

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023



Gun Free South Africa
— *Making South Africa safer*



Image: Melanie Kiel lights a candle at the launch of the Prinsloo Guns class action in memory of her son Dudley Richards who was shot and killed with a Prinsloo Gun in 2013.

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Acronyms

APCOF: African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum

CFR: Central Firearms Registry

ECD: Early Childhood Development

FCA: Firearms Control Act, 2000

GFSA: Gun Free South Africa

GFZ: Gun Free Zone

IPID: Independent Police Investigative Directorate

SAPS: South African Police Service

UNRCPD: UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament

UNTOC: United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols Thereto



Melanie Kiel and Rashieda Andrews are two moms whose lives have been forever changed by a gun. Melanie's son Dudley Richards was killed, and Rashieda's son Niezaam Cupido was wounded with a Prinsloo Gun. In addition to the Prinsloo Guns class action, GFSA has been supporting mothers to get justice by holding the state accountable for investigating the murder of children by gunshot. *Credit: Brenton Geach/Daily Maverick*

Letter from the chair

Thirty three people were shot dead today. Thirty three will be shot dead tomorrow, and the day after that. Most of these deaths don't make the news – the names of lost loved ones not widely heard, their story of life and death not told. Unless they are shocking – Lucia Ndlovu and Maria Makgato who were shot dead and their bodies fed to pigs, or known – rapper AKA's assassination, or so sad your heart breaks in pain – 5-year-old Ditebogo, shot dead by hijackers as he ran to greet his father arriving home from work.

In May 2021, when an average of 23 people were shot dead every day, the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service published the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill for public comment. Over 118,000 submissions were received – most opposing the Bill, especially the proposed prohibition on gun ownership for self-defence. In response, parliament agreed to give more time to the process and instructed the Secretariat to undertake six months of bilateral stakeholder engagement to ensure that the Bill reflects the views of the South African public, as envisaged in the Constitution.

GFSA endorsed this extra time, believing it would ensure that the best possible version of the Bill would be tabled in parliament. We supported the bilateral consultations, meeting with the Secretariat and encouraging community members living with the daily reality of gun violence, sectors – like health, women and children who are increasingly affected by gun violence, and experts in violence prevention interventions to engage with the Secretariat. Through these engagements we showed that gun control, like gun violence, affects everyone, not just gun owners. We emphasised that when developing policy, it's important to determine the benefits that accrue to the entire population – even when there is opposition.

The evidence globally is clear: Restricting access to guns saves lives. South Africa proves this: As a result of gun controls associated with the Firearms Control Act, 2000, the number of people shot and killed almost halved, from 34 a day in 1998 to 18 a day in 2009.

Despite this evidence, the Firearms Control Act amendment process stalled in June 2022 – again (it stalled in 2015 too). A month later South Africa experienced one of the worst gun massacres seen, when 23 people were shot at a tavern in Soweto, sixteen of whom died.

Over two years have passed since the Soweto tavern massacre. In this time there have been untold massacres across South Africa, which don't make the news – the names of lost loved ones not widely heard, their story of life and death not told. Unless they are shocking – 18 people, including 15 women shot dead at a family gathering in the Eastern Cape, or known – the deputy police minister's personal protector who was among five killed in a Gugulethu mass shooting, or so sad your heart breaks in pain – 4-year-old Enzokuhle, who, along with two other children was shot dead in a barbershop massacre, in which three other children were injured.

It is within this context of state inaction, that the *Prinsloo Guns* class action has been instituted. Undertaken by GFSA on behalf of families who have lost loved ones to guns stolen from police stores by two corrupt cops and sold to criminals over eight years, it says we want accountability. It says we want justice. It says we want meaningful action to silence the guns.

The work undertaken by GFSA in this annual report is different from previous reports. While it describes what we've been doing to lobby for change and inspire action to save lives from gun violence, it also demands state accountability for leaking guns in police stores to gang leaders, for investigating the murder of children by gunshot and for keeping accurate firearm records to stop legal guns leaking into criminal hands.

We all have a Constitutional right to life, to live in safety and be free from all forms of violence. Our demand for accountability will get stronger and stronger as government's inaction, to paraphrase from the Firearm Control Act's Preamble, 'increases the availability and abuse of firearms and ammunition which contribute significantly to the high levels of violent crime in our society.'

Palesa Madi
Chairperson, 30 September 2024



Highlights

Prinsloo Guns class action launch

Launched on 10 May 2023 on behalf of families to hold the state accountable for leaking guns in police stores to gang leaders, the *Prinsloo Guns* class action is a significant highlight and marks a new approach for GFSA. While we have been involved in court action, for instance in Constitutional Court and Supreme Court cases which ruled that gun ownership is not a right but a privilege governed by law, we acted as amicus curiae to assist the courts in their deliberations on the provision for licence renewals as prescribed in the Firearms Control Act, 2000. The *Prinsloo Guns* class action takes state accountability to the door of the Police Minister for failure to secure police weapon stocks by seeking financial relief linked to deaths and injuries as well as an obligation on the police to improve its protocols for recording, storing and handling firearms.

