**SOUTH AFRICA’S INCIDENT REGISTRATION INFORMATION SYSTEM (IRIS): ITS USE AND ABUSE IN PROTEST ANLYSIS**

Peter Alexander,[[1]](#footnote-1)\* Carin Runciman[[2]](#footnote-2)\*\* and Boitumelo Maruping[[3]](#footnote-3)\*\*\*

palexander@uj.ac.za

crunciman@uj.ac.za

bmaruping@uj.ac.za

*South Africa’s Incident Registration Information System (IRIS) is a comprehensive, computerised database maintained by the South African Police Service (SAPS). In principle, it records all public order policing activity including all crowd incidents. While IRIS data is, potentially, a unique source for protest event analysis, considerable care is required. We aim to correct misunderstandings about the data advanced by academics and in the media, and expose its misuse by police chiefs and politicians. In particular, the incidents that IRIS reports are not protests, though protests can be found in the raw data. This article is based, in part, on records of 156,230 incidents covering the period 1997-2013.*

**INTRODUCTION**

How many protests are there in South Africa? The media has been used to provide one answer, but the South African Police Service (SAPS) Incident Registration Information System (IRIS) can take us much closer to a reliable estimate because it contains considerably more records of protests. However, as we will show, IRIS registers public order incidents, not protests as such, and this means the data must be interpreted carefully.

IRIS and its data are widely misunderstood and sometimes wilfully misused. One source was a mistake made by Bilkis Omar, who, in 2007, confused protests with published SAPS data for ‘crowd management incidents’. [[4]](#endnote-1) A 2013 article by two Media24 journalists broadened the problem. Working from actual IRIS data they claimed the police had recorded more than 3,000 service delivery protests in the preceding four years.[[5]](#endnote-2) Looking more carefully at the data, we found they had assumed, wrongly, that crowd incidents assigned the ‘motive’ ‘dissatisfied with service delivery’ were protests. Incidents and protests had been conflated yet again, and ‘motive’, as used by IRIS, had been misconstrued.[[6]](#endnote-3)

While academics and journalists made errors, the police knowingly misled the public. They did this, in particular, around the issue of violence. For instance, in 2014, Lt. General Elias Mawela, head of Operational Response Services (ORS), the SAPS division that included IRIS, told Parliament: ‘Violent protest action escalated from 1,226 in 2011/12, and then in 2012/13 it is 1,882, and in the last financial year [2013/14] it escalated to 1,907.[[7]](#endnote-4) This statement elides ‘unrest-related incident’, one of two crowd incident classifications used in the SAPS *Annual Report*, with ‘violent protest’, but, as will be shown, they are not the same. Elsewhere, we demonstrated that the same slippage was present in speeches by Police Minister Nkosinathi Nhleko and President Jacob Zuma. Disturbed by the way that statistics were being used to criminalise non-violent protests and campaign for increased funding, we exposed the matter for public consideration, and were damned by SAPS for doing so.[[8]](#endnote-5)

This article arose out of our attempt to make sense of an enormous amount of data on crowd incidents we received from IRIS following a request made under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA).[[9]](#endnote-6) In total there were 156,230 incidents divided among 34 Excel spreadsheets, which covered the years 1997 to 2013, with separate sheets for ‘crowd (peaceful)’ and ‘crowd (unrest)’. These two classifications, which IRIS calls ‘eventualities’, are also referred to as ‘crowd management (peaceful)’ and ‘crowd management (unrest)’ and they are aligned with the *Annual Report* terms ‘peaceful incident’ and ‘unrest-related incident’.[[10]](#endnote-7) We refer to events falling under these two eventualities as crowd incidents. For each incident there were 10 column headings, which included date, province, motive and, crucially, a note that provided a brief description of what happened.[[11]](#endnote-8)

Ultimately we were able to estimate that about 67,750 of the crowd incidents were protests, about 43% of the total.[[12]](#endnote-9) In terms of scale, to the best of our knowledge this means that IRIS contains more records of protests than any other publically available and analysed police data. In this article, we limit ourselves to, first, explaining IRIS; secondly, placing it in relation to the recent history of public order policing; thirdly, explicating some challenges faced when using IRIS as a source for protest analysis; and, fourthly, offering a case study of ‘motives’.

