

# **Rape – International Paralympic Swimming World Championships**

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Durban - Two men appeared in the Durban magistrate's court on Friday in connection with the alleged gang rape of an official of the French swimming team attending the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) Swimming World Championships.

Police have arrested four people involved in the attack late on Tuesday night, but only two were charged on Friday, said police spokesperson Senior Superintendent Phindile Radebe.

Radebe said the other two had turned state witness and the case was remanded until February 27 next year.

The 26-year old French national had decided to go for a walk with another swimming official from another country on Tuesday night when they were attacked near the city's beachfront paddling pools. The other swimming official, a man, was allegedly held down, while the French woman was gang-raped.

Speaking to Sapa, Alison Burchell, the general manager of Disability Sport South Africa, said she was appealing to the press to leave the two officials alone.

"Allow them the chance to get back the dignity that was taken from them," she said.

## **Police were fast**

Asked whether she thought the incident would impact on South Africa's ability to host future paralympic events, she said: "I don't think it will affect our intent, but we'll have to go through the bidding process."

She commended the South African Police Services' efforts in apprehending the four suspects.

"That was super quick, especially in South Africa."

The incident happened barely a day after the city's Festive Season Management Committee (FSMC) unveiled its plans boosting security at the beachfront during the festive season.

On Monday, when the plan had been unveiled, officials were unwilling to reveal how many extra policemen would be deployed on the beachfront.

Democratic Alliance leader in the eThekweni Metro council, John Steenhuizen said the attack highlighted the fact that the city did not have a big enough visible policing presence to prevent attacks.

Hotel guests in Durban are regularly warned about going to the beaches and surrounding areas at night.

The Daily News quoted "a source" in the hospitality industry as saying: "This is horrifying, but what were they thinking going for a walk at that time of night?"

On Friday afternoon a statement was issued by the Durban city manager, Mike Sutcliffe, expressing his "outrage" at the attack.

He assured visitors that a "comprehensive safety plan has been put in place".