Call to strengthen Central Firearms Registry

Undertaking research to strengthen the Central Firearms Registry (CFR, the police unit responsible for a range of firearms control functions) was another new approach for GFSA. For the past 12 years we have used others' research in our work to save lives from gun violence. *The State of the Central Firearms Registry in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, undertaken in partnership with the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum, carefully documents the challenges and weakness in SA's current firearm licensing regime, including examples of widespread fraudulent practice, and makes recommendations to turn the CFR into an effective crime fighting tool based on lessons from other countries' management of their firearms registries. This report, combined with several consultations on the recommendations with a range of key stakeholders, has reinforced GFSA's position as an expert on firearms control matters both within the policy and practice arenas.

Using storytelling to stop gun violence

Raising awareness of the gun violence crisis in South Africa and the urgency of meaningful action was strengthened through storytelling. Both the *#GunsOutOfHand* campaign of 2022, and the work being done with the *Prinsloo Guns* class action families as well as moms who have lost children to gun violence has created spaces for people whose lives have been changed by a gun to tell their story and in this way reach more people. This too is a new approach for GFSA, learning to combine sharing of information and facts on the risks of guns and gun violence with people's lived experience of what gun violence does to families and communities. Working primarily with women, who most often bear the brunt of the burden of gun violence, has opened up opportunities for building a cohort of women who are empowered to hold the state accountable at local level, with the possibility of building a moms movement against gun violence.

Highlights



Shifting public perception of GFSA

The launch of the *Prinsloo Guns* class action, CFR report and the use of storytelling have contributed to a significant and positive shift in how GFSA is viewed by the public, our partners and allies and government and is evident in GFSA's media coverage, which increased from an advertising value equivalent of R11,5 million in 2022 to almost R35 million in 2023. The shift recognises the weight of the organisation in holding the state to account and our ability to engage with technical matters relating to small arms and light weapons control. It has also reinforced GFSA's role in giving voice to the unarmed majority, as well as reflecting greater levels of awareness on the risks of guns with increased public discourse and appetite for the vision of a gun-free-SA.

Growing leaders

Two GFSA staff members, Marlene Matlala and Monique Hansen, were chosen to be part of the 2023 DG Murray Trust Innovation Fellowship. The year-long programme, which involved immersions, workshops, fieldwork and coaching, supports young people working in civil society organisations to develop as change agents and future leaders. Marlene and Monique's participation has already had an impact on GFSA's work, particularly in how we work with strategic partners.

Holding the state accountable

People vs The State: Prinsloo Guns class action

Holding the state accountable for leaking guns in police stores to gang leaders

On 10 May 2023, GFSA, affected families, and Jason Whyte from Norton Rose Fulbright law firm, which with Wim Trengove (senior counsel) and Riaz Itzkin (junior counsel), took the case pro-bono, held a briefing at the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation in Cape Town to mark the first achievement in the *Prinsloo Guns* class action: The lodging of papers with the Western Cape High Court to apply for certification of a class action against the Minister of Police to claim for damages resulting from the theft and supply of guns in police stores to criminals by two senior police members.

The Aim:

The *Prinsloo Guns* class action seeks to claim financial relief for damages arising from police corruption and negligence in managing firearms in police care and on account of the Minister's vicarious liability for the actions of his employees.





What are Prinsloo Guns?

Prinsloo Guns include over 2400 guns that were stolen from police stores by a senior police officer, Colonel Christiaan Prinsloo and his accomplice, Colonel David Naidoo, and distributed to criminals between 2007 and 2015.

How the Prinsloo Guns to gangs syndicate was detected:

In September 2013 the police began recovering an excessive number of guns on the Cape Flats that had been professionally 'cleaned' of identifying marks, proof that a sophisticated gun smuggling syndicate was at work. Project Impi was registered by the police in December 2013 to investigate the syndicate.

Following intensive investigations, senior South African Police Service (SAPS) member Colonel Christiaan Prinsloo, a commander of the Gauteng Firearm, Liquor and Second Hand Goods Control was arrested in 2015. Prinsloo confessed to his role in smuggling guns that were confiscated by or surrendered to the police for destruction to gang leaders on the Cape Flats and entered into a plea bargain with the state, providing detailed information on the syndicate in return for a lesser sentence. Colonel David Naidoo was employed by SAPS in the capacity of an operational officer in the Confiscated Firearms Store at Silverton under the Head Office: Confiscated Firearms Store, and assisted Prinsloo in his criminal enterprise.

The evidence:

- The police's own Project Impi investigative reports which link crimes, including murders and attempted murders, to *Prinsloo Guns* through ballistic evidence.
- A ballistics expert witness who shows it is possible to forensically identify when a *Prinsloo Gun* has been used in a crime.
- Empirical evidence which shows a massive spike in gun-related deaths in areas *Prinsloo Guns* were distributed between 2007 and 2015.

The numbers:

888	of the guns stolen by Prinsloo and Naidoo were forensically linked to 1066 murders and 1403 attempted murders in the Western Cape between February 2010 and 5 June 2016.
187	children between the ages of one and 17 years old were shot between February 2010 and December 2015 with <i>Prinsloo Guns</i> , 67 of whom were killed.
2400+	guns that Prinsloo admitted to stealing, more than 1000 are still missing.

