

Government failures are creating an enabling environment for GBV to thrive

By Solly Malatsi MP, DA National Spokesperson

Every year, Parliament schedules this debate to showcase how it takes the fight against gender-based violence seriously. Government unleashes its PR machinery with the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence to somehow show it cares about women's rights.

It's like all of a sudden we wake up from a slumber to the harsh reality that women's lives are under siege in South Africa. Yet every day a woman is battered to death by someone they once considered the love of their life. In each and every case of a murdered woman or a homophobic attack, the common denominator is a man or group of men known by others.

If truth be told, we need to do better as men.

We all need to play our part to make our country a safe space for women and same-sex couples to fully enjoy the freedom of living without any victimization. From the young boys in our communities to those adults in our circles of brotherhood, we must hold each other more accountable to squash chauvinism and misogyny. We need to educate each other better that we are not entitled to women's bodies.

We need to empower each other that catcalling women is not sexy. We need to enlighten each other that gaslighting victims of gender-based violence is not cool at all. We must call out sexist stereotypes in all our spaces to dispel the notion that they are some sacred elements of a "bro-code".

As men who are leaders in society, we have a bigger responsibility to prevent gender-based violence. Our words and deeds have wide reach and carry powerful currency. But how can we truly make progress in the fight against gender-based violence, when leaders such as the Minister of Police say outrageous stuff like women are "lucky to be raped by one person" at a time when South Africa has one of the highest rape statistics in the world.

The latest quarterly crime statistics show that 10 590 rape cases were reported nationally between July and September 2022, which represents a 10% increase compared to the same period last year.

More than being a victim of the worst inhumane assault of their dignity, many of these women never get the justice they need because South Africa's criminal justice system is broken. The shortage of rape kits at police stations coupled with the DNA backlog mean far too many investigations in rape cases are botched to secure successful convictions.

Far too many police officers don't have the required professional etiquette and emotional intelligence deal with gender-based violence. We need an overhaul of the National Sex Offenders Registrar so that it can accurately identify specific sex offenders. This information

can be easily accessed through the Department of Justice. The truth is that ANC-failures in government create an enabling environment for gender-based violence to thrive.

For all this talk about women empowerment and emancipation, the ANC and its tripartite alliance apply a different set of rules to their leaders. For example, an ANC councillor in a municipality in the Eastern Cape, who was convicted for raping an ANC volunteer, had been receiving his full salary despite being sentenced without any condemnation by his party.

None of this is surprising because the ANC's institutional architecture is hostile to gender equality.

How is that that in its entire existence the ANC, its alliance partners and its former young league has never had a female president?

I thank you.