

‘Foreign entities stoking unrest in SA’

Mamoloko Kubayi implies Israel was behind anti-immigrant March and March protests

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Mamoloko Kubayi has suggested that Israel played a role in the June 30 March and March protests, saying the Jewish state's goal is to have the genocide case brought against it by South Africa in the ICJ struck from the roll. (Jeffrey Abrahams)



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Justice Minister Mamoloko Kubayi believes the government’s decision to drag Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has thrust the country into a high-stakes geopolitical battle, declaring it would be “naive” to believe powerful interests would not fight back.

In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, Kubayi stopped short of expressly accusing Israel of playing a role in last week’s [anti-illegal immigration marches](#), suggesting that Pretoria’s genocide case has made South Africa the target in a broader campaign to strip the country of moral authority.

“Our presence and our taking Israel to the [ICJ](#) — if anyone underestimates that, [that person] is naive,” Kubayi said.

“Israel fights. That court case is huge on their shoulders. And they will fight back in a manner that seeks to show South Africa is not a country with moral authority to advocate for human rights.”

Her remarks come as she revealed the government believed the June 30 nationwide anti-illegal immigration protests carried a real risk of plunging South Africa into a July 2021-style catastrophe, forcing President Cyril Ramaphosa to activate an extraordinary whole-of-government security operation to prevent the country from descending into chaos.

Kubayi, who chairs the inter-ministerial committee on immigration, disclosed that intelligence, drone surveillance, live CCTV feeds and round-the-clock co-ordination between ministers, police, intelligence agencies and security officials were used to fend off

what the government feared could become another deadly national upheaval.

“We did believe things could escalate and get out of control,” she said.

“The lessons of July 2021 are still very fresh [in our minds]. You don’t ignore those patterns when you see them again.”

Without presenting evidence that Israel or any other foreign state was involved in the June 30 mobilisation, Kubayi framed her warning within the wider geopolitical fallout caused by South Africa’s international legal challenge.

“I can’t discuss that in public. Let me be generic,” she said.

“Their intention is to have that case off the roll at the ICJ. As long as South Africa is seen as leading that matter, those who are affected will want to undermine the perception that we are credible on human rights.”

Kubayi revealed she barely slept on the eve of the demonstrations, fearing South Africa was hours away from another national disaster.

“I must be honest, I was anxious. I don’t think I slept on June 29.

“You start asking [yourself], ‘What would I say to South Africans? What would I say to the president? This responsibility was [placed] on my shoulders.’”

She said the government recognised familiar warning signs from the July 2021 riots, particularly in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, and moved rapidly to prevent history from repeating itself.

“The heartbeat of July 2021 was Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. And again, those were the areas we were watching very closely.

“You could see familiar signals.”

[Israel’s] intention is to have that case off the roll at the ICJ — Mamoloko
Kubayi

Kubayi said Ramaphosa personally took charge of the political response, clearing his diary to oversee continuous briefings as the government mobilised every arm of the security cluster.

“He led from the front. At times, he cleared his diary completely so he could engage with us.”

The government deliberately kept politicians out of operational policing decisions, leaving tactical planning to security professionals, while ministers focused on oversight.

“We told law enforcement, ‘You are the professionals. You develop your operational plan.

But if things go wrong, there must be accountability.””

The minister also disclosed that authorities detected signs during the marches that the organisers themselves were beginning to lose control.

“When we got a call [to say] that [former radio presenter and activist] Ngizwe [Mchunu] was calling [from] Johannesburg to say he was losing control of the march ... we had already picked up through monitoring that things were deteriorating.

“By the time he called, we were already seeing it on cameras and drone footage. It was managed.”

Additional security forces and the military were deployed after intelligence suggested some groups intended to exploit nightfall to trigger violence.

“There was intelligence suggesting groups were waiting for nightfall.”

Kubayi acknowledged that immigration has become an increasingly volatile political issue, with some activists using the protests to build support ahead of the November local government elections.

“There were elements of political campaigning within the mobilisation. Some saw an opportunity to advance local government ambitions.”

While the government considers the operation a success because there were no deaths or widespread destruction, Kubayi warned the deeper crisis remained unresolved.

“We did not have fatalities. We did not have mass destruction of property. People marched and dispersed. Co-ordination worked. But the underlying issues remain.”

She insisted South Africa could not afford another rupture such as July 2021 — especially while it occupied the global spotlight because of its ICJ case against Israel.

“We are not operating in isolation,” she said.

“There are global institutions watching ... If there is violence in your country, it reflects on your sport, your economy, your diplomacy — everything.”