GFSA has been in regular contact with the families both before and since the application for certification was lodged, hosting teas where families can connect and support each other, appointing a counsellor to provide psychosocial support, holding an In Memoriam event and engaging families on important developments regarding the case. One of these was the parole of Prinsloo who benefited from a 'special remission of sentence' after serving less than 4 years of his 18 year prison sentence.

While the class action aims to claim for damages and costs, all claimants are clear that it won't bring their loved ones back and it won't heal those who have been injured or disabled – but it may bring a sense of justice and closure if the state is forced to acknowledge the suffering caused by its negligence and corruption. It may also force the state to take control of firearms so that no more families lose a loved one to a *Prinsloo Gun*.

A weekly newspaper for people with cool minds and fiery hearts

DAILY MAVERICK

EXCLUSIVE
Critical class action case against Bheki Cele

'You owe us for arming assassins'
 Victims shot with guns cops sold to gangsters take on the state

By Caryn Dolley
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EVERY DAY WE'RE SHUFFLING
 Readers pick a dream Cabinet to put us back on track
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 Discovery ranks the fittest and fattest provinces in the land
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 Property owners fume as deadbeat councils push up rates and taxes
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 No bucks, no glory: plucky Proteas Women need more funding to win
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South Africa sabotaged: How the crime cartels are ruining Eskom
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'We don't want others to go through what we have suffered because of Prinsloo's Guns', say families who have joined class action.

The families:

Nine family members have joined the class action. They represent four categories of direct and indirect *Prinsloo Gun* victims. Because the first stage of the class action is based on an 'opt out' basis, anyone in these four categories who can prove that a *Prinsloo Gun* was used in a shooting-related death or injury is automatically included in the class, unless they choose to formally opt out. The four categories and the named families are:

Parents/guardians of children killed:

- Andre and Dianne Cornelius whose son, Dillan Cornelius, was shot and killed with a *Prinsloo Gun*
- Melanie Kiel, whose son Dudley Richards, was shot and killed with a *Prinsloo Gun*

Parents/guardians of children injured:

- Denise Mentor, the legal guardian of Leana van Wyk, who sustained serious head injuries in a shooting incident with a *Prinsloo Gun*
- Evenlyn Davids, the legal guardian of Liam Davids, who sustained neck injuries in a shooting incident with a *Prinsloo Gun*
- Simoné Julies, the mother of Mogamat Moeneer and Mogamat Nazeer, who were injured in a shooting incident with a *Prinsloo Gun*

Family members of adults killed:

- Natalie Dirks, the mother of Lukas Dirks, who was shot and killed with a *Prinsloo Gun*

Adults injured:

- Mansoer Eksteen, who was injured with a *Prinsloo Gun*
- Niezaam Cupido, who was injured with a *Prinsloo Gun*



Unknown mother mourning her son, representing all the unknown victims of *Prinsloo Guns*.

Moms against gun violence

Holding the state accountable for investigating the murder of children by gunshot

Through our community work GFSA has encountered many mothers with open murder case dockets after losing children to gun violence. We have been supporting these moms in two ways, first, by helping set up support groups where moms can share their stories of grief and survival, including what they are doing to hold the state to account regarding progress on their cases.

In this regard, and with no evidence that a *Prinsloo Gun* was involved in these shootings (which would allow moms to join the class action), the second way GFSA has been helping these moms is to seek justice through the SAPS Police Inspectorate. We identified 12 moms with sons murdered in Atlantis and Mitchells Plain whose murders have not been solved, and submitted a formal complaint with the SAPS Inspectorate on their behalf, which resulted in each family complaint being investigated.

GFSA also helped Jessica Shah, whose daughter Sasha-Lee was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend in October 2022, to submit a complaint on the failure of the Designated Firearms Officer (DFO) at Phoenix police station to remove the ex-boyfriend's licensed firearm despite a magistrate's instruction to do so under a Domestic Violence Act protection order. As a result, an investigation into the conduct of the DFO was instituted, and an inquest into Sasha-Lee's murder has been scheduled for early 2024.



Jessica Shah's tireless campaigning for justice after her daughter Sasha-Lee was shot dead by her ex-boyfriend helped inspire the Remove the Trigger from domestic violence campaign.

Following on from this work, in 2023 GFSA began working with MOSAIC (a training, service and healing centre combating abuse and gender-based violence), the National Shelter Movement (a network of organisations sheltering women and children affected by gender-based violence in South Africa), and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (a funder committed to ending gender-based violence) to develop a campaign on preventing women and children being shot and killed or injured with a gun in domestic violence incidents. As a starting point the campaign was presented to delegates at the National Shelter Movement's third annual meeting in November for discussion and input. The launch of Removing the Trigger campaign is scheduled for 14th February 2024.

Guns threaten our right to life

With support from GFSA, moms organised a protest outside the Atlantis police station to commemorate Human Rights day 2023. With the theme: Guns threaten our right to life, moms gathered in front of the police station with candles, pictures of their sons and posters calling for the state to investigate the murder of their sons.