**WHAT DOES IRIS RECORD**

Registration of incidents on IRIS is the sole responsibility of public order police units (POP), and it is one of their major duties.[[13]](#endnote-10) There are two principle logics underpinning what gets registered on IRIS or, more accurately, what should be registered. Firstly, it records all crowd management incidents, whether or not POP were involved.[[14]](#endnote-11) Secondly, it provides a record of all incidents involving POP, whether or not these concerned crowd management. In a 2006 manual the former were described as ‘primary tasks’ and the latter as ‘secondary functions.’[[15]](#endnote-12)

 As we have seen, there are two classifications of crowd management: crowd (peaceful) and crowd (unrest). The distinction between the two is straight-forward: if there was police ‘intervention’ the incident is categorised as crowd (unrest), if not, as crowd (peaceful). Lt. Col. Day from the POP Policy, Standards and Research department explained:

Unrest incidents require some form of police intervention. A spontaneous gathering resulting in a crime for which arrests are made and a case docket opened would constitute unrest. However, failure to give notice resulting in a spontaneous incident would not, even if a contravention of [the Regulation of Gatherings] Act 205 of 1993, as long as [it] remains peaceful … Arrests indicate an intervention, while peaceful incidents require only monitoring.[[16]](#endnote-13)

‘Intervention’ means the police exerted their physical influence in some way. It is not just about arrests, but would include use of physical force, such as push-backs, use of rubber bullets etc.[[17]](#endnote-14) POP do not have to wait until a crowd has actually been violent before intervening. First, they are expected to act if ‘life (and property) is in danger’, and, secondly, ‘if a national road is being blocked’, with ‘other roads … [at] the discretion of the operational commander.’[[18]](#endnote-15) This means that certain forms of non-violent disruption can trigger an intervention, and thus lead to a protests being classified as ‘unrest’. The critical point is that whether an incident is defined as ‘unrest’ or ‘peaceful’ is determined by whether the police intervened, not by whether there was violence.

 From 1997 there were three main ‘secondary functions’, with a fourth added for the 2010 World Cup. There are:

1. *Unrest (other).* This includes: ‘incidents of violence [that] cannot be classified as crowd management tasks, [including] taxi violence, gang violence etc.’[[19]](#endnote-16) According to our informant, these are often unpredictable and very violent.[[20]](#endnote-17)

2. *Crime prevention.* This refers to arrests and confiscations made in the course of a crime prevention operation, which might, initially, have been the responsibility of another force (either within SAPS or metro police).[[21]](#endnote-18)

3. *Support*. This involves assistance for other police, for instance in search and seizue of dagga.[[22]](#endnote-19) The SAPS 2014 National Instruction on public order policing speaks of ‘rendering of specialised operation support’, stating that this includes: ‘assisting the detectives in the search for, apprehending and escorting of dangerous and violent suspects, assisting Protection and Security Service in protecting VIPs by controlling perimeters, protecting National Key Points, managing crowdsand providing tactical reserves.[[23]](#endnote-20)

4. *Movement*. This was introduced to cover assistance with logistics during the World Cup. [[24]](#endnote-21) By 2013, there were only a little over 500 such incidents, and there is no reference to the classification in the National Instruction*.*[[25]](#endnote-22)

 Another way to understand IRIS is to consider what it terms ‘types’ of incident. These are presented in Appendix 1. This draws on two sources: a 2006 code table, which links ‘types’ to the five main classifications mentioned above, and a 2015 letter signed by Mawela that only covers crowd management incidents. The appendix helps clarify the differences between the classifications, and it firmly underscores the point that protests cannot be equated with crowd incidents, which include church and sporting events as well as strikes and barricades.

