Democratic Alliance Speech by

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**Government not doing enough to curb the scourge of GBV**

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South Africa is notoriously known the world over for horrendous gender-based crimes against women; this is despite progressive legislation in place to ensure the protection of women. In 2021, Statistics South Africa released a report, on crimes against women in South Africa, indicating that one in five women (21%) had experienced physical violence by a partner. In 2016, it was reported that a woman was killed every four hours in South Africa. At least half of them were murdered by an intimate partner.

In 2020, at the height of the global health crisis, President Cyril Ramaphosa labelled gender-based violence (GBV) the country's second pandemic.

We watch in horror day after day, news bulletin after news bulletin that reports yet another woman, another queer person who is assaulted, raped, or killed by someone they once loved.

Our pain, anger, defeat, and hopelessness at yet another brutal and arbitrary loss of life every so often spears us into action. We hold night vigils in memory of the lives lost, we take to the streets in numbers to bring attention to the colossal task that stands before us while we urge our government to act. All this while South African women ask themselves if they are next; another victim of a senseless murder; another statistic; another hashtag.

In early February, a 21-year-old Tshwane University of Technology student was found dead with stab wounds to the neck.

Days before Christmas, Mariam Makane was stabbed to death by her boyfriend in front of their 3-year-old child. Mariam had a restraining order against the perpetrator. We read in horror about the mutilated body of a lesbian who had been missing for a week in Vereeniging and was found after a desperate search by her family and community. Her name was Nontokozo Caroline Motloung.

Time and time again, we are told that the government is taking action yet there is no change. We are told about policies, strategies, frameworks, and interventions to address the scourge of violence meted out on our most vulnerable in society. Yet, despite these efforts, every day we see and read about violence against women and children continues unabated.

We are constantly assured that help is at hand for any person who needs it. There is no assurance, however, for the victim of this horrible crime which is often compounded by secondary victimisation by the police, families and even their communities.

How many times do we hear of women and queer people who report attacks to police who lack compassion and do not offer any support whatsoever to the victim?

How many times have we heard of bruised and battered individuals sitting on cold benches in queues at the police stations because there were no trauma rooms?

Or women who, even after reporting the crime, are taunted, and further threatened by their perpetrators, who often live in the same communities as them and roam free because of a broken and corrupt police system where dockets easily go missing?

At this point, we need to consider the fact that there are women who have been killed with protection orders in their hands.

Here are the DA's proposals that need to be implemented as a matter of urgency to curb GVB:

• Training programmes that provide police officers with the necessary knowledge and skills to recognise, investigate, and respond to cases of domestic violence. Training on how to conduct interviews with victims and perpetrators, how to gather evidence, and how to provide appropriate support to victims.

• Implement policies and procedures that prioritise the needs and rights of survivors. That will ensure that victims are provided with medical care and counselling services and that their rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected.

• Establishment of shelters and safe houses for victims of domestic violence and other forms of GBV.

Overall, addressing the problem of GBV in Gauteng requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. While a functioning criminal justice system plays a pivotal role in the fight against GBV; society, customs, culture, and mores have a critical role to play as well. Patriarchy, misogyny, and prejudice that result in hate crimes have to be dealt with from the root.

Working together as communities, civil organisations, political parties and the government, we can create a safer society for all.

**Media Enquiries**

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