

# South African police murder Mozambican taxi driver

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5 March 2013

Mido Macia, a Mozambican, died of head injuries on February 27 in the custody of South African police. He was killed in the township of Daveyton, in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Gauteng. This was 27 miles from where he was filmed as he was dragged along the street handcuffed to a police van.

Public outrage over the incident has forced the arrest of eight police officers. Reports suggest that the dispute between Macia, 27, and the eight policeman in question, all of whom are facing charges of murder, was sparked by the fact that Macia had parked his taxi-car on the wrong side of the road!

Just a few months have passed since the protest at Marikana where more than 30 striking platinum miners were killed by the police. Now, in an instance that is all too reminiscent of apartheid-style police brutality, cell-phone footage that has shown a man being handcuffed and dragged behind a police van has sparked local and international outrage. The only difference between the latest incident and those of the apartheid era is that the police officers involved are black.

The video was posted by the *Daily Sun* last Thursday. It showed several police dragging Macia over to a large truck. Police handcuffed the man's hands to the back of the truck and drove away, with the police holding his legs off the ground for a few seconds before letting go. The truck drove away at high speed, with onlookers chasing after it. Macia was found dead in a police cell two hours later.

The *Daily Sun* has reported other detainees stating that he was beaten while in custody. A post mortem examination revealed that Macia had suffered injuries to his head and upper abdomen, and internal bleeding.

An outbreak of xenophobic violence in 2008 in the area where Macia was arrested revealed dangerous anti-immigrant sentiments towards Mozambicans and other

foreigners, who were accused of stealing the jobs of South Africans. The violence meted out by the police in this case, however, has led to a wave of sympathy and solidarity that has again focused attention on rising public hostility to the African National Congress (ANC).

Since the end of apartheid and the transition to majority rule in 1994, crime has risen steadily, fuelled by the appalling levels of poverty and deprivation for the majority, amid fabulous wealth for the few. The ANC's response has been to turn to more and more repressive measures, recruiting an additional 70,000 police officers.

In 2008, Deputy Police Minister Susan Shabangu urged a shoot-to-kill policy, insisting, "I want no warning shots... You have one shot and it must be a kill shot."

"You must kill the bastards if they threaten you or the community. You must not worry about the regulations. That is my responsibility. Your responsibility is to serve and protect," Shabangu told police in Pretoria. That year there were 790 deaths at the hands of the police.

In 2009 the head of South Africa's police, Bheki Cele, urged police to adopt a shoot-to-kill policy, stressing that they should do so without fear of "what happens after that".

This came more than a year before the notorious killing of political activist Andries Tatane during a service delivery protest in 2011, and more than two years before the deaths at the Marikana mines. Although these are two of the more high profile incidents, there are many more such abhorrent killings that could be pointed out. In the Limpopo Province in 2011, for example, cell phone footage once again revealed a man being beaten unconscious by a

policeman, with onlookers egging him on.

Amnesty International notes that in October 2011, “police allegedly used excessive force during mass arrests of ‘suspected illegal foreign nationals’ in Nyanga township, Cape Town. The people affected included recognized refugees who had shown their documents to the police.”

Twenty-eight members of the Cato Manor Organized Crime Unit of the police, based in Durban, are currently standing trial for 116 offences, including 28 counts of murder. The alleged victims include taxi company owner Bongani Mkhize, who was killed three months after he obtained a High Court restraining order against the police, whom he argued represented a threat to his life. Another victim was 15 year-old schoolboy Kwazi Ndlovu.

The police oversight body, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, receives more than 700 new cases for investigation of suspicious deaths in custody or in other policing contexts every single year.

President Jacob Zuma has issued feigned statements of shock and outrage over the death of Macia. But he has repeatedly given the green light for repressive police action, most recently in his State of the Nation address in February, where he pledged to deal with protests such as that by platinum miners with an “iron fist.”

Marikana revealed the government’s determination to defend business interests at all costs. Macia’s death shows that police violence is inevitable in a society wracked by insoluble social contradictions—above all the vast and growing gulf between rich and poor, with high levels of unemployment for the vast majority and access to even basic amenities such as water and electricity the preserve of a privileged few.

The growing discontent among workers and youth fed up and angry at the failure of the government to honour the promises of the “new” South Africa continues to grow.



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