 Protest analysts should keep in mind that IRIS does not exist to help them do their job, it exists to help the police do its job, in particular to plan actions, monitor incidents, distribute resources, publicise activities, and sometimes make a case for additional funding. In 2006 it recorded about 40 classes of information, including things like weapons used, types of offense, organisations involved and degrees of injury, as well as eventualities, types and motives.[[26]](#endnote-23)

**PUBLIC ORDER POLICING AND IRIS: AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

It is now necessary to place IRIS and its development within the context of public order policing in South Africa. IRIS was established at a moment of insurgency and uncertainty, in January 1992, just two months after the formation of the paramilitary Internal Stability Division (ISD).[[27]](#endnote-24) The idea was to ‘install a standardisation of information which is easily understood and interpreted by all relevant parties,’ linking this to a process of computerisation. [[28]](#endnote-25) But it took five years to develop IRIS into a fully functioning system. On the one hand, public order policing was evolving, and, in 1995, following the CODESA negotiations, numerous reports by the Goldstone Commission, the passage of the Regulation of Gathering Act (1993) (RGA), and the 1994 election, the ISD was replaced by POP units. There was a process of transformation. ‘Crowd control’ was replaced by ‘crowd management’ (which emphasised co-operation with protest organisers); and there was retraining, a process of re-appointment aimed at weeding out hardline racists (so we understand), and recruitment of black officers.[[29]](#endnote-26) On the other hand, computers were not delivered until 1994, and there were teething troubles and debates about how to classify.[[30]](#endnote-27) IRIS generated some data in 1995 but less in 1996, and it was only from 1997 that it produced a full set of information.[[31]](#endnote-28)

Monique Marks, who undertook ethnographic research in Durban, described the period from 1995 to 2001 as a ‘golden era’.[[32]](#endnote-29) In 2002, in the context of declining numbers of crowd incidents and a public outcry over crime, public order policing was relegated in importance. POP members were re-organised into Area Crime Combatting Units (ACCUs) and deployed to assist local stations. The number of officers was cut from about 11,000 in the POP units to 7,327 in the ACCUs, and it is likely that training deteriorated and that quantity and quality of equipment declined.[[33]](#endnote-30)

In 2006 there was further restructuring. With the aim of strengthening stations, SAPS’s areas were disbanded, and the ACCUs were placed under national command, becoming Crime Combating Units (CCUs). Staffing was further reduced, to 2,595, and the number of units was cut from 43 in 2002 to 23.[[34]](#endnote-31) Large parts of the country, including the whole of Mpumalanga, were left without POP units.[[35]](#endnote-32) For SAPS, this cut was a serious blunder. As Omar commented at the time, there was a ‘growing number and intensity of service delivery protests and riots’,[[36]](#endnote-33) and as Burger commented later: ‘The short-sightedness of this decision was soon exposed when xenophobic violence erupted in March 2008.’ There was a slight increase in CCU numbers, to 3,306 in 2009, and then a major expansion, to 5,661 in 2010, the year of the World Cup.[[37]](#endnote-34)

With the soccer over, numbers slumped again, to 4,197 in 2011. [[38]](#endnote-35) However, there was some re-organisation of public order policing. The CCUs were re-branded under their old POP identity, and the paramilitary units that fell under ORS were sometimes deployed to undertake public order policing.[[39]](#endnote-36) This was especially apparent at Marikana, where members of the Tactical Response Teams (TRT) were used to kill wokers at Scene 1.[[40]](#endnote-37) In the wake of the massacre, Zuma called for new measures to combat violent protests, and in 2014 SAPS was seeking funds to expand POP from 28 to 54 units, to increase personnel from 4,721 to 9,522, and to spend R3.3 billion on re-capitalisation, all over four years. [[41]](#endnote-38) The new shape of public order policing is reflected in a plan to provide crowd management training for 992 metro police and 1,140 TRT officers, as well as 1,826 POP members, before the 2019 general election.[[42]](#endnote-39) To the best of our knowledge, the full expansion has not yet been agreed by the Treasury, though some resources have been moved into the POP units from elsewhere in SAPS.

