



Media Statement:

Gun Free South Africa's response to release of 2012/13 crime statistics: "Increase in violent crime not surprising"

19 September 2013: Gun Free South Africa is not surprised at the increase in violent crime, in particular the increase in both murder and attempted murder. Over the last two years the organisation has raised concern about the integrity of the firearms control management system, in particular the issuing of firearm licences. Furthermore, trauma surgeons across the country have noted an increase in the number of people presenting with gun shots at tertiary-level hospitals during this same period. Are the increase in the number of firearms in circulation and the increase in both murder and attempted murder connected?

The evidence shows, both in South Africa and globally, that strengthening national firearms control regimes can and does reduce the incidence and rates of firearm homicides. In the 2011/2012 annual South African Police Service (SAPS) report, the year in which SAPS posted the lowest ever reported murder figures at a rate of 30.9/100,000 (15, 695 total murders), the SAPS acknowledged that the steady decrease in murders over a ten year period was primarily due to the significant decrease in gun-related deaths. This decrease in gun-related deaths is also reflected in mortuary data which shows that in 2009 (the most recent year for which mortuary data is available) 6, 428 people were shot and killed, compared to a high of just over twelve thousand people (12,298) in 1998.

The latest murder figures released by the Minister of Police today show an increase from 43 murders a day to 45 murders a day, roughly 16,425 murders in total for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

Is the increase due to an increase in gun-related murders? We do not know this for certain. The only way we can have a more thorough analysis and get a better understanding of the causes of murder in South Africa, is if the SAPS release more detailed information related to the murder data, and in particular to make public, disaggregated data on the use of guns in murder – this would include type of firearm used; legal/illegal status of the gun; whether or not the gun was recovered from the crime scene; and number of bullets fired and recovered. Accurate information is essential to knowing how to tackle a problem: it will assist all of us in developing relevant and effective interventions to reduce violent crime in our country, in particular gun related violence. And that will go a long way towards making us all safe.

Ends