



## Response

2nd March 2023

### **The Crime Statistics and Gender-Based Violence/Femicide**

It is no secret that gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) is a pandemic in South Africa. On 17<sup>th</sup> February the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, delivered an overview of the 2022/2023 quarter three crime statistics. There had been an 11.6% rise in all forms of contact crimes, with murder increasing by 10.1% and a 9.6% increase in sexual offences. It is probable that intimate partner femicide accounted, in part, for the increase in the murder tally, but these statistics have not yet been disaggregated. Domestic abuse can and does occur in all socio-economic groups, across all racial groups, and amongst men and women of varying educational brackets. According to a report released at the *Second Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide* held in early November 2022, it is a scourge that was estimated to have cost the country R36bn in 2019 alone. Furthermore, during this period the government achieved a mere fifth of the targets set out in its anti-GBVF action plan.<sup>1</sup>

Rape has long been acknowledged as an under reported crime. While many women and girls are attacked by strangers, the Minister said that “it is alarming that a total of 5 935 rape incidents took place at the residence of the perpetrator/victim, including residence known by victims/perpetrator, these are family, friends and neighbours”.<sup>2</sup>

It is not entirely clear why there has been such an explosion of violence. Researcher David Bruce explains that the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, which has deteriorated markedly of late, may well be contributing factors. But other factors are also at work: residents of Khayelitsha in the Western Cape complain of extortion rackets linked to organised crime, where young women are harassed and forced to pay protection money simply to walk down a road with a new weave!<sup>3</sup>

It is important to understand that the non-physical aspects of GBV are not recorded in the crime statistics. There are many, many women who have no visible wounds but who experience emotional and psychological abuse, as well as economic abuse. Male abusers are very controlling; they make all the economic and family decisions and may prevent their spouse or partner from working. This makes it extremely difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship.

At present we are still in the first quarter of 2023. “The end of the festive season sadly sees an expected rise in the onset of divorce actions. These leave many people anxious about what will happen to them financially pending divorce actions. This includes whether they will see their children or how financial commitments will be met, or even how to pay the legal fees required to institute such divorce proceedings.”<sup>4</sup> These fears hinder many from instituting divorce proceedings and therefore leave them trapped in abusive marriages. Many have nowhere to go.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January, the Pietermaritzburg Child and Family Welfare Society had to close its doors for two days after a delay in subsidy payments from the Department of Social Development.<sup>5</sup> Many NGOs experience similar problems; allocated funds do not arrive timeously and there is often no allowance for inflation. There are many reports of shelters for women and children facing crises in funding and the possibility of closure. Furthermore, very few shelters accommodate children over the age of five.

The acronym GBVF is bandied about as a slogan, but it has little content and clearly has done very little to lessen the impact of rampant patriarchal entitlement which dominates our social discourse and fuels

crimes against women and girls. The President talks about the need for a new social compact – such a compact requires an emphatic NO to gender-based violence and femicide.

Research conducted in Ghana has shown that sexuality education “shapes gender norms in a positive way. This, in turn, minimises the likelihood of coercive and violent sexual practices. Sexuality education has also been shown to improve decision-making skills, competencies, and respectful sexual practices and behaviours.”<sup>6</sup>

Having successful grassroots prevention campaigns located in communities is crucial. The Lady of Peace Community Foundation, in collaboration with UN Women’s South Africa Multi-Country Office, has initiated a programme to honour and celebrate actors and actions being taken to ensure that women and girls live violence-free lives.<sup>7</sup>

In Minister Cele’s words, “the call on communities to be allies against crime cannot be understated, when it comes to the prevention and combating of GBV and Femicide. Someone, Somewhere, Somehow - Knows Something! It remains a betrayal of humanity to look away and ignore abuse and violence of anyone, let alone women, children and other vulnerable groups in society”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.businesslive.co.za/fm/features/2022-11-29-how-south-africas-fight-against-gbv-and-femicide-is-going/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/we-have-to-be-honest-about-causes-of-violence--bhe?utm\\_sourc](https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/we-have-to-be-honest-about-causes-of-violence--bhe?utm_sourc)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-02-20-the-politics-of-crime-and-the-crime-in-politics/?token>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.golegal.co.za/pending-divorce-rule-43/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-02-21-ngos-and-civic-organisations-in-kzn-raise-alarm-over->

<sup>6</sup> <https://theconversation.com/sexuality-education-in-ghanas-schools-some-answers-to-when-and-what-158457>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/honouring-activists-in-the-war-against-gender-based-violence-and-femicide-3e4ca856-3850-492d-b5f3-46daa9586932>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/we-have-to-be-honest-about-causes-of-violence--bhe?utm\\_sourc](https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/we-have-to-be-honest-about-causes-of-violence--bhe?utm_sourc)

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