

No arrests yet in brutality case

2013-02-28 16:42



Johannesburg - Police watchdog the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) said on Thursday that no arrests have yet been made after a Mozambican man died after allegedly being dragged behind a police vehicle.

A video emerged of police handcuffing 27-year-old Mido Macia to a back of a police van, then driving off, after he allegedly assaulted an officer.

He was later found dead in police custody at the Daveyton police station.

The IPID confirmed that the incident was being probed, and no arrests had yet been made.

"If we find evidence, the arrests will happen, even if it is not today or tomorrow," said spokesperson Moses Dlamini.

"We are still interviewing the witnesses because the allegations are that he was dragged [along] with the police vehicle," Dlamini said.

He said two policemen switched on their siren, indicating that Macia should move his vehicle, when they saw it obstructing traffic in Empilweni Street on Tuesday.

"It is also alleged that the taxi driver then assaulted the constable and took his police firearm," he said.

"The warrant officer overpowered the taxi driver and handed the firearm back to his colleague," he said.

The warrant officer then took a taxi to the Daveyton police station to call for back-up.

"When back-up arrived, the constable was still at the scene, struggling to put the suspect in the police van," said Dlamini.

He said officers claimed they put the "resisting suspect" into the police van and took him to the police cells.

He was found dead by another police officer later in the day.

An inquest docket had been opened, and the police had also opened a case of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm against the man.

Dlamini said a post mortem report received on Wednesday indicated that Macia died of head injuries, with internal bleeding.

"They [policemen] are only saying they locked him [up] and he was found by another police officer, but we are investigating," he said.

Strongly condemned

National police commissioner Riah Phiyega said she was "deeply concerned" about the allegations that police brutality led to Macia's death.

"The matter is viewed by the national commissioner in a very serious light and it is strongly condemned," said her spokesperson Brigadier Phuti Setati.

Amnesty International called the death shocking.

"This appalling incident involving excessive force is the latest in an increasingly disturbing pattern of brutal police conduct in South Africa," Amnesty International's Southern Africa director Noel Kututwa said in a statement.

"Amnesty International urges the South African government to make a public commitment to ensure that the police stop the use of excessive force and deliberate targeted killings."

The Democratic Alliance called on the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to investigate.

"[This] shows the deep, systemic problems of brutality and lack of discipline and professionalism within [the SA Police Service] SAPS," said DA police spokesperson Dianne Kohler Barnard.

"How much longer must South Africans live in fear of the very people who are supposed to protect them?" she asked.

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) said it supported IPID's investigation.

"Popcru is mortified by these actions, which demonstrate the opposite of what the men and women in blue represent," spokesperson Theto Mahlakoana said.

SAHRC spokesperson Isaac Mangena said the death or assault of anyone in police custody was a matter of concern which deserved full investigation.

East Rand police showed disregard for the law in Macia's death, Benoni, Cope said.

"The violent killing of a Daveyton taxi driver, allegedly by police officers, is senseless and barbaric and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms," Congress of the People spokesperson Leonard Ramatlakane said in a statement.

"The police showed utter disregard for the rule of law by continuing to engage in their ruthless assault exercise."

Ramatlakane said police officers demonstrated a lack of recognition of human rights.

- SAPA