**IRIS DATA**

This brief historical reflection is important for interpreting the data IRIS presents us. Figure 1 merges ‘crowd (peaceful)’ and ‘crowd (unrest)’ into a single line, and it includes ‘unrest (other)’, ‘support’ and ‘movement’ in one line termed ‘other incidents’. Actual numbers are provided in Appendix 2. The high proportion of activity devoted to crime prevention should be noted. After a dip from 2000 to 2002, the line rises again with the formation of the ACCUs. This underlines the importance of crime combatting duties for public order units in this period. The ‘other incidents’ are a small proportion of the total, though their numbers rise with the World Cup, and, in the case of ‘unrest (other)’ and ‘support’, continue to increase substantially thereafter.

**Figure 1: Incidents recorded by IRIS, 1997-2013**

The most important reason for including the graph is to highlight the massive decline in all recorded incidents that occurred after the CCU restructuring of 2006. This affected crime prevention duties but, critically from the perspective of protest analysis, it also affected crowd management. In the case of Mpumalanga, only four crowd management incidents were logged in the year 2007/8. [[43]](#endnote-40) Day told as that for the three worst years, IRIS under-recorded crowd incidents by 20%-40%.[[44]](#endnote-41) He added: ‘*they* were policed but not recorded. *We* didn’t have the capacity to get at them.’[[45]](#endnote-42)

In this quote ‘they’ refers to crowd incidents and ‘we’ refers to the CCUs. This spotlights a further problem with using IRIS data. Where crowd management is undertaken by forces other than POP, there is increased likelihood that an incident will not be registered.[[46]](#endnote-43) This has two pertinent consequences. For the first of these, it is necessary to factor in the impact of ‘threat assessment’, which has three levels. With Level 1 and Level 2 threats, POP units are, respectively, ‘on standby’ or ‘in reserve’, and it is only with a Level 3 threat that they are the ‘primary role player’. [[47]](#endnote-44) The threat level and response can change in the course of an event, and according to the National Instruction*,* ‘if public violence erupts … POP must take full operational command and stabilize the situation’.[[48]](#endnote-45) In practice, because POP is less involved with Level One and Level Two incidents, there is a higher chance that these will not be recorded, and, thus, IRIS probably under-records peaceful protests. The second consequence is a geographical predisposition in the under-recording of incidents. In 2014, there were 28 POP units, with these stationed in the eight metros and 20 other major towns. If a protest occurs a significant distance from these locations, there is a higher chance that it will be covered by local police, or perhaps occur without a police presence, so there is an urban bias in IRIS data.

 According to Day, the proportion of incidents registered has been improving, with IRIS now missing only about 5% (most of these being in rural areas, he added).[[49]](#endnote-46) SAPS’s concern to secure additional funding for POP would be an incentive to improve the quantity of registrations, and its expansion should further increase reliability. However, we are wary about depending too heavily on this 5% figure because we are finding many media-reported protests on our data base that do not appear on IRIS.[[50]](#endnote-47)

 Finally, the quality of data output is determined by data input. Unit commanders are instructed to ensure speedy capture of data, with this done by deploying at least one officer per shift to undertake the task.[[51]](#endnote-48) Each POP unit has an IRIS controller responsible for checking ‘data integrity’ and the system is, or was in 2006, maintained by the ORS Management Centre in Pretoria.[[52]](#endnote-49)

However, with evident frustration and concern, the authors of the Training Manual declare:

MANAGEMENT, CONTROLLERS AND USERS MUST HOWEVER REMEMBER THAT THE IRIS SYSTEM IS NOT A MAGICAL SYSTEM … The quality of the statistics … is wholly dependent on the quality of the information which is entered into the system. … [IRIS presents statistics] in a user friendly format [but] ... [t]his is not always a true reflection of what is occurring in an area, because the information [on] incidents [is] not captured correctly or not captured at all.[[53]](#endnote-50)

From reading the IRIS data sheets, we can also attest to the uneven quality of data capture. From discussions and documents there can be a variety of reasons for this, including the poor education of many officers, inadequate training and overwork. SAPS is aware of many of the problems that exist with IRIS and we understand there are internal discussions about how it might be improved.

**‘MOTIVES’ ON IRIS**

For the protest event analyst IRIS can be a rich source of data, if interpreted correctly. The greatest challenge in employing it to undertake protest analysis is that it captures and counts incidents but it does not record protests as such*.* For protest research one has to define and then find the protests. The second task is extremely laborious, and we were only able to reach estimates through careful reading of ‘notes’ for a random sample of crowd incidents. Here we examine a problem raised in the introduction, that of literal and uncritical interpretation of the IRIS lexicon. We look specifically at ‘motives’.

