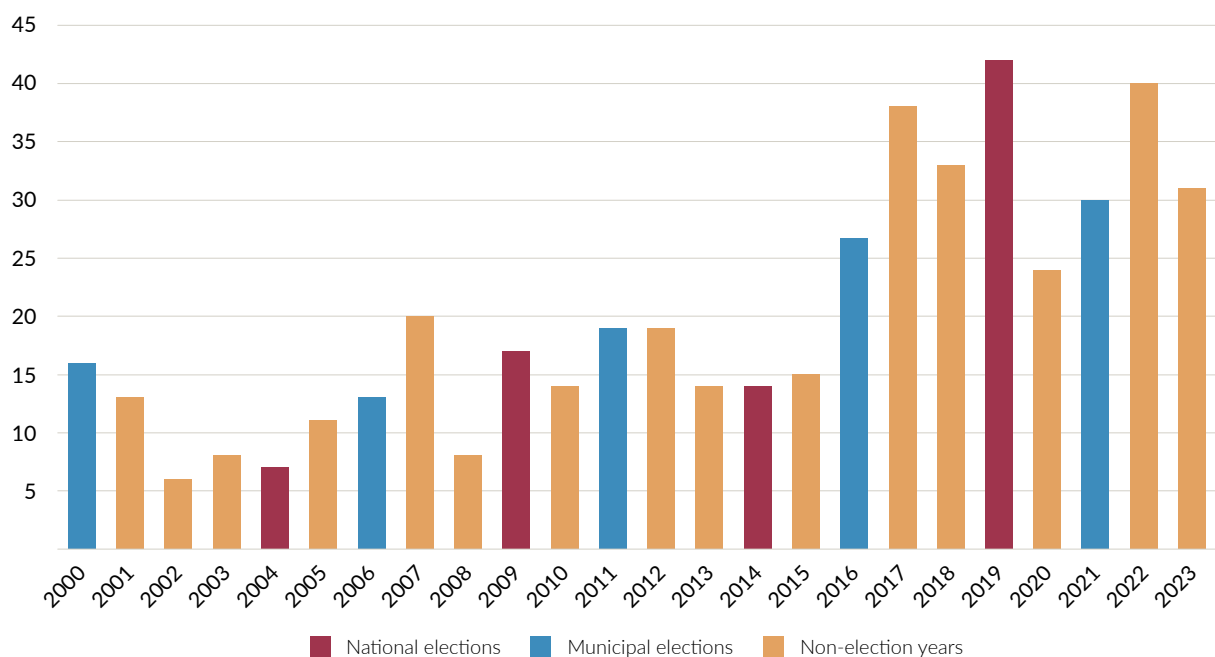
has already threatened violence.<sup>29</sup> A long history of instability and the ongoing competition for control of KZN puts the province at the centre of the 2024 elections, with provincial outcomes having significant national implications.<sup>30</sup>

One of the most violent riots in South Africa's recent history followed the arrest of Jacob Zuma in 2021, concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal. © Guillem Sartorio/AFP via Getty Images



## Election years and assassination rate

While the data collected shows an increasing number of political assassinations, as mentioned above, interesting patterns begin to emerge when the data is broken down by election year and election type (national and municipal elections). A total of 186 cases were recorded in all election years (national and municipal) since 2000. National elections accounted for 44% of the recorded incidents (81), while municipal elections accounted for 56% of cases (105) (Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4** Political assassinations, 2000–2023, showing election years.

## Municipal elections

The database shows that a higher number of political assassinations and spikes in violence are more likely to occur in municipal election years than in national election years. The data shows an increase in political assassinations over time, but particularly during municipal election years. A gradual increase has been seen since the 2006 municipal elections, with a sharp rise documented in 2016, when 27 cases were recorded, and a further increase observed during the 2021 municipal elections, when 30 cases were documented. These spikes are the result of the fierce competition for local government positions and access to municipal finances, which often comes to a head during municipal elections as changes in control are anticipated and sometimes averted through hits.

Municipalities tend to be loyal to a particular political party. The eThekweni municipality, for example, was the primary political support base for the ANC when Jacob Zuma was president, and fierce competition for this political base resulted in several assassinations.<sup>31</sup> The widespread failure of some of South Africa's municipalities to fulfil their mandates and the needs of their constituents, particularly in terms of service delivery and socio-economic upliftment, is compounded by corruption and financial mismanagement.<sup>32</sup> This dysfunction, coupled with competition within municipalities, particularly in local election years, creates an environment where political assassination is rife. At the same time, political violence can have a major impact on the structure and functioning of a municipality and affect service delivery, as in the case of the coalition-governed municipality of KwaNongoma, profiled below.

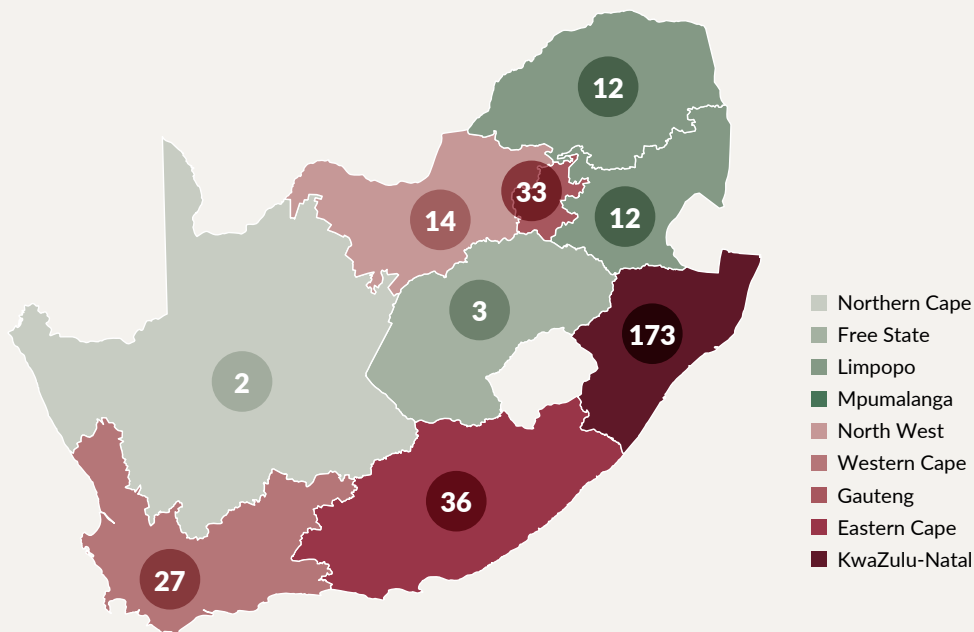
## National elections

Despite a trend of higher numbers of incidents around municipal elections, the greatest number of political assassinations recorded in the database was in fact during the 2019 national elections, when 42 incidents were noted. In national election years covered in the database (2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019), violence flared up in the wake of the elections, with a spike in killings just after the polls. This is likely to be a result of competition for political positions, with people being strategically targeted to free up the particular roles that they have been elected to. Under this form of collaborative criminal governance, other political actors collude with criminals to take out duly elected individuals, undermining democratic processes. As noted above, the SA-Obs recorded 31 political hits in 2023, a decrease from the 40 recorded in 2022. The number recorded in 2023 is similar to what has been observed in other years preceding general election years. However, the pattern of post-election violence suggests that there is a threat of further politically motivated hits in 2024.

## Analyzing political assassinations by province

All nine provinces have recorded political assassinations, but the majority of the attacks have been in KZN (for example, of the 280 cases recorded between 2015 and 2024, KZN accounted for 158). In addition to its long history of violence, the province has a substantial number of illegal firearms in circulation from internal arms flows,<sup>33</sup> as well as from arms trafficking related to the instability in Mozambique.<sup>34</sup> The province also has a notoriously violent taxi industry, which provides firearms and hitmen to the rest of the country and sometimes to other parts of southern Africa. The ready availability of contract killers and illicit firearms in the province poses a threat to political stability, with the potential to fuel an already volatile situation.<sup>35</sup>

A sharp rise in levels of intra-party violence and political killings in KZN, as evidenced by the number of people in political positions who were targeted for their seats by fellow party members, came to a



**FIGURE 5** Political assassinations by province, 2013–2023.

head during the 2016 municipal elections and led to the establishment of the Moerane Commission of Inquiry. The commission, which sought to understand the root causes of the violence, released its report in 2018, declaring the ‘apparently never-ending murder of politicians in KZN [to be] a symptom of a serious pathology in the Province’s body politic’ and recommending, among other measures, that political parties ‘take responsibility for the violent competition between their members for political positions and power’.<sup>36</sup>

The report showed that those in local government, most notably councillors, are the primary targets of political assassination, largely because of the access they have to highly coveted and lucrative municipal contracts.<sup>37</sup> Businesspeople take advantage of this by using their government contacts to fraudulently secure tenders.<sup>38</sup> As a result, if a councillor experiences competition for access to tenders, or if a businessperson is unhappy about a contract being awarded to someone else, hitmen have been hired to eliminate competition or exact revenge. In this way, some municipalities have been reduced to competition for tenders and access to wealth and power, with a very limited focus on governance and service delivery. In response to the situation, the Moerane report recommend that the state ‘take measures to depoliticise and professionalise the public service’, as a step towards preventing the thirst for personal accumulation that motivates much of the procurement-linked violence.<sup>39</sup>

Violence against Democratic Alliance (DA) councillors in the municipality of uMngeni, for example, has been linked to resentment over the administration change that saw the abolition of entrenched and corrupt tendering processes, and efforts to end other forms of corruption within the municipality. In the 2021 municipal elections, uMngeni became the first municipality in KZN to be won by the official opposition party, after long being controlled by the ANC.<sup>40</sup> The assassination of the local council’s chief whip, Nhlalayenza Ndlovu, in December 2023 is thought to be linked to the battle for control of the municipality by those who had benefited before the DA takeover.<sup>41</sup> Ndlovu, who was shot and killed at his home, was allegedly preparing to submit information to an investigative team about illegal electricity connections in the municipality at the time of his death.<sup>42</sup> In a press briefing following Ndlovu’s murder,

the mayor of uMngeni, Chris Pappas, revealed that Ndlovu had confided in him that he feared his life might be in danger.<sup>43</sup>

