Violence and crime

The total number of fatalities in the seven years and three months since violence erupted at the beginning of September 1984 was 11 748.

Research by the South African Institute of Race Relations showed that the police were responsible for 566 unrest deaths between the Sharpeville shootings in 1960 and 1991. The police said that the ANC/SACP alliance had subjected them to more than 6 000 attacks in 1990. More than 130 policemen were killed in attacks in 1991.

The Institute analysed 1 236 violent incidents countrywide between 1 January and 31 August 1991 and concluded that aggressors could not be identified in 85%. A third of the police force and more than 60 000 SADF personnel were deployed to stop violence between rival groups of black people. The new minister of law and order, Mr Hernus Kriel, said the government was planning to establish a separate police unit to combat political violence. It would start with 7 000 members and increase to 17 500.

Mr Nelson Mandela said there had been 225 assassinations of anti-apartheid activists since 1971. The ANC said more than 60 of its leaders had been killed in 1991. The Inkatha Institute published a list naming 180 IFP officials assassinated since 1988.

In his report for 1990, published in 1991, the commissioner of police said that there had been an 8,53% increase in serious crime, the highest rise in ten years. Murders had increased by 29% to more than 15 000, 'mainly as a result of unrest and fighting among black groups'. Housebreakings had gone up 20% to more than 225 000. Crimes included 146 bank robberies between 1 April and 30 September 1991, in which more than R12m was stolen. Suspicions were voiced that some bank robberies were carried out to obtain funds for political organisations.

By the middle of 1991, 57 000 political and other prisoners had been released under various amnesties, and the overcrowding of prisons reduced from 30% to 1,6%. Nobody was hanged.