

Violence against women slammed as fallen Ndaleni nurse is hailed as a true health service cadre

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A kind soul, a dedicated nurse, and an exemplary health cadre who always upheld the Nurses' Pledge - and often went well beyond the call of duty. That is how the late staff nurse Nomusa Ngcongco from Ndaleni Clinic was described at an emotion-charged memorial service held in Richmond today.

Ms Ngcongco, 35, was gunned down while with a patient inside the clinic last Thursday, allegedly by her fiancé, Mr Themba Bhengu, who was a clerk at Grey's Hospital. It is alleged that after shooting his fiancée, he turned the gun on himself.

At the memorial service held at Ndaleni School for the Deaf – where Ms Ngcongco used to win beauty pageants as a young woman – her former colleagues remembered her as a wonderful human being, who was loved by her patients and was beautiful inside and out.

Mourners heard how she would freely give out her contact details to patients, telling them to feel free to call her anytime if they encounter had any enquiries or had problems with their medication.

Affectionately known as *Noms*, she was remembered as having been *very polite, dedicated and intelligent*. She would call her patients *abantu bami* (my people). She had no children, and had been staying with her mother, who is sickly.

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo expressed his extreme concern at the number of health workers from Umgungundlovu who have been murdered in recent years. He said that the safety of staff and patients is paramount, and it was the first time in many years that a health workers was murdered inside a health facility. The district has previously lost highly-qualified female nurses, including: Sr Ntokozo Milicent Xulu; Sr Thabisa Daysen Doyisa and Sr Sindisiwe Shelembe.

In one of the previous killings, the assailant brazenly and mercilessly used an R5 rifle to take the life of an unarmed female nurse.

All of them were basically killed on duty, as one of them was on the freeway traveling to work when she was shot; and the other was shot outside Edendale Hospital after finishing her shift.

MEC Dhlomo also visited Ndaleni Clinic where he comforted Ms Ngcongco's colleagues and management. Although the perpetrator was known to the murdered nurse and had previously visited the clinic on numerous occasions, MEC Dhlomo will continue to seek answers from management and security at the clinic as to how an armed person was able to make it past the security gate with a firearm. *My heart bleeds at seeing an educated woman lose her life like this, particularly at a time when we are mobilizing society to protect women and children, as part of 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. What has happened is painful, and should never have happened. I am certain that the family of perpetrator is also in pain, because I do not think that the perpetrator received permission from them to do this.*

He has also made a pledge to assist the Ngcongco family. *If there is any assistance that the Ngcongco family needs... If there is any other child from the family who wants to become a nurse, we will try our best to assist you. We hope that that will go some way towards wiping away your tears.*

MEC Dhlomo said the Department is still committed to making improvements to six key aspects that have been identified at public health facilities. These are the cutting of long queues;

availability and provision of medicines; change of staff attitudes, improving safety and security and general cleanliness.



Rev Sgungu Shangase conducts a prayer at Ndaleni Hospital as MEC Dhlomo and clinic staff join in



MEC Dhlomo with an official and security guard from Ndaleni



Clinic; MEC Dhlomo with mourning members of the Ngcongo family