Almost six years after the publication of the Moerane report, the KZN provincial government has insisted that the commission's recommendations are being implemented, including through the establishment of a multi-party political intervention committee.<sup>44</sup> A task force on political violence in KZN has also been introduced, along with a separate task force dedicated to investigating targeted killings in the province since 2018. Meanwhile, political killings have continued unabated, the landscape now characterized by a mix of inter-party and intra-party violence, linked to changes in provincial governments and the establishment of coalition municipalities. Municipalities under new leadership or coalition governance, such as uMngeni and KwaNongoma (detailed below), are among the most affected.<sup>45</sup>

## KwaNongoma local municipality

**K**waNongoma local municipality in KZN, known locally as iHlalankosi (regarded as the capital city of the Zulu Kingdom), was once an IFP stronghold. However, the IFP lost its majority in the 2021 local government elections and was forced to form a coalition with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). The relationship between the IFP and EFF soon broke down, however, and the EFF instead joined forces with the ANC and the National Freedom Party (NFP). The shift in alliance led to the removal of the IFP mayor and speaker through a vote of no confidence in February 2023. With control now in the hands of a coalition led by the NFP, ANC and EFF, a political struggle emerged in the municipality, marked by leadership disputes and threats against councillors.<sup>46</sup> This fractious environment was underscored by the assassination of IFP ward councillor Ndukenhle Duma in January 2024, shortly after his election in a by-election held in November 2023.<sup>47</sup>

The battle for control of KwaNongoma continues, with both inter-party and intra-party violence fuelled by the municipality's complicated political makeup – KwaNongoma's political party composition consists of the IFP, NFP, ANC, EFF and the National People's Front (NAPF). There have been allegations of intimidation of municipal officers appointed during the IFP's tenure.<sup>48</sup> The political violence, which includes attacks on councillors and municipal

officials, has severely impeded service delivery. The situation is worsened by financial constraints, with the municipality unable to pay some of its vendors and service providers.<sup>49</sup> Resources that could have been allocated to essential services have instead been diverted to providing security and protection for councillors facing threats.<sup>50</sup> In addition to political violence, senior officials within the municipality have been arrested on suspicion of fraud, theft and money laundering.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, alongside political violence and intimidation, corruption has further aggravated the erosion of service delivery in the area.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one councillor revealed that he had been warned several times by council members and the South African Police Service (SAPS) that a hit was out against him.<sup>52</sup> In July 2023, NFP councillor Ntombenhle Mchunu was shot and killed in her home, while in August 2023, another NFP councillor, Mphathiseni Manqe, was hospitalized after surviving an assassination attempt.<sup>53</sup> In another incident in September 2023, when hired assailants failed to find NFP councillor Senzeni Zulu, they fatally shot her husband, Bongani Zulu, instead.<sup>54</sup> Although information on who ordered the killings and why has not been verified, these consecutive assassinations suggest that NFP councillors are being specifically targeted. ■

**Violence against DA councillors in uMngeni has been linked to resentment over the administration change that saw efforts to end corruption within the municipality.** © Gianluigi Guercia/AFP via Getty Images



While other provinces recorded fewer hits than KZN in 2023, the distribution of cases across provinces reveals the targeting of more high-profile figures, such as traditional leaders, in places like Mpumalanga, and hits on municipal workers in the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. Mpumalanga, which previously recorded five political assassinations over the seven-year period between 2015 and 2022, saw three cases in 2022 alone and the same number in 2023, showing a clear increase in the frequency of targeted killings in the province. Victims in 2022 and 2023 included a regional deputy chairperson, a ward member, councillors, a South African National Civic Organisation chairperson, and the mayor of a local municipality.

In the Eastern Cape, the number of incidents was in the single digits annually between 2000 and 2021, but there was a spike in 2022, when the SA-Obs recorded 10 politically motivated hits. Of the 51 cases recorded in the Eastern Cape between 2000 and 2024, 2022 stands out with the highest number of political assassinations recorded (10). The nature of the Eastern Cape killings in 2022, such as the failed attempt on Ward 42 branch leader Mazwi Mini, after being warned against campaigning for Oscar Mabuyane to be re-elected as provincial chair, suggests that they are rooted in intra-party conflict, with ANC colleagues jostling for political positions.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, the Free State (seven) and the Northern Cape (three) recorded the fewest cases since 2000, with no cases recorded between 2021 and 2023.

Overall, the high incidence of targeted political killings points to a significant shortcoming in local government: the current level of protection afforded to councillors is insufficient to shield them from attack. More worryingly, the fact that some of these killings occur after councillors have reported threats to their lives, either to the SAPS or within their party or municipal structures, speaks to the ineffectiveness of the state, political parties and local government in addressing the problem and protecting local councillors.

The murder of Simphiwe Sindelo, an ANC councillor in Mpumalanga's Govan Mbeki municipality, highlights this inefficiency.<sup>56</sup> In September 2022, gunmen ambushed Sindelo as he returned home, firing several bullets at his house and vehicle.<sup>57</sup> Sindelo and his family survived the attack and were reportedly given a security detail. They were then relocated to another residence for two months, and a subsequent security threat assessment indicated that the threat to the councillor had diminished.<sup>58</sup> A year later, Sindelo was visiting Pietermaritzburg in the KZN province when he was shot multiple times in the stomach and later died in hospital from his injuries.<sup>59</sup> The fact that the threat against Sindelo had persisted, despite the assessment that it had subsided, suggests that those responsible for the councillor's protection had inaccurately assessed the situation.

## Victims of political killings

Targets of political killings in South Africa include activists, whistle-blowers, local councillors, party supporters and government administrators, but local councillors make up the majority of victims. At the heart of this is the battle for power and self-enrichment in a highly unequal society, which is reflected in the assassination trends. During the 2016 municipal elections, for example, the highest number of assassinations were recorded after parties had announced their candidates, with competition among councillors increasing in the run-up to the elections. In 2021, more killings occurred during the campaign period, which is also linked to competition among councillors for coveted municipal positions.

### Councillors killed in the lead-up to the November 2021 local government elections

|                     |                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <b>March 2021</b>     | ANC activist <b>Mduduzi Madikizela</b> was killed by hitmen allegedly hired by ANC ward councillor Lucky Mbuzi, who has since been convicted in connection with the crime. <sup>60</sup> There are reports that he was going to run for ward councillor, a seat then held by Mbuzi. <sup>61</sup>                                                                                                  |
| <b>August 2021</b>  |                       | ANC councillor <b>Siyabonga Mkhize</b> was gunned down while campaigning in Cato Crest, Durban. Mzimuni Ngiba, a fellow ANC councillor, was arrested for his murder. <sup>62</sup> His criminal trial is yet to commence. <b>Phumeza Nomzazi</b> , an ANC member who had stood for nomination as ward councillor in the City of Cape Town, was shot dead at her home in Khayelitsha. <sup>63</sup> |
| <b>October 2021</b> | <b>September 2021</b> | <b>Tshepo Motaung</b> , a ward councillor in the north of Pretoria, was gunned down while on his way home from an ANC meeting where he had been selected to stand for re-election in the same ward. <sup>64</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                     |                       | <b>Thulani Shangase</b> was shot dead in Caluza, KZN, after returning from an EFF campaign meeting in Dambula. <sup>65</sup> <b>Dumisani Qwabe</b> , ward councillor candidate for the NFP in KwaNongoma, was shot and burnt in his car just five days before the local government elections. <sup>66</sup>                                                                                        |

### Councillors killed in the lead-up to the May 2024 general elections

|                       |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <b>January 2023</b>  | <b>Sbonelo Ntshangase</b> , an ANC councillor, was shot dead in Mkhondo, Mpumalanga. He had recently taken to social media to reveal threats to his safety and that of his fellow councillors by other municipal members. <sup>67</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>February 2023</b>  |                      | <b>Nomxolisi Nqwena-Maliwa</b> , an ANC ward councillor in Mbashe municipality in the Eastern Cape, was found dead in her car with a single gunshot wound to her head. <sup>68</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>July 2023</b>      | <b>June 2023</b>     | <b>John Myaka</b> , a pastor and African Christian Democratic Party councillor in uMhlatuze, was killed in eNseleni in KZN while delivering a sermon. <sup>69</sup> <b>Jonas Mpe</b> , an EFF councillor in the Ephraim Mogale municipality in Gauteng, was fatally shot in his home. <sup>70</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>September 2023</b> | <b>August 2023</b>   | <b>Mabhungu Mkhize</b> , an ANC councillor in Msunduzi municipality in KZN, was leaving a council meeting when he was attacked and killed by gunmen. <sup>73</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                       | <b>December 2023</b> | <b>Simphiwe Sindelo</b> , an ANC ward councillor, was visiting a friend with fellow ward committee member FA Nogwanya in Ext 25, Mpumalanga, when they were shot several times. Both later died in hospital. This was the second attempt on Sindelo's life in less than a year. <sup>76</sup> <b>Nhlalayenza Ndlovu</b> , a DA councillor and chief whip of the uMngeni municipal council, was killed in his home by gunmen. He had recently indicated to DA officials that he feared for his safety. <sup>77</sup> |
| <b>February 2024</b>  |                      | <b>Ndukenhle Duma</b> , an IFP councillor in KwaNongoma who had recently been elected in a by-election, was ambushed on the side of the road while attending to his broken-down car. <sup>78</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                       |                      | <b>Ntombenhle Mchunu</b> , an NFP ward councillor in KwaNongoma, was shot several times in her home. <sup>71</sup> <b>Innocent Mkhwanazi</b> , an IFP councillor in uMkhanyakude municipality in KZN, was killed by hitmen who fired several bullets at his car before fleeing the scene. <sup>72</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                       |                      | <b>Mzwandile Shandu</b> , an ANC councillor in the uMkhambathini municipality in KZN, was shot and killed in Umlazi, after having survived an assassination attempt a month earlier. <sup>74</sup> <b>Arthur Sibusiso Gqeba</b> , an ANC councillor in Vredenburg in the Western Cape, was shot and killed outside his home, after surviving two previous assassination attempts. <sup>75</sup>                                                                                                                     |