‘Motives’ are assigned to incidents using a dropdown menu of options. For crowd management incidents between 1997 and 2008 there were 60 options to choose from, and from 2009 onwards there were 72. An incident could be recorded with more than one motive, but until 2013 it was not obligatory to assign any motive. Indeed, 34% of all incidents recorded between 1997-2013 were listed as ‘no motive registered’, which is a significant obstacle for analysis. In practice, minimal use was made of the majority of motive options, and Figure 2 just shows the 10 most frequently cited. It excludes, as do percentages below, ‘no motive registered’. The two most common motives were ‘demand wage increases’ and ‘labour dispute’, which together accounted for 25% of incidents. ‘Sporting event’ and ‘social event’ combined accounted for 10%. ‘Dissatisfied with service delivery’ represented 4% of the incidents. ‘Solidarity’, the third most common motive, is defined vaguely and applied inconsistently, and ‘Forcing of demands&’ (sic), the fifth most common (despite only being used until 1999), was also ambiguous.

**Figure 2. Most commonly assigned motive options on IRIS database, 1997-2013**

Looking at the ‘notes’ recorded for each incident, it is clearly wrong to assume that ‘dissatisfied with service delivery’ equates to ‘service delivery protest’ (as the Media24 journalists assumed). Two examples will illustrate the problem. The first, a ‘crowd (peaceful)’ incident that occurred in Eastern Cape in 2013, was an official event or *imbizo* that discussed service delivery, and there is no indication of a protest. While it is likely that a higher proportion of ‘crowd (unrest)’ incidents recorded as ‘dissatisfied with service delivery’ were protests, there were exceptions. In a second example, from North West in 2009, there was a protest, but not over service delivery. Possibly the recording officer conflated ‘service delivery protest’ and ‘community protest’. On the other hand, there are numerous incidents listed under other motives that most of us would regard as a ‘service delivery protest’. Our conclusion is twofold, that, once again, one should not confuse an incident with a protest, and ‘motives’ cannot be taken at face value.

That said, motives can be used to gain some insight into the nature of incidents. We tried to get a sense of major trends by aggregating motives into ten broad categories.[[54]](#endnote-51) As part of the process we examined samples of incidents where the motive was absent or its meaning struse. Clearly there is a high level of approximation in this process and a good deal or circumspection is required when interpreting the results. In the graphs that follow we only show the three most numerous kinds of aggregated motives.[[55]](#endnote-52) For both of them, keep in mind the problem with data for 2007 to 2009 raised above.

In Figure 3, ‘crowd (peaceful)’ incidents, we see a peak for labour-related and recreational, cultural and religious (RCR) incidents in 2010. This can be explained by, respectively, the 2010 public sector workers’ strike, which in terms of ‘days lost’ was the largest in South African history, and the World Cup. There were fewer community-related events than labour-related and RCR events, and the trend for the former is flat. The picture that emerges in Figure 4, showing ‘crowd (unrest)’ incidents is quite different (though keep in mind there were far fewer ‘unrest’ than ‘peaceful’ incidents). Here there are fewer RCR incidents than either labour-related or community-incidents and the line is flat. For labour-related incidents, there are two peaks, the one in 1998 and another in 2012, the year of the Marikana Massacre (though the Marikana strike itself was only a very small proportion of the total). The pattern for community-related incidents is more dramatic. Here there is a nadir in 2003 (as there is for labour-related incidents) followed by a strong upward trend leading to a pinnacle in 2012. It is clear from the ‘notes’ that, overwhelmingly, the community-related unrest incidents are protests, and our data base of media reported community protests has a similar shape.

