

16 days of activism against gender-based violence – to end the violence against women and children

By Annerie Weber MP, DA Shadow Deputy of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

It is shameful that the annual 16 days of activism against gender-based violence is still needed in a country that affords all its people – including women and children – the constitutional right to life, equality and administrative justice.

It is horrifying that we have to ask ourselves, honourable members, do South African women truly have the freedom to make choices and control the decisions and resources that determine their quality of life?

In this day and age, the scourge of gender-based violence continues to disempower women. We are constantly living in fear of assault or rape, at home, work or while being socialising and we know that little will be done to protect us or bring the assailants to book.

In Suid-Afrika, in 2022, is baie vroue nogsteeds nie vry om besluite oor wat reg is vir hul en hul families te neem nie.

Men, sex is not a right. Too many men in this country do not understand that sex is a consensual act, that no is no, and that real men do not rape women and children. They treat their partners and children like property, and beat and abuse them. Child rapes are a dime a dozen in South Africa, yet justice is rarely seen.

Genoeg is genoeg en ons vereis geregtigheid.

Veilige omgewings vir vroue en kinders word al hoe minder – en dit terwyl 115 vroue daaglik verkrag word. Articles abound of children dying in horrendous circumstances. Yet justice often remain elusive.

Suid-Afrika val onder die top 50 gevaarlikste lande in die wêreld. Ons kwartaalikse misdaad statistieke hou aan styg – skynbaar onverpoosd.

Yet the backlog for DNA testing has yet to be eradicated. DNA testing is one of the most effective and credited resources available to ensure perpetrators of violent crimes are brought to justice. The DA has been raising the alarm on the challenges with DNA testing since 2019 – three years later, the implementation of solutions is happening at snail's pace. Until the backlog is gone, there will be little, if any, consequences for rapists and violators, while their victims continues to live in fear. Little came of Police Minister Bheki Cele's promises to have the backlog completely cleared by October this year. And I'll be very surprised if the extended deadline of January 2023 manages to be met.

In the meantime, the brutality against the vulnerable are increasing and becoming more alarming.

Nearly every day a new horror was brought to light by the media: women beaten to death by their partners, raped, gang raped, cut into pieces, stabbed, burnt by their neighbours, families or friends, and children killed, raped, kidnapped or maimed by those that were meant to love and protect them – their parents or teachers. Yes, many GBVF instances are perpetrated by strangers, but the people we love and trust often posts an unexpected danger.

Hoe verwag ons van vroue om effektief te funksioneer in ons samelewing – te werk, om kinders te voed en te klee, te onderrig en 'n huis vir hul gesinne te skep – wanneer ons samelewing hulle nie gelykes behandel nie.

How many promises have been made to GBVF victims in the 31 years of the annual 16 days of activism program? Yet there seems to be almost no perceptible stemming of the tide. We need immediate and decisive implementation of the laws and programmes created to combat these atrocious crimes.

The DA run Western Cape has 25 active shelters to assist GBV victims and continues to train LEAP officers to fight crime. There are also eight Tutuzela centres with 24 hours medical services.

Vroue en kinders in Suid-Afrika trek aanhoudend aan die kortste end wanneer dit by geregtigheid kom.

Government needs to join hands and assist the DA with our whole-of-society approach to combat GBV. Empty promises will not be tolerated any more. The women and children in this country are in the fight of their lives. We cannot win the war against GBVF alone.

Women in SA have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and equality.

Women in SA deserves justice.

Cry the beloved country.