

Who will protect me from being raped and murdered?

By Natasha Mazzone MP – Chief Whip of the Official Opposition

Who is going to protect me from being raped and murdered? The number of gender-based violence (GBV) crimes has risen by 500% since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. Lifeline SA Chief Executive Molefi Takalo said that the number of distress calls shot up from twelve thousand to almost eighty thousand since the first week of lockdown.

There is absolutely no place in South Africa where a woman or girl is safe. We are not safe at home, we are not safe in the car, we are not safe on public transport, we are not safe at school or university, we are not safe in the mall, we are not safe in club or bar, we are not safe at the shops, we are not safe at the post office, we are not safe at work. Women and girls in South Africa live in perpetual and unending fear. It is not normal and must stop.

Women are not raping women; girls are not raping girls. Women are not killing women; girls are not killing girls. We have a rape culture in South Africa, and it is not the fault of women or any victim. The narrative around the issue has to change and men must take responsibility. I do not subscribe to the notion that all men are trash. I believe there are men who would give up their lives to keep me and other women safe. These men need to multiply in numbers and need to start teaching other men how to behave. It starts in this very Parliament. Let's stop little boys using the Parliamentary platform to belittle GBV by abusing the right they have to talk at his podium. Let's stop lawyers from being able to make comments on Twitter about journalists they don't like that sexually demean them and encourage acts of violence. Women, let's stop talking and let's start fighting back. I encourage every woman listening to me today, if you are attacked, fight back, and if you are able to, take the death shot.

When asked by a UN special rapporteur on violence against women why men commit these crimes, the majority of South African men answered that they do it out of boredom, for fun or because they are entitled to do it. Can this actually be? Does this mean that government needs to fundamentally understand that we are dealing with a group of actual psychopaths and psychopaths who should not be walking the streets freely!

We need to fundamentally change the way men see women in society. We proudly stand here and say if you strike a woman you strike a rock...but where is that respect in real life? How can it be that a then Deputy President of the country proudly holds up various flavoured condoms to show the nation how the government is assisting with safe sex, because of course, every man has the right to have sex, but still, not one member of the Cabinet, yet alone a President or Deputy President has ever stood up and showed the Parliament a sanitary pad or tampon and announced every woman will be able to have dignity while menstruating.

Women are giving up because there seems to be no use in reporting GBV. A report in 2017 revealed that only 8.6% of reported cases see a successful conviction. But then we are told that

legislation is before Parliament to address these issues, which as confirmed by the Speaker of Parliament, is simply untrue.

On the 11th of September 2019, the DA through Hon Andrew Whitfield wrote to Minister Cele asking him to prioritize the Forensic Procedures Bill. There are currently no DNA sample of schedule 8 offenders on record, there are over 46 thousand of these offenders. We don't know if they have been released or not where is this bill? Where is the proof that all stations have Rape Kits, where are the police watches of hotspots? I'll tell you, they are policing cigarette smokers and charging over 230 000 South Africans for lockdown infringements

I beg every man in this house, I beg every man in this country. Help protect me, help protect every girl, every woman. We are daughters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nieces, cousins, sisters. We can only do this together. If you, as men, do not stand up for me and all girls and women, it will not be a case of if I am raped and murdered, it will be a case of when I am raped and murdered.