Democratic Alliance Speech by

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**GBV remains a pandemic in Gauteng, trauma services should be accessible to all residents**

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Thank you, Madam Speaker,

It is indeed an honour to speak on this debate on gender-based violence (GBV).

There are many glaring gaps in our society concerning this pandemic and it is probably the biggest shame in our country. How did we even get here as a country?

On Saturday evening, I was humbled by a Non-Profit Organisation (NGO), Tshegofatso, based in Kempton Park, operated by a woman called Cynthia. Cynthia does not have a job but somehow opened her home to about 70 survivors of GBV.

The police and social workers take rescued victims to her house. In one conversation that we had, she told me that she is funded by good samaritans who randomly donate to her shelter. Sometimes when Ikhaya Lethemba is full and cannot accommodate victims, they refer people to Cynthia.

On Saturday, she hosted an awards evening for all the NGOs, police and social workers involved in the GBV space. She asked me to assist by giving out the awards.

Though I believe this is what government should have been doing, I was very humbled.

I know we criticise the police and social workers when they don’t perform, but honestly, some men and women do amazing work out there. Men and women who leave their families and risk it all.

When they leave their families to go to work, they don’t even know if they will return alive; these men and women risk their lives by taking victims out of harmful situations where perpetrators can easily kill them. I salute them! The situations they are exposed to require ongoing trauma counselling!

Madam Speaker,

The Gauteng Department of Social Development should never spend more than three months with any vacancy as the services that are rendered to our people are essential. In a situation where a staff member is about to retire, plans must be put in place timeously to prevent the department from sitting with a vacancy rate of over 400.

Heavy caseloads severely compromise the already short-staffed social workers, affecting the quality of support given to the victims. As a result, the number of cases opened is far lower than the actual incidents of GBV in Gauteng or South Africa as a whole.

Why would anyone open a case when the perpetrators can still get bail? And when they do get bail, where would the victim go except to be stuck in the same home with the alleged perpetrators? What do you think happens then? Usually, the victim closes the case.

If they are courageous and continue with the case, they also must see if the case will even make it onto the court roll. If it does, they must attend multiple court hearings and, at the end of it, see if the alleged perpetrator is convicted.

Why would anyone report a case when we have seen from the statistics that the conviction rate is very low? This discourages the victims from opening cases. By opening cases, the victims put themselves at risk. This whole process is incredibly traumatic to the victims, or shall I say, the survivor. These challenges identified in each step require serious intervention.

While the majority of victims of GBV are women and children, many people in the LGBTIQA+ community, an already socially stigmatised group, endure profound suffering when affected by this plague. They are even more deeply affected when they are victims of GBV. Following them are men who are abused within a society that says “monna ha lle ke nku” – loosely translated as “a man is not allowed to cry” – and so men affected suffer silently and never tell a soul about what they are going through.

I would like to lobby all members of this house to support this motion because, in one way or another, we are all affected by GBV, and it should become a priority crime in our province.

Police training should be improved to include sensitivity and tolerance. Gauteng should push hard to ensure that every single police station has a victim-friendly room that is adequately equipped with necessary resources, such as a play area for children of victims, not clinically hard rooms that emotionally torture a traumatised soul.

In closing, it is only by bringing services closer to our people and the province lobbying for devolution of policing that we will have a better chance of fighting this horrible crime.

I thank you – Madam Speaker

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