While local councillors are disproportionately represented among the victims, our records show that whistle-blowers, political activists and anti-fraud and corruption officials have all been victims of assassination, demonstrating the link between corruption in the local and state spheres of government and targeted killings. This connection is particularly evident in cases related to public procurement and those involving employees of state-owned enterprises, which the database records as politically linked assassinations, and employees of private enterprises that deal with procurement issues affecting the public or local communities, which the database records as politically linked assassinations. For example, the assassination of two executives at Richards Bay Minerals (RBM) – a joint venture company between metal and mining corporation Rio Tinto, an investor consortium and host communities largely represented by community trusts – was allegedly linked to ‘procurement issues’.<sup>79</sup> The managing director of RBM, Werner Duvenhage, stated that investigations had revealed that procurement was the reason for the murders of general manager Nico Swart in 2021 and human resources general manager Ronny Nzimande in 2016.<sup>80</sup> Reflecting the seriousness of the threat to business, Duvenhage revealed that now ‘the majority of the senior leaders at RBM travel to work in armoured vehicles with close protection officers’.<sup>81</sup> Because of RBM’s involvement with local communities, the murders of its officials have been recorded in the category of political assassinations.<sup>82</sup>

### The targeting of employees of state-owned enterprises

The targeting of whistle-blowers, exemplified by the murder of Babita Deokaran in Johannesburg in 2021, also falls into the category of politically motivated assassinations.<sup>83</sup> Deokaran was killed for reporting corruption in the Gauteng health department, where she worked, underscoring the connection between assassinations and the widespread hollowing out of key state institutions in South Africa by organized crime. A more recent case, the targeting of former Eskom forensic auditor Dorothy Mmushi, shows the continuing onslaught against administration officials and the detrimental impact on state-owned enterprises. These cases reveal a pattern of collusion between state officials and criminals in a system of collaborative governance, highlighting the kinds of systemic failures that undermine justice and perpetuate impunity.



Dorothy Mmushi was threatened for her work exposing fraud and corruption in state-owned power utility Eskom. *Photo: Social media*

### Dorothy Mmushi: threatened for exposing fraud

In 2023, Dorothy Mmushi was hired as a consulting forensic investigations manager by the state-owned power utility Eskom, where her forensic audits revealed fraud and corruption within the power utility. When her investigations uncovered evidence of corruption, Mmushi began to receive death threats. Towards the end of her contract with Eskom, she was directly threatened by a hitman,<sup>84</sup> who claimed that he had been hired to kill her because of her ongoing investigations at Eskom. Mmushi reported the threat to Eskom and was told that the matter would be investigated, but she was soon compelled to take the matter to the police when the threat became more imminent after a hitman began trailing her. In an interview, Mmushi noted that the police were

supportive and offered her protection under the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act (commonly known as the 'Whistle-blower Act'), which safeguards the 'disclosure of information regarding any conduct by an employer believed to show that a criminal offence has been committed or is likely to be committed'.<sup>85</sup> However, Mmushi was forced to turn down the assistance, because it was inadequate and would have severely disrupted her life and that of her family. Mmushi was left with no choice but to ensure her own safety at great financial cost.

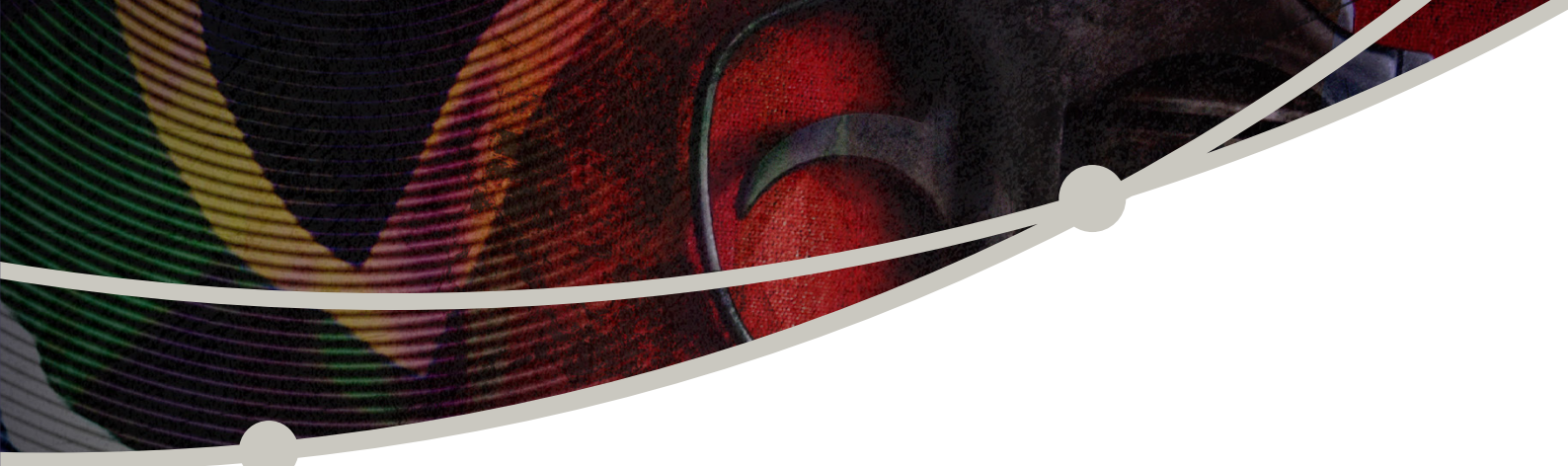
It is important to note that, despite being offered protection under the Protected Disclosures Act, Mmushi was not actually a whistle-blower in the traditional sense of the term because she had not stumbled upon information pointing to fraud and possible criminal activity. Rather, she was acting within her professional capacity as a forensic investigator

when she uncovered fraud and corruption. After her investigations and reporting to her supervisors at Eskom, she received threats in an attempt to silence her and dissuade her from further investigation.

Mmushi has continued to work as a forensic investigator, but now works mainly in the private sector because of the perceived higher level of security. Mmushi is not the only professional to have left the public sector in response to threats and intimidation: state-owned enterprises, already eroded by corruption, have been further weakened by the largely undocumented exodus of qualified staff. This illustrates the ripple effect of political assassinations – when people are no longer willing to work to ensure accountability and expose corruption for fear of their safety, this has a knock-on effect on transparency and accountability, pillars of a healthy democracy. ■

The targeting of activists and whistle-blowers has been covered extensively in the South African media amid growing concern about the commercialization of violence. However, the diminishing ability of civil society actors to hold criminal or corrupt actors to account, while ensuring their own safety, is a trend that can be seen around the world, as captured in the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index.<sup>86</sup>

The protections in place for whistle-blowers and political activists are often inadequate. Violence against those attempting to hold criminal or corrupt actors to account is concerning as members of civil society are pivotal in contributing to public accountability, good governance and countering criminality.



## ASSASSINATION TRENDS IN OTHER CATEGORIES

**T**his report, published in a crucial election year, focuses on political assassinations. However, it is also necessary to briefly cover targeted killings in the three other categories identified in the data. This overview is important not only because of the overlap between the categories – linked by method, motive or perpetrator – but also because it helps to illustrate the extent of targeted killings in South Africa. By examining incidents related to organized crime, the minibus taxi industry and personal motives, alongside the politically motivated hits recorded, a picture begins to emerge of the extent of the commercialization of violence in South Africa after 30 years of democracy.

### Organized crime-related killings

Organized crime-related killings accounted for most of the assassinations recorded in 2023 (46 cases), making up 35% of the killings in the database. Victims included suspected drug dealers, gang members and law enforcement officers investigating organized crime cases, mostly related to gang rivalries, and extortion and protection racketeering by criminal gangs. Business owners and people in the entertainment industry, including DJs and musicians, were also targeted. Although it is not always clear, from the reporting or from court documents relating to the arrest of hitmen, why these professions are targeted, it can be speculated that some of these killings are linked to extortion rackets, when businesses are threatened by criminals, or to business deals gone wrong.

The province of Gauteng recorded the highest number of killings in this category in 2023 (15), some of which were linked to the activities of the Boko Haram gang, which runs an extortion and protection racket in Mamelodi and surrounding areas.<sup>87</sup> Competition between Boko Haram and other offshoot gangs led to the targeting of members of rival gangs, often in mass shootings, such as the shooting in Mamelodi on 19 May 2023, which resulted in the death of four Boko Haram members.<sup>88</sup> In the Western Cape, gang dynamics in 2023 were influenced by turf wars, infighting and aggressive territorial expansion, which may have contributed to some of the cases recorded in the province, most notably the killing of an allegedly prominent 28s member Simon Stanfield in March.<sup>89</sup> The arrests of alleged high-profile gang leaders in 2023, Nafiz Modack for the 2020 murder of Anti-Gang Unit Lieutenant Colonel Charl Kinnear and Ralph Stanfield and his wife, Nicole, on charges of car theft, fraud and attempted murder,<sup>90</sup> are key cases to watch in this regard, as they may lead to changes in gang dynamics in the Western Cape.<sup>91</sup>

While none of the assassinations that are grouped into the organized crime category in the database in 2023 were explicitly linked to politics, gangsterism in South Africa is inextricably caught up in issues of governance, through the territorial control that criminal gangs exercise over communities and the gaps they fill in service delivery.<sup>92</sup> There have been allegations of collusion between municipal officials and alleged underworld figures who run businesses such as construction companies. In the Western Cape, for example, there were accusations that some tenders were manipulated by municipal and council employees in favour of companies accused of having criminal connections.<sup>93</sup>

While gang-related hits pose a significant threat to communities, organized crime-related assassinations are also linked to the erosion of key state institutions through corruption. Crucial state investigative capacity has also been compromised as a result. The murder of court-appointed liquidator Cloete Murray and his son in Johannesburg in March 2023, for example, has jeopardized progress in the case against government contractor Bosasa.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, violence that targets professionals sends a threatening message, discouraging others in similar positions from carrying out their duties for fear of their safety. This drives qualified professionals to leave their jobs, compromises the investigation of corruption and imparts a sense of impunity to the criminals involved.

