

Men, we need more guts. We must challenge each other to bring change

Hon House Chairperson,

When masculinity is in crisis, it turns on women. In that moment there is no time to be resilient. There is no time to listen to debates that lead to no change. There is no time to have hope when we have a Minister of police who believes your lucky to be raped just once.

To those young women I am sorry that your pain had to be minimised in that way. It happened because we have ministers who don't have to worry about their safety. We have ministers who are protected by bodyguards. Theirs is a life of armed police, high rise fences and blue lights. They do not understand what it means to look over their shoulder. They do not understand what it means to worry about your safety on a daily basis. For them justice is only one phone call away, for you its years of waiting.

We know this because of all the promises that have been made in the past which are yet to be materialise. From the President down to his Ministers there has been zero accountability and zero delivery on promises made to South Africa and women in particular. Gender-based violence is an establishment that thrives in an environment of no accountability, no justice, no service delivery, entrenched patronage and a complete lack of will.

Two years ago, President Ramaphosa introduced a GBVF council which he claimed would tackle the scourge of violence however till to this day nothing has happened.

We have a department of Women, Youth and Persons with disabilities that focuses on webinars instead of substantive action like increasing shelters for women who are under attack in their homes.

We have a police minister who has presided over the DNA backlog crisis which has denied justice to hundreds and thousands of victims of rape, murder and violent crimes. To date there over 150 000 DNA samples yet to be processed.

Can you imagine being let down like this by what is supposed to be your last line of defence? South Africans do not have to imagine because these are their lived experiences every day.

President Ramaphosa must decide whether he chooses the women of South Africa or Minister Bheki Cele?

A Minister of Police who tells people to shut up when they raise their concerns about safety in their communities. The refusal to listen stems from power and privilege. These social constructs and ego-driven complexes endorse toxicity and a government that is out of touch with the realities of ordinary South Africans.

The Western Cape Government has the biggest and most comprehensive safety plan with the largest budget to keep people safe.

The DA believes that local policing authorities are better at crime prevention and fighting. Here in Parliament the DA through Honourable Andrew Whitfield has introduced an Amendment Bill to deal with the issue of DNA backlogs so that those who commit these crimes do not become repeat offenders at our expense.

Finally, to us men. It is not enough to be deeply worried by these issues because that is not enough. We need more guts, to challenge each other, to disrupt each other and begin to change the level of tragedy in our society. This is one of the ways in which we stop dominant systems from maintaining themselves. To stop the trajectory of going unexamined about issues that are actually about us.

Women's day is supposed to be about looking at how far we have come in terms of gender equality but now it has become about gender-based violence awareness. This is what happens when government ignores the cries of society.