

Speech by Mr V Mapolisa, HOD for Community Safety, at the occasion of the Ministerial Gender Based Violence and Femicides Dialogue, held at Calvary Christian Church East London

Friday 1 October 2021 @ 10h00.

Greetings

- *The Presidium – Mr Memela and Ms Velentiya*
- *Reverent Bethela*
- *Deputy Minister of Police, Honourable Cassel C Mathale*
- *Deputy National Commissioner – General LE Ntshinga*
- *Secretary of Police – Dr Manthiba Phalane*
- *Acting Provincial Commissioner Major General Dladla*
- *CPF Chairperson – Mr Mbiza*
- *Student Representatives,*
- *SWEAT – Mr Phindile Ngwazi*
- *Members of the Staff*
- *Members of the media*
- *People of the Eastern Cape*

Introduction

This is a dialogue on gruesome victimisation of women and the girl child. The President of the Republic of South Africa and Government has called this scourge a second pandemic to the novel corona virus. Programme Directors, heinous crimes against women and the girl child are a shame of our times.

It has become almost an expectation that during the women's month and the ensuing 16 days of activism against women and children abuse, the public get to know about the most gruesome acts of violence

Our society has over time been entangled psychologically in pain and suffering emanating from:

- ✓ Murders of women in the hands of their loved ones (femicide),
- ✓ Rape of women in the hands of their loved ones
- ✓ Girls children found buried in shallow graves on what is supposed to be their playgrounds,
- ✓ Girl child trafficking, abduction and kidnapping,
- ✓ Girl child marriage, illegal adoptions and sexual exploitation'

Gender based violence negatively affects our country's GDP because it is well established that long term consequences of victimisation affect productivity.

One of the greatest sons of our land, the late Tata Oliver R Tambo reminded the concluding session of the Conference of the Women's Section of the ANC on 14 September 1981 in Luanda, Angola, that:

I quote -

"The mobilisation of women is the task not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike."

Close quote

To deal with this scourge is a revolution within a revolution; this is one revolution that we should all wage. Women of the Eastern Cape and South Africa fought side-by-side with men during liberation struggles and even this attack on women calls for all of us to fight side by side.

Legislative context to fight GBV and Femicides

We find solace in knowing that women's rights are protected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which is the supreme law of the country.

In Section 9 – Equality Clause, calls for the right to equal protection and benefit of the law and expressly forbids unfair gender based discrimination.

Section 12 of the Constitution provides for the freedom and security of the person, including freedom from violence against women.

The mere fact that the equality clause is entrenched in the Constitution should encourage us to fight vigorously to triumph over gender based violence.

Struggles for gender equality

Struggles for gender equality have over decades been at the core of our struggles against racism and class oppression.

Incredible women of substance such as Mama Charlotte Maxeke, who was an activist, a teacher, politician and founder of the Bantu Women's League of South Africa mobilised other women to march and protest against these inhuman actions of the colonial government.

Mama Maxeke organised and mobilised women against women abuse and disapproval of women. In June 1913 she led the first women anti-pass campaign against the Union government.

In 1955 at a meeting of the Federation of South African Women (FSAW), Mama Margaret Gazo made a suggestion that: "*Let us go to Pretoria ourselves and protest to the Government against laws that oppress us.*"

The success of the women struggles challenged the stereotypes about women and their assumed lack of perfect humanity.

Gender mainstreaming

The democratic government has put gender mainstreaming at the centre of our socio-economic transformation agenda. The creation of the ministry in the Presidency shows government's highest commitment to protecting women's rights.

The United Nation's Secretary General's study on Ending Violence against Women: From Words to Action (October 2006), amongst others, stressed that:

- ✓ The most effective weapon to fight violence against women is a clear demonstration of commitment, backed by action and the commitment of resources.

South Africa is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015. SDG 5 talks to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls..

Aspiration number six of the AU's Agenda 2063, encourages us to build:

"An Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, ...".

Our country is further bound by being a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995.

Our Government has come up with a legislative framework to ensure that criminals who commit these crimes are prosecuted and sentenced accordingly. The -

- ✓ The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE);
- ✓ Equality Courts;
- ✓ Sexual Offences Courts;
- ✓ Family Courts; and
- ✓ Enforce the Domestic Violence Act.

The recently launched GBV Strategy and plan conclude these interventions,

Strategic centres such as Thuthuzela centres have been established using donor money for victim empowerment. Government has also invested in the training of officials in the criminal justice system to ensure proper implementation of our laws. Government will continue to intervene to ensure the integrated criminal justice system works, for greater impact specifically in stopping this anarchy.

Poverty is a major cause of vulnerability to gender based violence. Some of our young girls are lured with promises of better economic and social opportunities, to their detriment.

Mothers who are economically independent are better equipped to support their children. Hence in terms of the BBBEE legislation women inclusion has been elevated.

Capacity building and improving on the required resources for effective interventions have been prioritised and must always be a priority.

The fight against gender based violence cannot be waged by government alone. Broader civil society have to drive programmes targeted at arresting this scourge. We should all take a stand.

Conclusion

We appeal to all stakeholders in our communities in both urban and rural areas that they should at all times break the silence, speak out and expose these perpetrators. Our communities, should become a human shield and smell like a rose's scent any threat of violation of women and mobilise for action lines. Gains made so far give us hope, and we believe this battle of gender based violence will be won if we work together.

I thank you