



Clarifying the Situation of Illegal Miners in Stilfontein

Recent developments have seen a number of illegal miners, known as Zama Zamas, voluntarily emerging from the disused mine shafts in Stilfontein. This trend indicates that these individuals have the capability to exit the underground tunnels independently. Their delayed emergence appears to be a tactic to evade arrest by law enforcement agencies.

Addressing Misinformation

Contrary to claims that food underground ran out months ago, evidence suggests that the miners have had access to supplies until recently.

Assertions that aid sent down is shared equally among miners are unverified. Government has not sanctioned any official aid deliveries to individuals engaged in illegal activities. Reports indicate that any supplies reaching the miners are controlled by underground syndicates, often leading to unequal distribution and exploitation.

The notion that miners remain trapped solely due to police actions is misleading. SAPS has implemented measures to secure the area and prevent further illegal activities, but designated exit points have been established to allow miners to surface safely and face due legal processes. The miners possess the means to exit independently, as demonstrated by those who have surfaced in recent days. Government's stance is to uphold the rule of law; thus, while immediate aid is not provided to facilitate illegal activities, measures are in place to ensure the safety and humane treatment of individuals who choose to come above ground.

Government acknowledges the presence of various narratives surrounding this issue. It is important to rely on verified information from official channels. SAPS and other government bodies are committed to transparency and will continue to provide accurate updates on the situation.

Government's Commitment

The South African Government remains steadfast in its efforts to address illegal mining activities, which pose significant risks to both the individuals involved and the broader community. Operations such as "Vala Umgodi" ("Close the Pits") are ongoing to rehabilitate abandoned mines and prevent further unlawful exploitation. Government is also working to

tackle the underlying socio-economic issues that contribute to illegal mining, including unemployment and lack of economic opportunities.

We cannot allow a situation where the Government is held hostage. All Court directives have been complied with thus far, including the allowed food supply on a daily basis. SAPS has previously indicated that it is working closely with all stakeholders involved in trying to get those illegal miners extracted from underground.

The Stilfontein rescue operation that is being undertaken is not as easy as it seems; it is quite complex, with the depth of the shaft playing a major role in how this operation is carried out. Unlike the Sabie operation, in which the shaft is 150 meters deep, the Stilfontein shaft is 2 kilometers deep to where these illegal miners allegedly are, making it a very difficult and high-risk operation to undertake.

The rescue team has recommended that the necessary resources and expertise must be acquired. The practicality and risks involved are also being taken into account. The liability involved is also a major factor. Police are not experts and can therefore not lead this rescue operation.

At this stage, the mine must acquire services to conduct the rescue operation, in which costs are involved. We are in possession of a quotation that indicates that there must also be a 100% upfront payment. It should be agreed upon that the Government must approach this process with due diligence and the utmost care, taking into consideration the applicable supply chain management processes involved. These processes must be above board in line with relevant prescripts.

We urge all individuals involved in these activities to surface voluntarily and engage with law enforcement to ensure their safety and well-being. Government is committed to upholding human rights and the rule of law in all its operations.

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