## Taxi industry-related killings

The SA-Obs recorded 45 assassinations related to the minibus taxi industry in 2023 (34% of all assassinations), largely a result of competition over routes and disputes between taxi drivers and associations. While in previous periods of assessment this category had the highest number of recorded cases, with a spike in 2018 (127 cases) attributed to a flare-up of violence in Gauteng from the Kempton Park Association taxi war,<sup>95</sup> in 2023 it was the second highest. Gauteng (in 2018) and the Western Cape (in 2021) had previously dominated the statistics, but the highest number of taxi-related cases recorded in 2023 was in the Eastern Cape, where the Uncedo Taxi Association and the Border Alliance Association were at war over the Mathambalele route.<sup>96</sup> Conflicts over taxi ranks and routes led to deadly violence between members of the two associations, with many of the killings in 2023 occurring in Mthatha, Port St Johns and Lusikisiki. In early 2024, the associations met in Mthatha to sign a peace agreement to prevent further killings, which community members hope is the first step towards resolving the conflict.<sup>97</sup>



Violence related to the minibus taxi industry frequently dominates assassination statistics.

© Shaun Swingler

Violence related to the taxi industry extends to other parts of the public transport sector, with bus drivers targeted in the Eastern Cape and in the Western Cape. The Intercape bus company, which operates mainly on long-distance routes, has lost some of its drivers due to targeted killings.<sup>98</sup> Intercape has received numerous threats and intimidation against its drivers in the Eastern Cape, sometimes being told by the taxi industry when and where it should operate, and the fares it should charge.<sup>99</sup>

KZN had the second highest number of cases in 2023 (14), largely as a result of the targeted killing of taxi bosses in Verulam, violence that dates back to 2022.<sup>100</sup> The Western Cape recorded 11 cases, with conflicts over routes continuing from 2021. While taxi drivers and rank marshals are most often the victims, prominent figures in the industry, including taxi association chairpersons, secretaries and other executives, were also killed in the Western Cape in 2023. Fewer cases were recorded in Gauteng (two), Limpopo (two) and Mpumalanga (one), where incidents of taxi-related violence were minimal in 2023.

The taxi industry is self-regulated and certain factions often deploy violence to impose their rules and settle disputes through a pool of hitmen who act as enforcers. These hitmen are also contracted to carry out killings that would be categorized, within the database, as personal, political or organized crime-related. This creates an overlap between killings in the taxi industry and those that fall within other categories recorded in the database. The taxi industry is also notably linked to politics and organized crime in several other ways, with allegations that the taxi industry is used for money laundering by politically connected and protected individuals and organized criminal networks. Connections are frequently drawn between political assassinations, the taxi industry and organized crime-related killings in KZN especially, with those who control patronage through councillors, mayors and ministers often linked to criminal activities, particularly taxi industry violence and cash-in-transit robberies.<sup>101</sup> In this way, systems of patronage and organized crime infiltration have enabled violence against politicians by criminals and political actors alike within the province. The involvement in the taxi industry of politically connected individuals, complicates efforts to regulate the industry and prevent violence.<sup>102</sup>

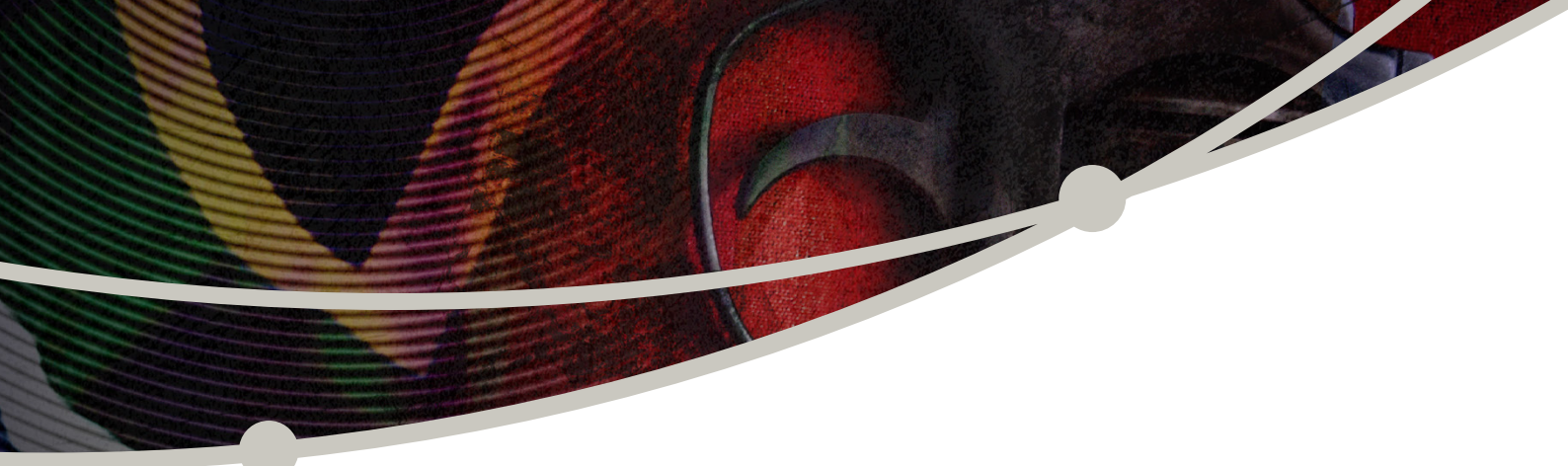
## Personal assassinations

The number of personal killings recorded has been relatively consistent since 2022, with eight cases recorded in 2022 and nine in 2023. Personal killings are often because of romantic disputes and for insurance claims. Among them is a case involving Agnes Setshwantsho, who was arrested in November 2023, accused of murdering relatives to claim life insurance policies taken out in their names.<sup>103</sup> Setshwantsho stands accused on charges of murder and fraud for the deaths of family members, including a niece who was allegedly poisoned.<sup>104</sup> There could well be similar cases, but due to the clandestine methods used in these cases, such as poisonings, which are not immediately flagged as areas of concern, a lot of the cases most likely go unnoticed, particularly given how easy it apparently is to take out insurance policies on people without their knowledge.<sup>105</sup>

In 2023, two police officers were killed in personal killings involving insurance fraud. Though unrelated, the murder of Captain Zwelakhe Ntombela and Warrant Officer Nkosinathi Ntinga share similar circumstances. Ntombela, an eThekweni metro police officer, was killed in May 2023 by a hitman allegedly hired by his wife, Nongcebo Ntombela. The hitman came forward after discovering that he shared the same surname as Captain Ntombela, and was sentenced to 20 years for the murder in August 2023 after pleading guilty in court.<sup>106</sup> The hitman turned state witness, providing information

about how the assassination was allegedly arranged by Nongcebo Ntombela, which led to her arrest for orchestrating the murder alongside convicted hitman Khulani Cele.<sup>107</sup> At the time of writing, the case is before the Umlazi Magistrate's Court, but it has been disclosed that the hitmen contracted were allegedly offered R300 000 for the murder.<sup>108</sup>

In August 2023, Ntinga and his colleague were kidnapped from the officer's home and robbed of their cellphones and pistols.<sup>109</sup> The colleague was later found lying on the side of the road, still alive, thought to have been thrown out of a moving vehicle, while Ntinga's lifeless body was discovered in an abandoned vehicle. Ntinga's wife and two others were later arrested in connection with the kidnappings and the murder.<sup>110</sup>



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**argeted killings have become increasingly common in South Africa over the past decade, affecting many different sectors of society, but particularly local government and the minibus taxi industry. While there was a slight decrease in the total number of assassinations recorded by the SA-Obs in 2023 compared to 2022, 131 versus 141, it is important to note that this statistic is likely to be an underestimate of the actual number of incidents. Assassinations have become bolder, occurring openly in public spaces and even disrupting church services and community meetings. Law enforcement efforts to address targeted violence have thus far mostly been reactive, with commissions of inquiry and task forces established to understand the underlying causes of the violence. Yet their effectiveness in reducing criminal impunity has been limited and attacks continue.

Of the four categories the SA-Obs tracks – organized crime-related killings, taxi industry-related killings, political assassinations and personal assassinations – targeted killings linked to politics are particularly important to monitor in the context of the May 2024 general elections. Indeed, 2024 could be a watershed election year in South Africa's political landscape, with the likelihood of significant party realignments and a risk of post-election violence, in line with trends seen in previous years.

This is particularly the case in KZN, a province disproportionately affected by political assassinations, mainly as a result of intra-party disputes. Previous efforts to address targeted violence in the province, most recently based on the recommendations of the Moerane Commission,<sup>111</sup> have been largely unsuccessful. While some of the measures proposed by the commission have been implemented at the provincial level – for example, the formation of an inter-ministerial task team to oversee the work of security agencies,<sup>112</sup> it is clear that others have not, most notably the recommendation that political parties educate their members regarding peaceful resolutions to internal disputes. The commission also urged the state to depoliticize and professionalize the civil service and to tackle the proliferation of political patronage networks, yet patronage systems remain the norm within the ranks of various political parties, particularly the ANC, and intra-party conflict continues to fuel violence.<sup>113</sup>

In a 2019 report on violence in local government,<sup>114</sup> the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) also made recommendations on how to prevent targeted killings in municipalities, based on a study conducted at local government level. These recommendations, which include better management of political party disputes and factionalism by political parties themselves, support for the educational development of councillors so that they have more opportunities after their term of

office, and improved security measures at council premises and councillors' homes, are also yet to be implemented.