**Figure 3. Selected estimated aggregate motive categories for ‘crowd (peaceful)’, from IRIS data, 1997-2013**

**Figure 4. Selected estimated aggregate motive categories for ‘crowd (unrest)’, from IRIS data, 1997-2013**

 We found the graphs interesting for three principle reasons. First, the large number of RCR events reminds us that a high proportion of crowd incidents are not protests. Secondly, the media focus on community protests has drawn attention away from the high level of labour-related action in South Africa. Thirdly, from 2004, there has been an explosion in ‘unrest-related’ community protests, reflecting what we have called a ‘Rebellion of the Poor’.

**CONCLUSION**

For counting and analysing protests, data from IRIS has the potential to be a source of considerable value. The sheer number of incidents that have been made available is astounding, probably larger than anything similar elsewhere in the world. However, the data needs to be treated with respect. First, and foremost, it is collected to assist POP, who capture the information. They record crowd management incidents, and we estimate that less than half of these are protests. Secondly, the data is organised according to two concepts, ‘peaceful’ and ‘unrest’, where ‘unrest’ is defined by police intervention, not violence, so that ‘peaceful’ refers to an absence of intervention, rather than ‘violent’ as generally understood. Thirdly, there are limitations to the capacity of POP to capture information accurately. If one is aware of these problems, and can find ways to address them, IRIS data becomes an unparalleled source of information for protest analysis. Its value is enhanced if utilised alongside other sources, for instance media reports and qualitative research.

***Appenxdix 1: ‘Types’ of IRIS incident listed in 2006 code tables and a 2015 letter***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cateegory | 2006 code tables[[56]](#endnote-53) | 2015letter[[57]](#endnote-54) |
| Crowd management (peaceful) | Crowd management(unrest) | Unrest incident (other) | Crime prevention | Support |
| Accident |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| Arrests |  |  |  | x | x |  |
| Arson |  | x | x |  |  |  |
| Assembly (Church) | x |  |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Festivity/Commemorate) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Elections) |  |  |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Funeral) | x |  |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Meeting) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Music festival) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Political meeting) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Poster demonstration) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Procession) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Assembly (Sport) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Attack |  | x | x |  | x |  |
| Barricade |  | x | x |  |  | x |
| Bomb threat |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| Boycott action | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Corpses found |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| Deliberate damage  |  | x | x |  |  |  |
| Demonstration | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Disaster/Catastrophe |  |  |  |  | x | x |
| Explosion |  |  | x |  | x |  |
| Gathering | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Hi-jacking |  |  | x |  | x |  |
| Hostage situation |  | x | x |  | x | x |
| Intimidation |  | x | x |  |  | x |
| Occupation |  | x |  |  |  | x |
| Seizure |  |  |  | x | x |  |
| Siege |  |  | x |  |  |  |
| Sit-in | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Stay away action |  |  |  |  |  | x |
| Strike (Labour affairs) | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| Strike (Occupation) |  |  |  |  |  | x |
| Strike (Stay-Away) | x |  |  |  |  | x |
| Threat |  |  | x |  |  |  |

***Appendix 2: Total incidents recorded on IRIS, by classification, 1997-2013[[58]](#endnote-55)***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Crowd (peaceful) | Crowd (unrest) | Unrest (other) | Crime prevention | Support | Movement |
| 1997 | 5,386 | 895 | 2,535 | 22,665 | 2,195 | - |
| 1998 | 8,315 | 1,198 | 2,227 | 19,657 | 1,489 | - |
| 1999 | 8,227 | 746 | 1,852 | 23,790 | 1,393 | - |
| 2000 | 7,202 | 718 | 1,398 | 29,605 | 2.349 | - |
| 2001 | 7,569 | 637 | 1,152 | 26,360 | 1,761 | - |
| 2002 | 6,433 | 572 | 557 | 21,740 | 1,203 | - |
| 2003 | 7,078 | 537 | 496 | 26,561 | 1,132 | - |
| 2004 | 8,307 | 573 | 533 | 27,465 | 1,441 | - |
| 2005 | 9,532 | 943 | 383 | 24,694 | 941 | - |
| 2006 | 10,049 | 861 | 573 | 22,937 | 745 | - |
| 2007 | 6,833 | 714 | 583 | 14,492 | 285 | - |
| 2008 | 5,747 | 740 | 908 | 11,241 | 273 | - |
| 2009 | 7,967 | 892 | 462 | 9,556 | 235 | - |
| 2010 | 11,179 | 948 | 604 | 12,184 | 961 | 1,585 |
| 2011 | 10,918 | 1,231 | 768 | 15,335 | 1,359 | 4 |
| 2012 | 10,351 | 1,819 | 1,208 | 16,519 | 3,814 | 183 |
| 2013 | 11,095 | 1,704 | 1,559 | 11,349 | 4,816 | 519 |
| Total | 142,188 | 17,728 | 17,798 | 336,114 | 26,392 | 2,292 |