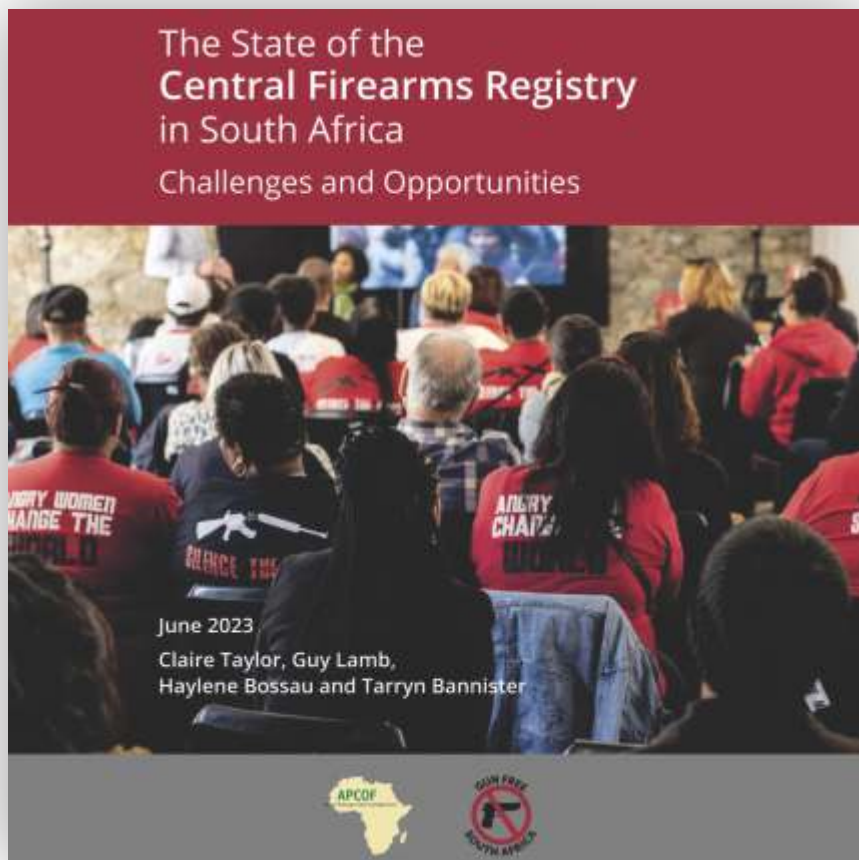
Functional firearms registry to stop illegal guns

Holding the state accountable for keeping accurate firearm records

Although most gun crime in SA is committed with illegal guns, almost all illegal guns were once legal. Accurate records tracking a gun from cradle to grave helps close the tap leaking legal guns into criminal hands



A key reason that corrupt cop Chris Prinsloo could steal guns awaiting destruction in police stores and sell them to criminals was poor oversight of legal firearm stocks. GFSA, in partnership with the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), undertook research to assess the viability of outsourcing the Central Firearms Registry (CFR) – the police unit responsible for managing firearms. Looking at global examples, the research explored the pros and cons of privatising, devolving responsibility to local level structures or locating the registration system as an independent authority that reports to the police.



The State of the Central Firearms Registry in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

was launched at a roundtable hosted by APCOF on 11 July 2023. Speaking at the event Annelize van Wyk, vice-chair of APCOF and previously chairperson of the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police emphasised that accurate firearms record-keeping is not an administrative function, but a key crime-fighting tool that can reduce gun violence.

Lobbying for change

Strengthening laws to save lives

Firearms Control Act

GFSA continues to play a critical role in raising the voice of the unarmed majority in support of effective gun control to reduce gun violence. This work intensified when the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service published a draft amendment to the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (FCA) in May 2021. While the process of mobilising communities to make submissions on the draft Bill was reported in GFSA's 2020-2021 annual report, in late 2021 the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police took an important decision to extend the process into 2022. It tasked the Secretariat to undertake six months (January to June 2022) of bilateral stakeholder engagement on proposed changes to ensure that the Bill reflects the views and interests of the South African public as envisaged in the Constitution.

GFSA welcomed this decision as it ensured that key stakeholders were given an opportunity for more in-depth consultations, in particular those addressing the negative impacts of high levels of gun violence. This included the Trauma Advocacy Group, the Children's Institute, Women's Legal Centre, the Violence Prevention Forum, South African Football Association and police trade unions. GFSA had several engagements with the Secretariat, including with our legal team from Norton Rose Fulbright giving an opinion on the constitutionality of repealing Section 13 and 14 of the Act which deal with licences for self-defence. Unfortunately, there has been no further movement on amending SA's gun law since then. There appears to be no urgency on the part of government to act decisively in curbing the high levels of gun violence despite police data showing that the number of people shot and killed has increased to 33 a day.

Gun laws aren't only for gun owners



Monique Hansen, GFSA Western Cape regional coordinator

'Representatives from the Civilian Secretariat for Police couldn't understand why I was meeting with them about South Africa's gun law. They were surprised that a young woman who isn't a gun owner wanted to comment on proposed amendments to the Firearms Control Act. I told them that young people across the country live with gun violence in our homes and communities and that we are the most likely victims and perpetrators of gun violence. I hope they recognise that gun laws aren't just for gun owners and that they specifically consult young people when the amendment to the Act gets tabled.'