Furthermore, while hitmen have been arrested in connection with some of the murders, few of those responsible for ordering the killings have been caught and the underlying motives often remain unknown. Other challenges to comprehensive solutions to combating targeted killings include administrative hurdles, with a significant backlog of criminal cases in the high court,<sup>115</sup> and persistent and systemic corruption in political and law enforcement institutions.



Police minister Bheki Cele is interviewed during the trial of suspects accused of the murder of rapper Kiernan Forbes (known as 'AKA'), who was gunned down in February 2023. © Darren Stewart/ Gallo Images via Getty Images

The lack of state investigative and prosecutorial capacity, combined with the failure to fully or effectively implement the recommendations made by commissions of inquiry, has further emboldened hitmen and masterminds, whose actions go largely unpunished. The police and other security agencies often work in isolation, and the lack of pooling of information and resources prevents a cohesive response. The assassination of a police officer in Nyanga, Cape Town, in February 2024, who was due to testify in the high-profile case of a taxi boss charged with murder, attempted murder and the illegal possession of firearms, illustrates this disconnect between law enforcement agencies.<sup>116</sup> In response to a media request for comment on the murder, the Hawks spokesperson stated that they were not aware that the victim had been due to testify, and referred the question to the SAPS Provincial Organised Crime Unit.<sup>117</sup> This despite the fact that the Hawks had previously investigated the taxi boss in relation to extortion threats against the Intercape bus company and should have, therefore, been aware of the developments in the case against the taxi boss, including that the police officer was set to testify against him.<sup>118</sup>

Hitmen are connected to other illicit economies in South Africa, including illegal drug markets, cash-in-transit robberies, and extortion and protection racketeering. For example, the hitman who allegedly threatened Dorothy Mmushi (whose case is covered earlier in this report) was apprehended while police were carrying out an arrest in connection with a cash-in-transit robbery in Limpopo.<sup>119</sup> The suspects implicated in rapper Kiernan Forbes's murder also have ties to the taxi industry.<sup>120</sup> Another important intersecting market is the illicit firearm trade, with firearms being the weapons used in most attacks on councillors, public officials and municipal employees. A task team set up in KZN in 2018 recovered 46 firearms from suspects, with ballistics linking them to several previous political assassinations.<sup>121</sup>

Political violence and the targeting of opposition members, whistle-blowers, activists, employees of state-owned enterprises, corruption investigators and local councillors undermine democracy, with devastating consequences for accountability, governance and service delivery, and have led to a collaborative form of criminal governance in local government. Proactive measures are therefore needed to prevent the kind of stagnation that surrounds the implementation of recommendations made in response to commissions of inquiry, due to a lack of resources or the absence of political will. A clear, holistic, strategic and innovative plan must be formulated to tackle organized crime in general and targeted killings in particular. The strategy should be guided by the following recommendations, which should supplement those of the Moerane Commission, previous analytical reports and the SALGA report:

- Target the pools of readily available contract killers, whether in the taxi industry or criminal gangs, focusing on the main provinces where they are recruited, such as KZN.
- Establish mechanisms to detect individuals at risk of assassination, by identifying high-risk professions – for example, auditors investigating particularly sensitive financial transactions. Identifying at-risk individuals means support and security can be more efficiently provided to those individuals, reducing their level of risk.
- Emphasize a multi-sectoral approach, with specialized teams within the National Prosecuting Authority to prosecute cases; a dedicated and anonymized hotline for civil society to provide information and report threats, which are then immediately dealt with by dedicated staff; and teams of trusted investigators who work exclusively on assassination cases.
- Focus law enforcement efforts on targeting criminal masterminds for arrest and prosecution, through more robust investigative work. This could be achieved by law enforcement agencies working with financial institutions to trace electronic payments made to hitmen, and by using call tracing technology.
- Improve collaboration between law enforcement and prosecutors. Prosecutors, for example, can use plea deals to uncover the identities of masterminds where they are known, which is an option that is not available to law enforcement officials, who only investigate and do not prosecute.<sup>122</sup>
- Launch an independent investigation into the awarding of tenders and subcontracts to criminally linked companies, and blacklist any companies connected to corrupt councillors, to ensure that an honest foundation for local government can be built.
- Decentralize administrative power and processes to mitigate against corruption in municipalities and state-owned enterprises. These should be separated into stages so that no one person or group can control outcomes across them. The current centralization of municipal power has facilitated targeted killings through favourable regulatory decisions, and the awarding of contracts to companies owned by corrupt politicians or their associates.
- Understand political violence as more than an isolated phenomenon and acknowledge its complex intersections with other illicit markets, such as the taxi industry and organized criminal gangs. In this way, authorities can adopt more effective strategies to dismantle criminal networks, improve law enforcement efforts and work towards a safer and more secure society.
- Target organized crime more broadly by recognizing its intersection with the phenomenon of assassination. While the commercial market for violence in South Africa undoubtedly contributes to the high overall crime rate, targeted killings are linked to other organized criminal economies, so what works in addressing the scourge of organized crime should also help to reduce targeted killings.

## NOTES

- 1 For more on the GI-TOC's monitoring of assassinations, see the Global Assassination Monitor, <https://assassination.globalinitiative.net/monitor>.
- 2 David Bruce, Murder trends in South Africa's deadliest provinces, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 10 November 2023, <https://issafrica.org/research/policy-briefs/murder-trends-in-south-africas-deadliest-provinces>.
- 3 Sinesipho Schrieber, Assassinated Rand Water exec Teboho Joala 'knew his time had come', says colleague, Times LIVE, 7 February 2024, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2024-02-07-assassinated-rand-water-exec-teboho-joala-knew-his-time-had-come-says-colleague>.
- 4 Andrew Faull and David Bruce, Reducing murder must be a top SA government priority, ISS, 21 March 2023, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/reducing-murder-must-be-a-top-sa-government-priority>.
- 5 For a detailed analysis of targeted killings in 2022, see Rumbi Matamba, The business of killing: Assassinations in South Africa, GI-TOC, April 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/assassinations-targeted-killings-south-africa>.
- 6 See Mark Shaw and Kim Thomas, The commercialization of assassination: 'Hits' and contract killing in South Africa, 2000–2015, *African Affairs*, 116, 465 (2017), 597–620, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adw050>; Mark Shaw, *Hitmen for Hire: Exposing South Africa's Underworld*, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2017.
- 7 Ray Mwareya, South Africa: Councillors' political murders at crisis level as 2024 looms, *The Africa Report*, 10 November 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/327261/south-africa-councillors-political-murders-at-crisis-level-as-2024-looms>.
- 8 Kim Thomas, Murder by contract: Targeted killings in eastern and southern Africa, GI-TOC, September 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/targeted-killings-eastern-southern-africa>; Rumbi Matamba, The business of killing: Assassinations in South Africa, GI-TOC, April 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/assassinations-targeted-killings-south-africa>.
- 9 uMkhonto weSizwe, meaning 'Spear of the Nation', was the name of the ANC's armed wing, instrumental in the fight against the apartheid regime.
- 10 In 2023, South Africa received its lowest ever score (41) on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, signalling deteriorating progress in tackling corruption. See Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>.
- 11 According to the findings of the 2023 Africa Organised Crime Index, South Africa scored third-highest on the continent in terms of levels of overall criminality and seventh in the world. See Africa Organised Crime Index 2023, GI-TOC and ENACT, <https://africa.ocindex.net>.
- 12 See Christopher Blattman et al, Gang rule: Understanding and countering criminal governance, SocArXiv, February 2021, <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/5nyqs>.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 These categories were advanced by Enrique Desmond Arias in an analysis of the contexts of Brazil, Colombia and Jamaica; see Social responses to criminal governance in Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Kingston, and Medellín, *Latin American Research Review*, 54, 1 (2019), 165–180. Arias also refers to a fourth category, 'tiered governance', which involves collaboration between state actors and criminals to regulate criminal behaviour, but this is less observable in South Africa.
- 15 In Uttar Pradesh, India, for example, criminal organizations have infiltrated the political landscape and sometimes serve as duly elected politicians. See Vishal Singh Deo and Radha Barooah, Behind the veil: Criminal governance in Western Uttar Pradesh, India, GI-TOC, February 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/criminal-governance-uttar-pradesh-india>.

