

South African Police COLD BLOOD HIT

Asherville man called to his gate, shot dead by man in police uniform

THEgangland-style shooting which saw Asherville's Leroy "Prem" Maharaj gunned down may be an act of revenge, the latest in a spate of shootings in an area divided by gang violence and drug culture.

Maharaj, 52, was executed in his driveway on Friday afternoon after being summoned to the gate by a man dressed in police uniform.

As the shots rang out, a stunned relative ran to his aid and saw the killer fleeing in a police car, bearing Gauteng Flying Squad insignia.

The attack came one year to the day after the execution of Desmond Govender, a businessman thought to have been targeted by Maharaj. Govender had been shot repeatedly while fetching his son from school.

Maharaj had been tentatively linked to the shooting, fuelling speculation this was a revenge attack.

A high-ranking police source, who asked not be named, said the hitman who killed Govender had been employed by Maharaj.

"There were links to Maharaj in the case because the shooter was an associate of his. Crime intelligence also revealed that Maharaj had put a hit out on Govender, but it could never be proven," he said.

Govender's wife, Vasie, said the timing of Maharaj's death had many pointing a finger at her.

"I have already received threatening phone calls about it and we still live in the area. I had nothing to do with what happened. I realised long ago there is nothing that will bring my husband back, and I was trying to close that chapter in my life," she said.

"I feel for his family because no one should have to go through something like that. I wish I was able to give my condolences but obviously I can't do that. I just hope that justice will be done," she added.

Maharaj was feared as a prominent crime boss in Asherville, and there are worries that if those in his ranks lash out in retaliation, more blood could be shed.

His bloodied and bullet-riddled body lay slumped face down against palisade fencing in his Aster Road driveway as police marked the spots where spent cartridges lay.

He had sustained several gunshot wounds to his torso and died before paramedics arrived.

It is believed Maharaj received a phone call from an unidentified caller who claimed to be a police officer and requested that he come outside. Given the position of the spent bullet casings, Maharaj had been shot at close range while standing at his pedestrian gate.

The gunman, while moving towards his car, continued to fire on the wounded Maharaj.

Another officer confirmed that police had circulated a description of the car and officers had been scouring the area for it.

"In cases like these, we wonder whether the flying squad car was really from Gauteng. One could easily put a sticker over its real demarcation and remove it afterwards once the trail had been thrown off," he said.

Scores of onlookers gathered on the road outside Maharaj's house and looked on as members of his family, who repeatedly attempted to touch the body, were restrained by police.

Crime scene investigators were seen removing money and a cellphone from his pockets, an indication that robbery can be ruled out as a motive.

An Asherville resident who would not be named described Maharaj as a drug lord who had cast a shadow over the community.

"Everybody knew who Prem was, and he ruled this area with an iron fist; no one crossed him. He hardly ever left his house and his windows are mirrored so that no one can see inside," he said.

He added that the manner in which Maharaj had died was not surprising. "This was bound to happen and if I'm truthful I don't think many people will lose too much sleep over this," the resident said.

Police spokesman Captain Thulani Zwane said that no arrests had been made.



A case of murder was being investigated.