

ANC must choose: are they part of the GBV problem or part of the solution?

By Emma Powell MP – Shadow Deputy Minister for Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements

Madam Speaker,

On 5 September last year our Nation witnessed one of the largest, most powerful protest marches post-democratic South Africa has ever seen.

More than 20 000 women gathered at the gates of this very precinct to tell our political leaders once and for all that enough is enough – our bodies will **no** longer be the crime scenes of men!

In the aftermath of that protest, our President gave the Nation his firm commitment to addressing this problem with speed, force and urgency.

On the 5 September last year, an average of 143 sexual offences were committed every day.

Today, almost a year later, that daily average has climbed to 148.

Madam Speaker, I do not need to tell you; the situation is intolerable.

In the last financial year alone, more than 53 000 women were victims of sexual assault.

More than 42 000 women were **raped**.

63% of the top 30 worst police stations reported an **increase** in sexual offences.

These are not just numbers.

These are real women with beating hearts.

148 mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters who are bludgeoned, traumatized and dehumanized by violent men every single day of the year - while cabinet drags its feet in addressing the bloodbath that unfolds.

Honourable Members, the ANC must not come here and tell us again today that they have a "plan".

The women of this country are **no longer** interested in their platitudes and promises; in their timelines and cheap talk.

For 26 years, you – the ANC - have **failed** to develop comprehensive legislative agenda to deal with this crisis.

For 26 years, you have **failed** to capacitate the State to deal decisively with the hundreds of thousands of men who rob women of their dignity as a sport!

For 26 years, you have **failed** to find a budget to abate the river of our women's blood, flowing scarlet red through the towns and villages of this nation.

Madam Speaker, it took a mere 61 Covid-19 cases for the Honourable President to declare a National State of Disaster, allowing a National Command Council to take executive control of the crisis.

While the ANC was able to find R500 billion in this year's budget to deal decisively with a medical pandemic, a mere R8 billion spread over the next 5 years has been found to deal with the pandemic of sexual violence claiming women's lives every day in this country.

If every member in this house is not as exhausted as almost 30 million South African women are by now, then you're either not paying attention, or you are part of the problem!

To our ruling elite, I say:

We need funding, state capacitation and comprehensive legislation – **NOW!**

We need police stations that actually have rape kits in stock.

We need DNA kits readily available in clinics and hospitals.

We need to prioritise the provision of legal aid to victims of gender-based violence.

We need the urgent introduction of an automated national registry for protection orders.

And we need The National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence to be **adequately** budgeted for by Treasury.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I say to the 30 million women of this nation who are exhausted and close to losing hope:

Do not despair.

We see you; we hear you and we will continue to fight for you in this space of legal consequence.

The death knell of violent patriarchy abounds.

And it should be grateful that we want equality and not revenge.