- 16 For more on this, in the context of South Africa's Nelson Mandela Bay municipality, see Kim Thomas, Mark Shaw and Mark Ronan, A city under siege: Gang violence and criminal governance in Nelson Mandela Bay, GI-TOC, November 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/nelson-mandela-bay>.
- 17 See GI-TOC, Assassination Witness, <https://globalinitiative.net/initiatives/assassination-witness>.
- 18 The terms 'hit', 'contract killing', 'targeted killing' and 'assassination' are used interchangeably in this report.
- 19 For example, the case of Chief Clyde Mnisi, traditional leader of the Mnisi clan and alleged rhino poaching kingpin, who was assassinated in 2023, can be classified in two categories. Because of his business dealings, where he was accused of rhino poaching, among other illicit activities, his case can be classified as organized crime-related. However, because he was a traditional leader, his murder would also be categorized as a political assassination.
- 20 Collin Olebogeng Mongale, Review of *War Party: How the ANC's political killings are breaking South Africa* by G Arde, *New Contree*, 87 (2021), 154–163.
- 21 Sibusiso Ngalwa, The ghosts of ANC conferences past have many lessons for Ramaphosa, *Daily Maverick*, 15 May 2021, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-05-15-the-ghosts-of-anc-conferences-past-have-many-lessons-for-ramaphosa>.
- 22 Lwazi Hlangu, Political killings to be addressed in KZN before elections: safety MEC, *Times LIVE*, 5 October 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2023-10-05-political-killings-to-be-addressed-in-kzn-before-elections-safety-mec>.
- 23 Richard Lyster and Howard Varney, Buthelezi: The warlord who tried to conceal the blood on this hands, *Mail & Guardian*, 15 September 2023, <https://mg.co.za/politics/2023-09-15-buthlezi-the-warlord-who-tried-to-conceal-the-blood-on-his-hands>.
- 24 Elizabeth Lubinga, Protest as communication for development and social change in South Africa, in Jan Servaes (ed), *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change*, Singapore: Springer, 2018.
- 25 Sandy Africa, South Africa's deadly July 2021 riots may recur if there's no change, *News24*, 12 July 2022, <https://www.news24.com/news24/opinions/analysis/analysis-sandy-africa-south-africas-deadly-july-2021-riots-may-recur-if-theres-no-change-20220712>.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Crimehub, Protest map, ISS, <https://crimehub.org/protests>.
- 28 Crystal Orderson, Can Jacob Zuma emerge as kingmaker in South Africa's election?, *Al Jazeera*, 8 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/8/can-jacob-zuma-emerge-as-kingmaker-in-south-africas-election>.
- 29 Stephen Grootes, KZN provincial battlefield will present a major challenge to ANC's continued grip on power, *Daily Maverick*, 21 January 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-01-21-kzn-provincial-battlefield-will-present-a-major-challenge-to-ancs-continued-grip-on-power>.
- 30 Crystal Orderson, Can Jacob Zuma emerge as kingmaker in South Africa's election?, *Al Jazeera*, 8 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/8/can-jacob-zuma-emerge-as-kingmaker-in-south-africas-election>.
- 31 Collin Olebogeng Mongale, Review of *War Party: How the ANC's political killings are breaking South Africa* by G Arde, *New Contree*, 87 (2021), 154–163. See also the analysis in Kim Thomas, Murder by contract: Targeted killings in eastern and southern Africa, GI-TOC, September 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/targeted-killings-eastern-southern-africa>.
- 32 Kim Thomas, Mark Shaw and Mark Ronan, A city under siege: Gang violence and criminal governance in Nelson Mandela Bay, GI-TOC, November 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/nelson-mandela-bay>.
- 33 Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, Ammunition theft raises fears of increased volatility and political violence in KwaZulu-Natal, *Risk Bulletin*, Issue 20, GI-TOC, September 2021, <https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/esa-obs-020/01-ammunition-theft-raises-fears-of-increased-volatility.html>.
- 34 Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, How to silence the guns? Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets, GI-TOC, September 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/southern-africas-illegal-firearms-markets>.
- 35 Ibid, p 6.
- 36 Report of the Moerane Commission of Enquiry into the underlying causes of the murder of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal, <http://www.kznonline.gov.za/images/Downloads/Publications/MOERANE%20COMMISSION%20OF%20INQUIRY%20REPORT.pdf>.
- 37 SALGA, Violence in local government: A study on damage to property, intimidation, threats, harm, and killing of councillors and municipal officials, 2019, <https://www.salga.org.za/Batch%201%20-%20Latest%20Knowledge%20Products/SALGA%20Study%20on%20Violence%20in%20Local%20Government.pdf>; Ray Mwareya, South Africa: Councillors' political murders at crisis level as 2024 looms, *The Africa Report*, 10 November 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/327261/south-africa-councillors-political-murders-at-crisis-level-as-2024-loom>.
- 38 Kim Thomas, Mark Shaw and Mark Ronan, A city under siege: Gang violence and criminal governance in Nelson Mandela Bay, GI-TOC, November 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/nelson-mandela-bay>.
- 39 SALGA, Violence in local government: A study on damage to property, intimidation, threats, harm, and killing of councillors and municipal officials, 2019, <https://www.salga.org.za/Batch%201%20-%20Latest%20Knowledge%20Products/SALGA%20Study%20on%20Violence%20in%20Local%20Government.pdf>.

- 40 Lwandile Bhengu, DA wins first ever KwaZulu-Natal municipality, after being voted in Umngeni, News24, 2 November 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/da-wins-first-ever-kwazulu-natal-municipality-after-being-voted-in-umngeni-20211102>; John Steenhuisen, DA secures a historic first KZN municipality as it wins uMngeni outright, Democratic Alliance, 2 November 2021, <https://www.da.org.za/2021/11/da-secures-a-historic-first-kzn-municipality-as-it-wins-umngeni-outright>.
- 41 Lyse Comins, Assassinated uMngeni DA councillor knew he was in danger, *Mail & Guardian*, 6 December 2023, <https://mg.co.za/news/2023-12-06-assassinated-umngeni-da-councillor-knew-he-was-in-danger>; Chris Makhaye, Nhlayenza Ndlovu 'cannot become another police statistic in the ongoing slaughter of councillors' – Chris Pappas, *Daily Maverick*, 6 December 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-12-06-nhlayenza-ndlovu-cannot-become-another-police-statistic-in-the-ongoing-slaughter-of-councillors-chris-pappas>; Mfundo Mkhize, Pappas believes net is tightening around killers of DA councillor Nhlayenza Ndlovu, *Times LIVE*, 14 April 2024, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2024-04-15-pappas-believes-net-is-tightening-around-killers-of-da-councillor-nhlayenza-ndlovu>.
- 42 See Londiwe Xulu, DA brings in the big guns to investigate councillor's murder, *The Witness*, 9 January 2024, <https://witness.co.za/news/kzn/2024/01/09/da-brings-in-the-big-guns-to-investigate-councillors-murder>.
- 43 See SABC News, Reward offered for killers of uMngeni municipality DA councillor Ndlovu, YouTube, 6 December 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOIUxaTke1Y>.
- 44 This was discussed during a Cabinet Lekgotla in Mayville on 15 February 2024, as reported in Noxolo Miya, Dube-Ncube hits back at SALGA's political killings criticism, *East Coast Radio*, 16 February 2024, <https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/dube-ncube-hits-back-salga-political-killing-criticism>.
- 45 These are not the only troubled municipalities in KZN, however. Both eThekweni and Umkhambathini have also been flagged as areas with high levels of political violence. See SALGA, Violence in local government: A study on damage to property, intimidation, threats, harm, and killing of councillors and municipal officials, 2019, <https://www.salga.org.za/Batch%201%20-%20Latest%20Knowledge%20Products/SALGA%20Study%20on%20Violence%20in%20Local%20Government.pdf>.
- 46 The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) held a special meeting to call for an end of the leadership dispute in the municipality. See MEC Sithole Moloi calls for tolerance and cooperation among parties within Nongoma local municipality, KwaZulu-Natal Province, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, <https://www.kzncogta.gov.za/archives/8069>.
- 47 Jehran Naidoo, KwaZulu-Natal political violence claims lives of councillor and two children, *IOL*, 8 February 2024, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/kwazulu-natal-political-violence-claims-lives-of-councillor-and-two-children-63e00994-0128-45c5-8d9f-2b9c585cf35c>. In South Africa, local municipalities are divided into wards and have a general council that is further divided into the executive committee, ward councillors and proportional representative councillors. Ward councillors represent a ward and are elected in the local elections; proportional representative councillors represent a political party on the council based on the number of votes a party receives in the local election. When a ward councillor vacancy occurs, either by resignation or incapacitation (which includes death) a by-election must take place to elect a new ward councillor.
- 48 Noxolo Miya, Nongoma municipality whistleblowers urged to come forward, *East Coast Radio*, 28 March 2024, <https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/nongoma-municipality-whistleblowers-urged-come-forward>.
- 49 The budget of KwaNongoma has been so strained by protection services that COGTA wrote a letter to the council highlighting this severity.
- 50 If a councillor has reason to believe that his or her life is danger, bodyguards are assigned to the councillor and the cost is borne by the municipality.
- 51 Siphamandla Goge, Senior Nongoma officials nabbed for fraud, *eNCA*, 25 March 2024, <https://www.enca.com/news/crime-sa-senior-nongoma-officials-nabbed-fraud>.
- 52 Interview with a council member, 26 April 2024, by phone.
- 53 Call for swift arrest of suspects behind councillors' murders, South African Government News Agency, 31 August 2023, <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/call-swift-arrest-suspects-behind-councillors-murders>; Soyiso Maliti, 'Resign or we're going to shoot you': Nongoma councillors tell Cele about threats they've received, *News24*, 7 September 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/government/resign-or-were-going-to-shoot-you-nongoma-councillors-tell-cele-about-threats-theyve-received-20230907>.
- 54 Anelisa Kubheka, Man 'killed councillor's husband while out on bail on murder charge', *Sunday Tribune*, 6 November 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/news/man-killed-councillors-husband-while-out-on-bail-on-murder-charge-cf995bfb-cde1-4048-8e7a-06a884023d2e>.
- 55 Siyamtanda Capa, Nelson Mandela Bay former councillor shot days after threats, *The Herald*, 14 February 2022, <https://www.theherald.co.za/news/2022-02-14-nelson-mandela-bay-former-councillor-shot-days-after-threats/>.
- 56 Mphikeleli Masangu, Ward 4 councillor gunned down in eMbalenhle, *Ridge Times*, 5 December 2023, <https://www.citizen.co.za/ridge-times/news-headlines/local-news/2023/12/05/ward-4-councillor-is-gunned-down-and-dies-on-the-sport>.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Mphikeleli Masangu, GMM Speaker claims ward councillor's murder was not politically motivated, *Ridge Times*, 13 December 2023, <https://www.citizen.co.za/ridge-times/>