Independent Police Investigative Directorate Act

The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) is a government department responsible for investigating complaints against SAPS and municipal police services, and is a key mechanism to hold the police accountable. GFSA made a written and oral submission on proposed amendments to the IPID Act published in 2023, emphasising two key issues:

- The independence of IPID, particularly in relation to the appointment process of its Director.
- The role of the IPID in holding the police accountable for firearms and ammunition management. In particular GFSA urged that IPID be mandated to investigate all complaints involving the misuse of any firearm, arguing that if family and community members were encouraged to report any instance of illegal use of a firearm (not just service firearms) by a police member – including pointing or shooting a gun, or failing to store it properly – and these complaints were independently investigated, rather than leaving investigations to colleagues, effective measures could be taken to ensure a police member is not a danger to others or him/herself. We also called for the IPID Act be amended to ensure that new policing bodies such as the Western Cape's Law Enforcement Advancement Programme (LEAP) officers and Gauteng's Crime Prevention Wardens fall under the Directorate's authority. While this would increase the responsibility put on IPID and require additional funding, it would mean that all policing structures fall under the same authority, thereby reducing the risk for loopholes and exceptions.

GFSA together with other civil society representatives closely followed the Bill's progress through parliament. The quality of engagement by members of parliament, both on the content of the Bill and on the rules of parliament for approving the Bill was weak, and despite substantive input by civil society organisations, there was limited engagement by all parties involved in the legislative process with these submissions. This is worrying given that our lawmakers play a crucial role in keeping the state's executive to account to uphold its Constitutional mandate to keep us safe. The Bill will only be finalised and adopted in 2024.

In 2022 four police members were acquitted of killing Mthokozisi Ntumba. Mthokozisi, 35, died in 2021 after being shot with rubber bullets while leaving his doctor's rooms in Braamfontein. Evidence indicates he was fired at for no reason by police who were responding to a student protest.



Since bilateral consultations ended in mid-2022 – when an average of 23 people were shot dead daily:

- there has been no further movement on amending SA's gun law*
- the number of people shot and killed has increased to 33 a day*
- gun massacres, in which 4 or more people are shot, often multiple times, have become increasingly common*

Gun massacres

Gun massacres, where multiple people are shot, often multiple times, has become increasingly prevalent across South Africa. The New Year's shootings in Melville in 2020 was one of the first high profile incidents in which people in a public place were indiscriminately shot. But this deadly trend ratcheted up significantly in 2022. On 9 July 2022, 35 people were shot in two separate tavern shootings. In the first, 23 people were shot, 16 of whom died in Soweto, Gauteng, in the second 12 people were shot, of whom 4 died in Sweetwaters, KwaZulu-Natal. And the trend has continued in public places across the country, from taverns to barbershops. GFSA has repeatedly focused attention on the issue of gun massacres, calling for comprehensive action to reduce the availability of guns in South Africa by both recovering illegal guns and going upstream to tighten controls over legal guns to stop them leaking into the illegal pool. The gun violence map on GFSA's website now includes a 'mass shooting' icon, where a shooting in which four or more people are shot is indicated.



National Policing Policy

In October 2023 the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service published a draft National Policing Policy as required under SA's Constitution. GFSA attended both the Gauteng and Western Cape policy consultations. We also made a written submission, urging that the Policy include a dedicated section on demilitarising policing, which is a key tenet of democratic policing.

Spotlighting the gun

Guns are four to seven times more deadly than any other weapon. In all our work, including engagements with institutions, movements and organisations that are active in building a safer, more just society, GFSA spotlights the gun, as reducing the availability of guns will help save lives. In this way GFSA helps build a broad-based movement that understands the impact of gun violence on society and how everyone has a part to play in reducing gun violence in SA. Some highlights include:

- **Ahmed Kathrada Foundation:** GFSA attended a screening of the Babita Deokaran SILENCED documentary. The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation hosted the screening in Tembisa in 2023 to engage community members on being a whistleblower and working for your community, without putting your life in danger.
- **Anti-Repression Collective:** Arising from the C-19 People's Coalition, GFSA continued to be active in the Anti-Repression Collective (ARC) as it is now called. This included commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Marikana massacre of 2012, giving an input on the less lethal weapons recommendations of the Panel of Experts (which Adèle Kirsten, GFSA's Director was part of), and, in solidarity with Abahlali baseMjondolo, and other ARC members, holding a seminar on 19 October 2022 to bring attention to the political assassinations occurring within the Abahlali movement.
- **Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union:** In 2023 GFSA attended a 3-day Policing Indaba hosted by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union. With the aim of finding solutions to SA's crime situation, the importance of effective gun control was a key feature of discussions.
- **PRICELESS:** Located in the School of Public Health at Wits University, PRICELESS' work examines the cost of harmful products such as alcohol, sugar and tobacco. GFSA was invited to give an input on the history of gun violence and gun control in SA to its team of specialists, as it is considering exploring the cost of the gun industry alongside the costing of other harmful industries.
- **SA Human Rights Commission:** In 2023 GFSA met with the SA Human Rights Commission, which is researching the impact of gun-related crime on human rights.
- **University of Cape Town Centre of Criminology:** GFSA was invited to give input at a seminar organised by the Centre on the Firearms Control Amendment Bill, including its strengths and gaps, plus opportunities for getting the Bill to parliament.