1. \* Peter Alexander is a professor of sociology at the Univeristy of Johannesburg, where is Director: Centre for Social Change and holds the DST/NRF South African Research Chair in Social Change. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. \*\* Carin Runciman is a senior researcher at the Centre for Social Change, University of Johannesburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. \*\*\* Boitumelo Maruping is a senior research assistant at the Centre for Social Change, University of Johannesburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bilkis Omar, *SAPS’s Costly restructuring: a review of public order policing capacity.* Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2007, 17-18. See also, Shauna Mottair and Patrick Bond, The politics of discontent and social protest, *Politikon* 3:3 (2012), 310; Monique Marks and David Bruce, Groundhog day? Public order policing twenty years into democracy, *South African Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27:3, 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
5. Athandiwe Saba and Jeanne van der Merwe, ‘SA has a protest every two

days’, *News24,* 21 January 2013. See also, Jane Duncan, *The rise of the securocrats: The case of South Africa.* Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2014, 124-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
6. See section on ‘Motives on IRIS’ below. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
7. This quote is taken directly from a recording of Mawela’s statement. We are grateful to Monique Doyle for providing the link to this recording. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
8. See Peter Alexander, Carin Runciman and Boitumelo Maruping, *South African Police Service (SAPS) Data on crowd incidents: a preliminary analysis.* Johannesburg: Social Change Research Unit, University of Johannesburg, 2015; Carin Runciman, Peter Alexander, Mahlatse Rampedi, Boikanyo Moloto, Boitumelo Maruping, Eunice Khumalo and Sehlaphi Sibanda, *Counting police-recorded protests: based on the South African police service data*. Johannesburg: Social Change Research Unit, University of Johannesburg, 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
9. We are grateful to the South African History Archive for assistance in making the PAIA request. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
10. When we re-formatted the IRIS data by financial year, to bring it into line with the *Annual Reports,* we found that the numbers were very similar to those in the report, but not exactly the same. We cannot explain the difference. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
11. For references and further details see our technical report: Alexander et al, *South African Police Service.* [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
12. See Runciman et al, *Counting police-recorded protests*. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
13. Operational Response Services (ORS) Division (of SAPS), National Instruction4 of 2014. Public Order Police: Crowd Management During Public Gatherings and Deminstrations, 6. Available at <http://protestinfo.org.za/download/saps_standing_orders/National-Instruction-4-of-2014-Public-Order-Police-Crowd-Management-During-Public-Gatherings-and-Demonstrations.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
14. BMR Stroh and HL Louwrens, Training Manual, 9 January 2006, 12, available from SAHA, SAH-2015-SAP-0024 (A20.02.06). Parts of this manual may have been superseded by an Information Management Manual, which we have not seen and do not know the fate of. See mention in ORS, National Instruction. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
15. Stroh and Louwrens, ibid, 5, 12. Also ORS, ibid*,* 6. There is a possible exception to this claim, which is that, in 2006, IRIS was supposed to record all ‘unrest’, including taxi violence etc, whether or not ACCUs were involved. In addition, IRIS records operational plans for crowd management, which, according to the Training Manual, should be registered under ‘peaceful’. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
16. Lt. Col. Vernon Day, email to Prof. Alexander, 21 May 2015. We are obliged to Day for taking the time to explain IRIS to us, both in this email and by letter. On arrests, see also letter from Lt. Gen. E. Mawela to Prof. Duncan, letter headed ‘Request for information regarding crowd management (peaceful) and crowd management (unrest) on IRIS system’, 6 March 2015. We are grateful to Duncan for sharing the letter. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
17. Lt. Col. Vernon Day, interview with Peter Alexander, 20 Aug 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
18. ORS, National Instruction, pp. 16, 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
19. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
20. Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
21. Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual, 12. While, to the best of our knowledge, IRIS retains the distinction between ‘unrest (other)’ and ‘crime prevention’, SAPS also refers generically to ‘Combatting of serious and violent crime’. See ORS, National Instruction, pp. 5-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
22. Stroh and Louwrens, ibid, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
23. ORS, National Instruction*,* 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
24. Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
25. IRIS, Incidents by Class, 1996-2013, in SAHA’s SAH-2014-SAP-0008. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
26. SAPS, Code Tables for IRIS, available from SAHA, SAH-2015-SAP-0024 (A20.02.07). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
27. Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual, 4; Marks and Bruce, Groundhog Day, 353-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
28. Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual, ibid, 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
29. Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
30. Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual, 4; Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
31. For 1996, 7 crowd (peaceful) and 4 crowd (unrest) incidents were recorded. For 1997, the respective figures are 5386 and 895. See IRIS, Incidents by Class, 1996-2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
32. Marks and Bruce, Groundhog Day, 355. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
33. SAPS, Enhancing of the Public Order Policing Capacity, slide 6; Marks and Bruce, Groundhog Day, 353, 360. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
34. SAPS, ibid. There had been 42 units in 1995. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
35. Natasha Vally, National trends around protest action: mapping protest action in South Africa, presented to Centre for Sociological Research, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
36. Bilkis Omar, Crowd control: Can the public order police still deliver? *SA Crime Quarterly* 15 (2006), 1, [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
37. Johan Burger, Public violence: What does it mean for the police? Presentation to Institute for Security Studies seminar, 13 March 2014, slide 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
38. SAPS, Enhancing of the public order policing capacity, slide 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
39. Marks and Bruce, Groundhog Day, 364-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
40. Peter Alexander, Marikana commission of inquiry: from narratives towards history, *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 42:5 (2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
41. SAPS, Enhancing of the public order policing capacity, slides 4, 37 and 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
42. See ibid, specifically slide 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
43. Vally, National trends around protest action, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
44. Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
45. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
46. Ibid; Marks and Bruce, Groundhog day, 352. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
47. ORS, National Instruction*,* 6. A Level 1 threat would include a peaceful gathering or less significant sports event; Level 2 implies an unconfirmed possibility of injuries or damage; a Level 3 threat is determined by confirmed information of a likely threat to lives or property. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
48. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
49. Day, interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
50. Similarly, in a case study of Mbombela Municipality, 2011 and 2012, Duncan showed that many planned protests reported to the municipality were not recorded on IRIS. We are uncomfortable about placing too much weight on this example, however, because Mbombela is in Mpumalanga and, to the best of our knowledge did not have a CCU at that time. See Jane Duncan, *Protest nation: the right to protest in South Africa*, Scottsville, UKZN Press, 2016, 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
51. ORS, National Instruction*,* 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
52. Ibid., Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
53. Stroh and Louwrens, ibid, 4-5 [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
54. For full methodology see Alexander et al, *South African Police Service.* [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
55. Those not included in the graphs are: education-related, official government and party political events, crime and policing-related, transport-related, elections, racism and xenophobia, and other. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
56. Source: SAPS, Code Tables for IRIS. Definitions for the categories of ‘type’ are available in ‘Appendix C: Definitions of the Types of Incidents and Reasons/Motives’, linked with Stroh and Louwrens, Training Manual. ‘Gathering’ has various meanings, and in Appendix C (p. 2) it is defined as: ‘The spontaneous assembly of a number of persons without a joint goal or objective, after an incident or happening, e.g. a fire, accident or explosion.’ It also explains (p. 1) that ‘crowd management tasks imply that the number of persons involved must be greater than 15 [but] this excludes a demonstration.’ So, in contrast to ‘gathering’, the definition of ‘demonstration’ is aligned to the RGA. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
57. Source: Mawela to Duncan, letter. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
58. Source: IRIS, Incidents by Class, 1996-2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)