

Bring back the Scorpions, DA demands, as Hawks' success rate falls

RDM News Wire | 29 October, 2015 12:39

An 83% plummet in convictions in cases stemming from arrests effected by the Hawks “serves President Jacob Zuma and his cronies quite well”, the Democratic Alliance (DA) said.

The party said a Parliamentary reply “confirmed what the DA has long held - the Hawks would have no appetite to investigate priority crime and corruption at large”.

“Since the disbandment of the corruption-busting Scorpions, arrest and conviction rates by its replacement, the Hawks, have dropped at an alarming rate,” the DA’s Zakhele Mbhele said. “Specifically, the reply reveals that since the disbandment of the Scorpions in January 2009, there has been a 60% decline in arrests and an astounding 83% plummet in conviction rates in the last six years of the Hawks’ existence.

“In the 2010/11 financial year, there were 14793 arrests with 7037 convictions. However, in the 2014/15 financial year, only 5847 arrests were made and a comparatively feeble 1176 convictions obtained.”

It was Zuma who, shortly after taking office, disbanded the Scorpions – who “operated with an independent, prosecutions-led approach under the NPA (National Prosecuting Authority)” – and “replaced them with the Hawks, which he conveniently placed under the control of SAPS”, Mbhele said.

The decline in the Hawks’ success rate was “clear evidence that the disbandment of the Scorpions was fatally flawed in the first place because it allowed for pervasive undue political influence”.

The DA wanted the Scorpions to “be re-established under the NPA, which itself must be independent and free from political interference, so that we can start making meaningful strides in the fight against corruption with a credible head whose priority is to discharge his or her mandate without fear or favour”.