Guns are overwhelmingly the weapon used in assassinations, including that of whistleblower Babita Deokaran.

Policy briefings

As part of our work spotlighting the role that guns play in SA's violence, and interventions to save lives by controlling guns, GFSA developed five firearms control policy briefings in 2022-23:

- *Femicide in South Africa over 18 years* summarised 2017 mortuary data to better understand the murder of women and girls in SA. This showed that while gun controls continued to protect women from being shot by an intimate partner, an increasing number of women were shot that year by non-intimates.
- *Gun control, self-defence and public safety* summarised new research into robbery-related murders in SA, showing that the presence of a gun increases the risk of murder, with older white men being particularly vulnerable due to the higher likelihood that they will be armed and resist.
- *Using the principle of limits to stop SA's gun violence epidemic* looked at how limiting the types, users and uses of firearms and ammunition can save lives.
- *Class action aims for police accountability in firearms management* located GFSA's *Prinsloo Guns* class action proceedings within the broader context of police accountability, and the role and effectiveness of various institutions to hold the police accountable.
- *Functional Central Firearms Registry key to dealing with illegal guns* summarised GFSA's and APCOF's research assessing the feasibility of outsourcing firearms record-keeping as a crime-fighting tool.

'Not only is a firearm ineffective for self defence, it increases risk for the wider community and the country.'

GFSA Policy Briefing 2 of 2022

Global networking

GFSA played a more active role globally in the two years under review, as our expertise in gun violence prevention was increasingly sought.

- **Global Action Against Gun Violence:** Adèle was invited to join the advisory committee of this new initiative which, in line with the *Prinsloo Guns* class action, is using litigation to reduce harm from guns.
- **IM Sweden:** GFSA, together with speakers from El Salvador, Mexico, and Nigeria participated in a webinar *Voices of Women: on guns, violence, and activism* where we presented our 2021 research into gun-related gender-based violence in SA and discussed with other civil society stakeholders how policy can be turned into meaningful action to save lives from gun violence.
- **Small Arms Survey:** GFSA provided updated information on the reported number of firearms and owners in SA as the Survey updates its 2018 firearms holdings database; this is the 'go to' source used by global media, researchers and agencies like the United Nations.
- **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):** In response to a global call, GFSA developed a submission on the civilian acquisition, possession, and use of firearms. We gave evidence to show how civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms negatively impacts on human rights in South Africa, and made recommendations on how the root causes and risk factors underlying the availability of firearms and firearms-related violence could be addressed. Our submission was included in the OHCHR's report, which identified a series of recommendations to mitigate the negative human rights impacts of the civilian firearms industry.
- **UN Institute for Disarmament Research:** GFSA was approached for information on craft gun production in SA, as there is growing concern about this unregulated market.
- **UN Transnational Organised Crime:** Arising from the *Prinsloo Guns* class action, GFSA has been engaging more with efforts to stop global arms trafficking. A key initiative is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto (UNTOC), which includes the Firearms Protocol, a legally binding instrument on small arms at the global level. GFSA attended (virtually) the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime sponsored UNTOC meetings on firearms in 2022 and 2023, which had a strong civil society presence.



A 2023 protest outside the Mitchells Plain police station helped spotlight the role of the police in leaking guns into criminal hands.

Inspiring Action

Building safe communities through community mobilisation and activism

Gun Free Zones

GFSA continues working in communities to establish Gun Free Zones (GFZs) as safe spaces and to challenge the acceptance of guns in public spaces.

In Gauteng the focus of GFSA's work in Alexandra, Ivory Park and Tembisa was on making groove spots and restaurants GFZs in recognition of the risks posed by the lethal mix of guns and alcohol to the community at large.



Patrons feel safer in groove spots and restaurants that are designated Gun Free Zones

In the Western Cape, GFSA continued working with Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs) to become GFZs. In this process children are asked to hand in their toy guns and are given non-violent educational toys in return. There is keen interest from the sector and we've started working with forums that represent ECDs rather than individual centres, thereby extending our reach. GFSA's work is supported by Molo Songolo, a non-profit that promotes the rights and protection of children and youth, especially girls, and which also became a GFZ.

The one-year anniversary of the launch of GFZs in ECD centres, which was attended by the Western Cape Children's Commissioner was held in June 2023 as part of the Real Reform campaign for the ECD sector.





Children are given non-violent educational toys in return for toy guns in GFZs

There is increasing global interest in GFSA's GFZ work:

- *BMS 8: GFSA was accredited to attend the 8th Biennial Meeting of States of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in New York in July 2022. We made input (virtually) on our GFZ project at one of the side events in partnership with the International Action Network on Small Arms and IM Sweden.*
- *UNCRPD (Asia & Pacific): GFSA was invited to share our knowledge of the GFZ project at a two day webinar organised by the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to support the establishment and maintenance of GFZs in the region. Seventy participants attended the event, including senior police and security personnel.*



Women's right to safety

GFSA runs dialogues and self-defence workshops with girls and women in the communities in which we work. These are spaces to talk about risks and to be empowered with knowledge on opportunities for action, as well as skills to help keep safe.

