

Democratic Alliance speech by

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## Is victory really certain when we are losing the fight against crime?

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**Madame Speaker,**

Premier Lesufi started his State of the Province Address (SOPA) by paying tribute to "Women Giants," as he coined it in celebration of Women's Month. He continued to celebrate the 7 000 Crime Safety Wardens, or the Amapanyaza, as we all know them, who have been recruited by the Gauteng Provincial Government. Premier Lesufi proudly proclaimed, "We are confident that victory is certain, that law-abiding residents will reclaim their peaceful existence."

Madame Speaker, in light of this, it is quite disturbing that I need to share, that during this Women's Month, an innocent woman was assaulted unprovoked in Randburg CBD by the Crime Prevention Wardens, who are supposed to combat crime and ensure that women can walk in public spaces, day or night, without fear. This repulsive behaviour was captured on video and circulated on social media.

Instead of condemning this unacceptable behaviour and acting against those responsible, the Premier chose to keep quiet. Thanks to his deafening silence, I was reliably informed about another woman who was attacked in Sunnyside over the weekend in front of her children by another group of Crime Prevention Wardens. This behaviour is unacceptable and not something to be proud of, Mr Premier.

The DA vehemently denounces this flagrant abuse of power by the Crime Prevention Wardens and insists on a thorough investigation into these matters. It is unacceptable that the Crime Prevention Wardens, entrusted with the vital task of ensuring the safety and security of Gauteng residents, instil fear and terror among law-abiding residents of Gauteng.

The DA has consistently flagged the lack of training of these Crime Prevention Wardens and reported that rather than enforcing the law, many of them were causing panic and wreaking havoc in our communities. But in a haste for glory, the Premier chose to unleash them nonetheless.

The crime statistics have shown that since the Crime Prevention Wardens were hired on 1 May 2023, crime has increased. Currently, Gauteng ranks number one in the country in crime categories such as community-reported serious crimes, contact crime, rape, robbery, and others.

A DA government would reduce crime by implementing a programme similar to the one in the Western Cape called the LEAP programme to increase police presence. Unlike the Amapanyaza, those working under this programme are properly trained and disciplined to act with integrity and not violate their powers.

This brings me to another point: it was interesting to note at this SOPA that there was a drone above the venue and a helicopter in the area. Well done, Mr Premier. I suspect this

performance was aimed at proving that you have indeed bought these resources to fight crime.

Although we welcome these resources, we need to plead with you to prioritise the command centre and the proper training of those who need to utilise it. Let's ensure that these resources are allocated by using evidence-based data in a strategic manner and deployed to crime hotspots. Let's not only use the quarterly crime statistics but also focus on getting live updates on where criminal activities are taking place. On Wednesday last week, children were shot at a school in Eldorado Park. This incident caused an uproar in the community. Strategically, the drones and helicopters should be deployed to an area like this, tracing the gangsters and ensuring successful arrests and prosecutions. We should not sit back and watch as those children continue to write their exams in fear.

If and when we have a command centre, we will be able to tap into the live data and explore equipment and crime prevention strategies as they did in the Western Cape, where we can utilise ShotSpotter, a gunshot detection, acoustic surveillance technology that uses sensors to detect, locate, and alert law enforcement agencies of potential gunfire incidents in real time.

By using drones, helicopters, shotspotters, and well-trained LEAP officers, we will be able to fight crime and put an end to the ruthless killings, hijackings, and gangsterism that are controlling our streets and townships in our province.

The DA is unwavering in its commitment to creating safer communities in Gauteng, where the rule of law is upheld by law enforcement and residents of our province in line with the Constitution. Where we will focus on evidence-based data to determine crime prevention strategies, that will not be seen as pie-in-the-sky promises, but that will make a tangible difference to bring about a safer Gauteng.

Honourable Premier, if you truly want to address crime effectively, consider assigning a specific MEC solely dedicated to community safety and crime prevention in Gauteng. Get the DA involved and allow us to guide you in rectifying the flaws of the warden scheme, highlighting problematic areas, and offering recommendations on what works and what doesn't work in the Western Cape.

Unless that is done, we cannot Mr Premier cannot be confident that victory in the fight against crime is "certain."

One life lost is one too many; we need to end crime now!

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