Exploring the nexus between poverty, livestock looting and violence sprees: Provincial focus on South African civil unrest

Prof. Dr. Witness Maluleke
Senior Lecturer, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of Limpopo (UL), South Africa

PhD (C.) Ms. Smangele Nkosingiphile Shandu
Criminology and Forensic Studies Discipline, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Ms. Xoliswa Makhanya
Former [2020] Honours in Criminology and Criminal Justice candidate, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, UL, South Africa

Abstract

South Africa has experienced several episodes of protests, looting and violence, as a results fears are growing about food security as these scenes continues across Gauteng (GP) and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province respectively. The violence erupted on Thursday, 8 July 2021 in the KZN Province, reportedly in protest to the imprisonment of former president Jacob Zuma after he was found guilty for 'Contempt of Court' by the Constitutional Court for 15 months and his release called by die-hard supporters. Some of the displayed actions are regarded as the worst violence witnessed in South Africa since the 1990s. As a result, community members were left reeling after days of violence and looting, which caused widespread destructions and more than 200 deaths registered. Negatively, this was widely reported globally, unfortunately; the looting of livestock of informal traders in the rural and urban areas of the Two (02) selected provinces were largely witnessed. Therefore, the nexus between poverty and stock theft looting and violence sprees formed an exploratory premise of this study, focusing on GP and KZN Province civil unrest.

This study adopted qualitative research approach, with an aid of non-empirical research design: Systematic review, closely looking at recent reputable reports across South Africa, using the GP and KZN Province as case studies to explore the nexus between poverty and livestock looting and violence sprees during South African civil unrest, the collected data was restricted from 2007-2021 (I.e. 14 years' projection, not in sequence). This study established that this lucrative sector was targeted by opportunistic large organised criminals, cast fears to the local livestock farmers. The Cattle, Chicken, Goats, Pigs and Sheep were looted during this point of chaos in the two manly affected provinces of South Africa. Around 20 billion of damage is currently estimated thereof. It is also provided that this was caused by the political and economic shortcomings in South Africa. This study also showcased that the informal livestock traders should not be demolished in the wake of unrest to avoid compromising food accessibility for millions of vulnerable consumers and depleting their reliable source of income for street vendors who rely on such consumers for survival. It is recommended that opportunities created by criminal networks to loot livestock in these provinces should be clearly understood by the National government, together with the degree of anger and hostility. Equally, the notion that the nature of livestock looting and related violence and its causes, should be aligned with the created existing opportunities during this period. Thus,

this was driven by the organised opportunistic criminal elements, with livestock becoming targets, this have little to do with the initial cause of the reported protest, further invalidating the envisaged nexus.

Keywords: Provincial focus (GP and KZN Province), South African civil unrest, The nexus between poverty, livestock looting and violence sprees.

Full Text: PDF