Every year GFSA partners with the International Action Network on Small Arms on a Gun Free Valentines campaign where we raise awareness of how the FCA and Domestic Violence Act can be used to get a gun removed when women (and children) are in danger.



Women are taught from a young age to fear 'stranger danger.' Yet women and girls are most at risk of being raped or murdered by men they know

Empowering youth and keeping them safe

'Adults are unlikely to shift their coffee order, let alone their views on a topic like guns after so many years of exposure to powerful yet false narratives around guns and safety. But young people are open to considering the facts on this issue and changing their minds as a result.'

Time, 26 October 2023

GFSA's work with communities, particularly young people, remains a key focus. Highlights in 2022 and 2023 included:

- Dialogues: GFSA hosted and participated in various dialogues organised to celebrate key days such as Women's, Youth and Mandela Day and the International Day of Peace. Dialogues are spaces where participants talk about violence – where and why it happens, and what they can do to keep themselves, their family and community safe. We also host men only dialogues where young men talk about their experiences of violence and what they can do to keep themselves and others safe, as young men are the most likely victims and perpetrators of violence.
- Programmes to keep kids safe: GFSA helped teach young people life skills, create awareness around safety and security and have conversations they might not have at home, while also keeping them safe and off the street. In Tembisa South we held a 2-day sports against violence event and in Atlantis we organised a 5-day holiday programme. One of the activities in the holiday programme is making an Aim for Change zine, this is an informal magazine made up of children's photographs and handwritten text and is a powerful way to get young people to engage with their reality and hope for the future.
- Vigils and walks: GFSA helped organise a candlelight prayer walk in Alexandra as a memorial for the five people (including Alex FM music manager Joshua Mbatha), who were killed during a spate of murders in the township in July 2022. Also in 2022 we organised a Youth Day walk in Atlantis to pay tribute to young people who lost their lives to gun violence and to celebrate young people and their abilities and potential to change the world, with the right role models.
- Debates: Together with organisations such as Boys and Girls Club and Bophelong Drop-in Centre, we engaged youth in discussions around violence and safety.
- Community walkabouts: GFSA's Western Cape team undertook community walkabouts in Hanover Park, Mitchells Plain and Paarl East to better understand these communities by seeing them firsthand and speaking directly to community members.





Using storytelling to inspire action

An important aspect of GFSA's work is providing information freely and openly. This includes sharing information obtained from credible scientific sources, and making it readily available to those who otherwise would have no access to this information. Working in partnership with organisations who share our vision and values, GFSA has been able to extend our reach into new constituencies in new ways while also adding value to the work of our partners.

In 2022 GFSA partnered with creative agency KNOWN to inspire action through storytelling campaigns.

Gun violence violates human rights

In a series of video interviews to coincide with 2022 Human Rights Day, former Western Cape detective head and *Prinsloo Guns* lead investigator Jeremy Vearey and respected criminologist Elrena van der Spuy discussed how gun violence violates every person's right to be safe.

In one of the videos Vearey describes the danger of the argument 'I need a gun to defend myself from the gun.' Instead, of being protective he says, 'Its presence escalates the situation and, unless I'm able to dominate that situation tactically through the type of training some of us have, forget about it. It is not even an argument in that situation. You get killed because your target has the great advantage of surprise over you. They already control you through the pointing of the firearm. It is in the absence of a gun that you are more likely to survive.'



Jeremy Vearey

#GunsOutOfHand

GFSA's #GunsOutOfHand social media campaign gave voice to the people in South Africa whose lives have been changed forever, in an instant, by a gun.

These include the family of 16-year-old Josh Edwards, who was shot dead by a friend. The story of Lynworth Mentoor, the victim and survivor of a stray bullet from an unknown shooter. And Avril, a mother left without her son Alcardo Andrews, who is working with other mothers who have lost children from gun violence.

#GunsOutOfHand showed that gun violence can happen to anyone. Through storytelling it gave ordinary people the space to join the conversation on how guns got out of hand in their life, and in this way inspire meaningful action to help stop just one bullet. Or many.



GFSA's communication channels, including our website, media statements and social media platforms are an important way to alert people and inspire action to help stop gun violence.

Media coverage: GFSA's total media coverage in advertising value equivalent amounted to R46 391 394 in 2022-23, R11 555 991 in 2022 and R34 835 403 in 2023. The growth in coverage is related to the extensive interest in the Prinsloo Guns class action and research into the CFR as well as a shift to storytelling in our communications.

Strengthening the base

Staffing

Over the 2022-23 period GFSA employed a total of seven staff members, with a consultant to manage our finances.

The staff were Adèle Kirsten: Director, Alexia Roussos: Communications coordinator, Claire Taylor: Researcher, Courtney Arendse: Western Cape project officer, Marlene Matlala: Gauteng project officer, Mary-Ann Nobele: Gauteng regional coordinator (who was with the organisation until January 2023), and Monique Hansen: Western Cape regional coordinator. In addition, GFSA appointed former 'top-cop' Jeremy Vearey as a strategic advisor in November 2021.