- news-headlines/local-news/2023/12/13/speaker-claims-ward-councillors-murder-was-not-politically-motivated.
- 59 Mphikeleli Masangu, Ward 4 councillor gunned down in eMbalenhle, *Ridge Times*, 5 December 2023, <https://www.citizen.co.za/ridge-times/news-headlines/local-news/2023/12/05/ward-4-councillor-is-gunned-down-and-dies-on-the-sport>.
  - 60 Babalwa Ndlanya, Former Eastern Cape ANC ward councillor sentenced for killing two political opponents, *Mthatha Express*, 20 February 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/community-newspaper/mthathaexpress/former-anc-councillor-in-mbizana-sentenced-for-killing-two-political-opponents-20230220>.
  - 61 Malibongwe Dayimani, ANC councillor arrested after fellow party member shot dead in alleged ambush, *News24*, 20 April 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/anc-councillor-arrested-after-fellow-party-member-shot-dead-in-alleged-ambush-20210420>.
  - 62 Khethukuthula Xulu, Murder trial against former ANC councillor Ngiba postponed again, *The Witness*, 19 April 2024, <https://witness.co.za/news/kzn/2024/04/19/murder-trial-against-former-anc-councillor-ngiba-postponed-again>.
  - 63 Jenni Evans, Murdered Khayelitsha woman had stood as candidate in ANC council nomination, *News24*, 31 August 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/murdered-khayelitsha-woman-had-stood-as-candidate-in-anc-council-nomination-20210831>.
  - 64 Peter Mothiba, Killers of Tshwane ANC councillor Tshepo Motaung yet to be arrested, two years later, *Daily Maverick*, 24 October 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-10-24-killers-of-tshwane-anc-councillor-tshepo-motaung-yet-to-be-arrested-two-years-later>.
  - 65 Cebelihle Mthethwa, Two more ward candidates attacked in KwaZulu-Natal, says Cele after visiting Thulani Shangase's family, *News24*, 20 October 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/two-more-ward-candidates-attacked-in-kwazulu-natal-says-cele-after-visiting-thulani-shangases-family-20211020>.
  - 66 Willem Phungula, Woman charged with murder of NFP local government elections ward councillor candidate Dumisani Qwabe, *IOL*, 14 December 2021, <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/woman-charged-with-murder-of-nfp-local-government-elections-ward-councillor-candidate-dumisani-qwabe-68a89cd3-90b3-44b7-9646-c5ad9d3d5103>.
  - 67 See Nokwanda Ncwane, Breakthrough in the murder of an ANC Councillor in Mkhondo, *The South African*, 17 January 2023, <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/anc-councillor-murdered-sbonelo-mthembu-ntshangase-mkhondo-piet-retief-17-january-2023>.
  - 68 Cebelihle Mthethwa, Eastern Cape ANC councillor Nomxolisi Nqwena-Maliwa shot dead in her car, *News24*, 18 February 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/eastern-cape-anc-councillor-nomxolisi-nqwena-maliwa-shot-dead-in-her-car-20230218>.
  - 69 Zimasa Matiwane, Slain councillor was a peaceful man of God who had no known enemies: ACDP, *Times LIVE*, 28 June 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2023-06-28-slain-councillor-was-a-peaceful-man-of-god-who-had-no-known-enemies-acdp>.
  - 70 Jonisayi Maromo, EFF says its Limpopo councillor Jonas Mpe bled to death after being shot in his home, *IOL*, 28 May 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/eff-says-its-limpopo-councillor-jonas-mpe-bled-to-death-after-being-shot-in-his-home-93b2602c-1ab8-45a0-87cd-56376144e5f2>.
  - 71 Soyiso Maliti, IFP denies involvement in KZN councillor's cold-blooded killing, *News24*, 2 August 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/ifp-denies-involvement-in-kzn-councillors-cold-blooded-killing-20230802>.
  - 72 Sihle Mavuso, Popular IFP councillor Innocent 'Killer' Mkhwanazi shot dead in Mtubatuba, *IOL*, 3 July 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/popular-ifp-councillor-innocent-killer-mkhwanazi-shot-dead-in-mtubatuba-5ca8cd9a-81eb-4820-9f30-c830c3e6d8b2>.
  - 73 Sakhiseni Nxumalo, KZN ANC councillor's alleged killers abandon bail, *Times LIVE*, 4 September 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-09-04-kzn-anc-councillors-alleged-killers-abandon-bail>.
  - 74 Soyiso Maliti, Killing councillors: Death toll at 21 after murder of KZN councillor a month after attempt on his life, *News24*, 21 September 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/killing-councillors-death-toll-at-21-after-murder-of-kzn-councillor-a-month-after-attempt-on-his-life-20230921>.
  - 75 Noluvu Ludidi, ANC councillor killed, *Weslander*, 2 October 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/community-newspaper/weslander/anc-councillor-killed-20230920>.
  - 76 Mphikeleli Masangu, Ward 4 councillor gunned down in eMbalenhle, *Ridge Times*, 5 December 2023; Lyse Comins, Assassinated uMngeni DA councillor knew he was in danger, *Mail & Guardian*, 6 December 2023, <https://mg.co.za/news/2023-12-06-assassinated-umngeni-da-councillor-knew-he-was-in-danger>.
  - 77 Se-Anne Rall, Democratic Alliance confirms death of uMngeni Municipality Chief Whip, Nhlayenza Ndlovu, *IOL*, 6 December 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/democratic-alliance-confirms-death-of-umngeni-municipality-chief-whip-nhlayenza-ndlovu-e2561570-722d-47e8-8cb2-9060c17ce653>.
  - 78 Jehran Naidoo, KwaZulu-Natal political violence claims lives of councillor and two children, *IOL*, 8 February 2024, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/kwazulu-natal-political-violence-claims-lives-of-councillor-and-two-children-63e00994-0128-45c5-8d9f-2b9c585cf35c>.
  - 79 Brendan Ryan, RBM murders linked to 'control of procurement', says MD, *Miningmx*, 5 February 2024, <https://www.miningmx.com/news/markets/55804-rbm-murders->

- linked-to-control-of-procurement-says-md; see Rio Tinto's website: <https://www.riotinto.com/en/operations/south-africa/richards-bay-minerals>.
- 80 Brendan Ryan, RBM murders linked to 'control of procurement', says MD, Miningmx, 5 February 2024, <https://www.miningmx.com/news/markets/55804-rbm-murders-linked-to-control-of-procurement-says-md>.
  - 81 Ibid.
  - 82 Ibid.
  - 83 GI-TOC, Faces of Assassination: Babita Deokaran, <https://assassination.globalinitiative.net/face/babita-deokaran>.
  - 84 Sinesipho Schrieber, 'No-one is safe': Former Eskom employee denies power utility offered her protection amid 'death threats', Times LIVE, 12 August 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-08-12-no-one-is-safe-former-eskom-employee-denies-power-utility-offered-her-protection-amid-death-threats>.
  - 85 Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Protected Disclosures Act (No. 26 of 2000), Section 1, [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/a26-000.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a26-000.pdf).
  - 86 Within the Index's composite resilience score, the indicator for 'non-state actors' declined by -0.16 points between 2021 and 2023. See GI-TOC, Global Organized Crime Index 2023, <https://ocindex.net>.
  - 87 Newzroom Afrika, Boko Haram: Mamelodi residents live in fear as gang violence spirals out of control, YouTube, 30 October 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib-sYQHsLPc&ab\\_channel=NewzroomAfrika](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib-sYQHsLPc&ab_channel=NewzroomAfrika); Nicole McCain, Alleged member of notorious Boko Haram gang in custody in connection with robberies, News24, 28 April 2022, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/alleged-member-of-notorious-boko-haram-gang-in-custody-in-connection-with-robberies-20220428>. Boko Haram has also emerged as a key actor in the township extortion economy in the Western Cape; see Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, The shadow economy: Uncovering Cape Town's extortion networks, GI-TOC, April 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-shadow-economy-uncovering-cape-towns-extortion-networks>.
  - 88 Cebelihle Bhengu and Cebelihle Mthethewa, 'Seems the bullies have found their equals' - 4 alleged 'Boko Haram' gangsters shot dead in Mamelodi, News24, 20 May 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/seems-the-bullies-have-found-their-equals-4-alleged-boko-haram-gangsters-shot-dead-in-mamelodi-20230520>.
  - 89 GI-TOC, Western Cape gang monitor, Issue 1, October 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-cape-gang-monitor-issue-1>.
  - 90 Vincent Cruywagen, Kinnear trial: Links between alleged criminal mastermind Nafiz Modack and 14 co-accused, *Daily Maverick*, 22 February 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-02-22-kinnear-trial-links-between-alleged-criminal-mastermind-nafiz-modack-and-14-co-accused>; Samane Jnr Marks and Caryn Dolley, 28s gang boss accused Ralph Stanfield's legal woes escalate — court hears about another charge, *Daily Maverick*, 28 March 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-03-28-28s-gang-boss-accused-ralph-stanfields-legal-woes-escalate-court-hears-about-another-charge>.
  - 91 GI-TOC, Western Cape gang monitor, Issue 2, March 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-cape-gang-monitor-issue-2>.
  - 92 Gangs often fill service provision gaps in the country, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when they supplied food to communities. See Julia Stanyard, Gangs in lockdown: Impact of COVID-19 restricts on gangs in east and southern Africa, GI-TOC, October 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/gangs-in-lockdown-za>.
  - 93 Mahira Duval, City of Cape Town blacklists companies allegedly linked to construction mafia, *Cape Argus*, 20 December 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/city-of-cape-town-blacklists-companies-allegedly-linked-to-construction-mafia-86ad6684-dc0b-4fb8-ab48-8833a88c9d04>.
  - 94 Samuel Horti, Cloete Murray: South African corruption investigator shot dead, BBC, 19 March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65007942>; South African Government, Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture: Part III, Vol. 1: Bosasa, [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/202203/judicial-commission-inquiry-state-capture-reportpart-3-viss.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202203/judicial-commission-inquiry-state-capture-reportpart-3-viss.pdf).
  - 95 Kim Thomas, Murder by contract: Targeted killings in eastern and southern Africa, GI-TOC, September 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/targeted-killings-eastern-southern-africa>. A sharp rise in incidents was also observed in 2021 (80 cases), linked to disputes over the B97 route between Belville and Paarl in the Western Cape; see Rumbi Matamba, The business of killing: Assassinations in South Africa, GI-TOC, April 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/assassinations-targeted-killings-south-africa>.
  - 96 The Uncedo Taxi Association was previously the main association in Eastern Cape, but intra-association conflict led to the formation of a faction, the Border Alliance Association.
  - 97 See Nkululeko Nyembezi, Two associations in E Cape agree to end taxi violence, SABC News, 23 January 2024, <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/two-associations-in-e-cape-agree-to-end-taxi-violence>; Babalwa Ndlanganya, Police investigates several incidents of taxi violence in OR Tambo District, News24, 12 January 2024, <https://www.news24.com/news24/community-newspaper/mthathaexpress/police-investigates-several-incidents-of-taxi-violence-in-or-tambo-district-20240112>.
  - 98 Philani Nombembe, Intercap driver dies as gunmen target long-distance bus company, Times LIVE, 30 April 2022, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2022-04-30-intercape-driver-dies-as-gunmen-target-long-distance-bus-company>.

