

# Phiyega expected to face tough grilling at Marikana hearing

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NATIONAL police commissioner Riah Phiyega will face a tough grilling from defence lawyers when she returns to the Marikana Commission of Inquiry tomorrow.

Phiyega is to be cross-examined by, among others, Dumisa Ntsebenza who represents families of 34 miners who died and George Bizos, the lawyer representing more than 270 injured miners.

Already, the families of the victims have said they do not want to be at the commission when Phiyega testifies, following upsetting evidence in her Thursday testimony.

Phiyega is expected to be taken to task over the way in which she handled the 3000-strong Marikana strike.

On Thursday she told the commission in Rustenburg the police dealt with 11000 public protests between 2009 and 2012 and that the vast majority were resolved without loss of life.

She was appointed commissioner in June 2012 and, two months later, coincidentally after she unbanned some of the methods used to disperse crowds,

the Marikana massacre occurred.

Her decisions are likely to be questioned. The fact that Phiyega was updated on every development by the provincial commissioner, Zukiswa

Mbombo, since the strike turned violent, but gave no orders as to what should be done, could also come back to haunt her.

The first time Phiyega went to Marikana was when two policemen were hacked to death by the miners, which was two days before the shooting.

Then she advised that the number of police be increased and that Mbombo recruit officers from several other units.

She explained to the commission that there were nine provincial police commissioners in the country and they all had authority to make policing decisions.

The comments Phiyega made at the funeral of Sello Lepaaku, one of the police officers who were killed on August 13, will make her day in the witness stand tough.

The top cop will have to either prove that the comments were taken out of



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context or convince defence lawyers that they were justified.

She said, among other things, that what had happened in Marikana "represents the best of responsible policing".

She also advised the police to continue with their work, not worry and "breathe because they are alive".

The commission is tasked with determining whether police had acted legally when they shot and killed the miners.

They, however, maintain that they acted in self defence as the miners were charging at them with traditional weapons.

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