- 99 Katharine Child, Police commissioners found in contempt of court over lack of Intercap bus protection, *Business Day*, 20 December 2023, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2023-12-20-police-commissioners-found-in-contempt-of-court-over-lack-of-intercape-bus-protection>.
- 100 See Drive-by shootings plague Tongaat and Verulam, *Tabloid Newspapers*, 29 March 2023, <https://tabloidmedia.co.za/drive-by-shootings-plague-tonga-at-and-verulam>; Thobeka Ngema, Ongoing Verulam taxi violence claims the life of another taxi owner, *IOL*, 4 April 2022, <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/ongoing-verulam-taxi-violence-claims-the-life-of-another-taxi-owner-b3fd4672-951a-4514-9222-c6ffdaf60145>.
- 101 Observatory of Illicit Economies in East and Southern Africa, Data on assassinations shows stark reality of violence in KwaZulu-Natal, Risk Bulletin, Issue 25, GI-TOC, May–June 2022, <https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/esa-obs-025/04-data-on-assassinations-shows-stark-reality-of-violence-in-kwazulu-natal.html>.
- 102 See also GI-TOC, Strategic organized crime risk assessment: South Africa, September 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/assessing-south-africa-organized-crime-risk>.
- 103 This matter is ongoing and Setshwantsho has not yet pleaded. Se-Anne Rall, Bail denied for murder- for-money accused, Agnes Setshwantsho, *IOL*, 19 January 2024, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/bail-denied-for-murder-for-money-accused-agnes-setshwantsho-2d57d93c-7406-4f6d-aa82-fca5adb158ad>. The same police officer who had investigated the now-convicted serial killer Rosemary Ndlovu was in charge of arresting Setshwantsho. For details of Ndlovu's case, see Naledi Shange, Man relieved to see Nomia Rosemary Ndlovu and his ex-wife charged again, *Herald LIVE*, 20 April 2022, <https://www.heraldlive.co.za/news/2022-04-20-man-relieved-to-see-nomia-rosemary-ndlovu-and-his-ex-wife-charged-again>.
- 104 Se-Anne Rall, Woman accused of plotting loved ones' murders for insurance money appears in court, *IOL*, 17 November 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/woman-accused-of-plotting-loved-ones-murders-for-insurance-money-appears-in-court-d899cb35-73e0-4bf7-aa8d-0e09f61e5d47>. See also Se-Anne Rall, Court postpones case against Mahikeng woman accused of killing family for insurance payouts, *IOL*, 25 November 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/court-postpones-case-against-mahikeng-woman-accused-of-killing-family-for-insurance-payouts-b3a8cbb8-e670-4d2a-8ecd-4f1a4613c7c7>.
- 105 Marianne Thamm, Rolling in the deep – unlucky relatives and friends with posthumous benefits, *Daily Maverick*, 13 February 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2024-02-13-murder-for-insurance-friends-with-posthumous-benefits>.
- 106 Mfundo Mkhize, Hitman sentenced to 20 years for killing Durban metro cop, *Times LIVE*, 22 August 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-08-22-hitman-sentenced-to-20-years-for-killing-durban-metro-cop>.
- 107 See Sakhiseni Nxumalo, Court employee implicated in husband's murder back in court, *Times LIVE*, 9 October 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-10-09-court-employee-implicated-in-husbands-murder-back-in-court>.
- 108 School principal arrested for his involvement in murder of a metro cop, *The Witness*, 14 December 2023, <https://witness.co.za/news/2023/12/14/school-principal-arrested-for-allegedly-killing-a-metro-cop>; Sakhiseni Nxumalo, Wife implicated in husband's murder abandons bail application, *Sowetan LIVE*, 5 September 2023, <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-09-05-watch-wife-implicated-in-husbands-murder-abandons-bail-application>.
- 109 See Gaddafi Zulu, KwaMbonambi police officer robbed, abducted and killed, *The Citizen*, 2 August 2023, <https://www.citizen.co.za/zululand-observer/news-headlines/local-news/2023/08/02/kwambonambi-police-officer-robbed-abducted-and-killed>.
- 110 See Sakhiseni Nxumalo, Wife arrested in connection with kidnapping and murder of KZN cop, *Sowetan LIVE*, 4 August 2023, <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-08-04-wife-arrested-in-connection-with-kidnapping-and-murder-of-kzn-cop>; Jolene Marriah-Maharaj, KZN cop accused of killing her husband to apply for bail next week, *IOL*, 9 August 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/kzn-cop-accused-of-killing-her-husband-to-apply-for-bail-next-week-ba5f4f04-dc1e-4123-b32a-3204fc8c7806>. The matter is ongoing at the time of writing.
- 111 Report of the Moerane Commission of Enquiry into the underlying causes of the murder of politicians in KwaZulu-Natal, <http://www.kznonline.gov.za/images/Downloads/Publications/MOERANE%20COMMISSION%20OF%20INQUIRY%20REPORT.pdf>.
- 112 While eight of the KZN province's 11 regions have reportedly stabilized since the formation of the task team, KZN remains the hotspot for political assassinations because the country cannot arrest its way out of the problem of targeted killings. See South African Government, Minister Bheki Cele: Inter-Ministerial Committee on political killings, 6 September 2023, <https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/minister-bheki-cele-inter-ministerial-committee-political-killings-06-sep-2023>.
- 113 Paul Hoffman, ANC's failed step-aside rule a dead letter destined for the dustbin of history, *Daily Maverick*, 6 March 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2024-03-06-ancs-failed-step-aside-rule-a-dead-letter-destined-for-the-dustbin-of-history>.
- 114 SALGA, Violence in local government: A study on damage to property, intimidation, threats, harm, and killing of councillors and municipal officials, 2019, <https://www.salga.org.za/Batch%201%20-%20Latest%20Knowledge%20Products/SALGA%20Study%20on%20Violence%20in%20Local%20Government.pdf>.
- 115 Caryn Dolley, 'High-risk' gang cases exacerbate Western Cape High Court backlog and spark concerns for those awaiting justice, *Daily Maverick*, 30 August 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-08-30-high-risk-gang-cases-exacerbate-western-cape-high-court-backlog>.

- [www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-08-30-high-risk-gang-cases-exacerbate-western-cape-high-court-backlog-and-spark-concerns-for-those-awaiting-justice](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-08-30-high-risk-gang-cases-exacerbate-western-cape-high-court-backlog-and-spark-concerns-for-those-awaiting-justice).
- 116 Vincent Cruywagen, Nyanga cop due to testify against Cape Town taxi boss gunned down in apparent hit, *Daily Maverick*, 26 February 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-02-26-nyanga-cop-due-to-testify-against-cape-town-taxi-boss-gunned-down-in-apparent-hit>.
  - 117 Vincent Cruywagen, Nyanga cop due to testify against Cape Town taxi boss gunned down in apparent hit, *Daily Maverick*, 26 February 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-02-26-nyanga-cop-due-to-testify-against-cape-town-taxi-boss-gunned-down-in-apparent-hit>.
  - 118 Buyeleni Sibanyoni and Sam Sole, Intercape attacks — the 'murderous' taxi boss at the centre of the long-distance bus extortion saga, *Daily Maverick*, 27 March 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-03-27-intercape-attacks-the-murderous-taxi-boss-at-the-centre-of-the-long-distance-bus-extortion-saga>.
  - 119 Bradley Prior, Confusion after police catch 'Eskom hitman', MyBroadband, 3 December 2023, <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/energy/518171-confusion-after-police-catch-eskom-hitman.html>.
  - 120 Jolene Marriah-Maharaj, Businessmen and taxi bosses, these are the five accused who have been arrested in connection with AKA's murder, IOL, 29 February 2024, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/businessmen-and-taxi-bosses-these-are-the-five-accused-who-have-been-arrested-in-connection-with-akas-murder-57034118-8ac8-45e3-a38a-0d4f8986e032>.
  - 121 South African Government, Minister Bheki Cele: Inter-Ministerial Committee on political killings, 6 September 2023, <https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/minister-bheki-cele-inter-ministerial-committee-political-killings-06-sep-2023>.
  - 122 Mandy Wiener, The tricky tightrope of plea deals for assassinations in SA, Eyewitness News, 24 August 2023, <https://www.ewn.co.za/2023/08/24/mandy-wiener-the-tricky-tightrope-of-plea-deals-for-assassinations-in-sa>.





**GLOBAL  
INITIATIVE**  
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

#### ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with over 600 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

[www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)