Two staff members, Marlene and Monique, were chosen to participate in a DG Murray Trust Innovation Fellowship in 2023. The year-long course, which comprised three five-day immersions and ongoing work saw them deepen their thinking about the organisation and their role in it, particularly helping GFSA strengthen its approach to nurturing and sustaining strategic partnerships.



Volunteers are vital to GFSA's work. Working with volunteers helps GFSA connect to communities and make them safer places, while also empowering young people with skills and knowledge.

Board

2022-23 saw several changes to GFSA's board: Two board members stepped down: Felicity Harrison who joined the Board in 2009 and Richard Matzopoulos who joined in 2011, while Professor Brett Bowman, Head of Postgraduate Strategy at the University of the Witwatersrand and an internationally acclaimed expert on violence prevention joined the Board in 2023. Palesa Madi will take over as Chairperson in 2024.

As of 31 December 2023, GFSA's board consisted of six members:

Yolande Baker	Chairperson	Programme director, Mothers2Mothers
Angelica Pino	Treasurer	Grants manager and capacity strengthening specialist, Sexual Violence Research Initiative
Malose Langa	Secretary	Professor, registered psychologist and lecturer at the School of Community and Human Development, University of the Witwatersrand
Brett Bowman	Board Member	Head of Postgraduate Strategy at the University of the Witwatersrand and an internationally acclaimed expert on violence prevention
Palesa Madi	Board Member	Attorney and deputy programme director at the Centre for Environmental Rights
Sithombo Maqungo	Board Member	Professor and head of the orthopaedic trauma service, Groote Schuur Hospital and University of Cape Town

Meetings

GFSA held two planning meetings: Board members and staff met in Cape Town in August 2022, the first face-to-face meeting since February 2020, to develop GFSA's 2023-2025 strategic plan, and staff met in October 2022 to plan for 2023.

GFSA held two AGMs in the two years under review, on 4 August 2022 and 18 August 2023.

The GFSA board also had five ordinary meetings during this time.

Financial Report

	2023 R's	2022 R's
Grants and donations received	2 152 947	2 982 042
Other income	2 561 151	1 829 461
Total income	4 714 098	4 811 503
Operating expenses	(4 765 639)	(4 812 053)
Operation (deficit)/income	(51 541)	(550)
Investment income	26 616	22 012
Equipment fund	11 177	(10 042)
(Deficit)/income for the year	(13 748)	11 420
Reserves		
At beginning of year	18 924	7 504
At end of year	5 176	18 924

Donors

Increasing our support remains a priority and successful approaches made in 2022-23 helped secure and diversify GFSA's longer-term donor base.

Financial support is also sourced from pro bono work and services provided to GFSA. This includes pro bono legal advice provided by Norton Rose Fulbright and senior legal counsel, Wim Trengove, with Riaz Itzkin as junior counsel. Other income sources include private donations and interest yielded.

We appreciate the support of donors who provide funding for activities and operational costs. The support of the following funders enabled GFSA's work in 2022-23:



THE CLAUDE
LEON FOUNDATION



HEINRICH
BÖLL
STIFTUNG



Commonwealth
Foundation

MILLENNIUM TRUST



DG Murray Trust

THE RAITH
FOUNDATION

Conclusion

Gun violence is a national crisis in South Africa. According to the latest annual crime statistics, an average of 33 people are shot dead every day, with hundreds more injured or threatened. Families and communities are left traumatised, and the entire country is suffering. Fear permeates daily life, while resources that should be addressing the root causes of crime—such as inequality, poverty, unemployment, poor spatial planning, and corruption—are instead being diverted to deal with the devastating effects of gun violence.

On 5 June 2022, South African health professionals issued a stark warning in an editorial in the Sunday Times: 'Our focus on the downstream treatment, care, and processing of gunshots has normalized an abnormal situation in our hospitals and mortuaries. The numbers have become too big. The time has come to change our approach and treat gun violence for what it is—a public health epidemic. The solution is to go upstream and limit the number of guns in our communities.' They called on the government to prioritise public safety as it amends the Firearms Control Act, emphasising that 'fewer guns mean less gun violence.' At the time, 30 people were shot dead daily. That number is now 33.

To address South Africa's gun violence crisis, two key actions are essential: Recovering illegal guns already in circulation and implementing robust measures to prevent legal guns from leaking into the illegal market. While the government has focused on the former, launching initiatives like Operation Shanela on 8 May 2023 with great fanfare as a 'bold and decisive' crime fighting approach, progress has been minimal. Despite frequent updates, the Operation resulted in only 207 more gun recoveries in its first year—far from a decisive impact.

GFSA has consistently highlighted, in every annual report since 2010 (when gun violence started increasing), the urgent need for government action to stop gun violence. Without such intervention, violent crime will continue to rise, and public trust in law enforcement will erode. This in turn drives more people to purchase firearms for self-defence. For instance, gun sales spiked after the July 2021 unrest, leading to more guns in homes and communities, and consequently, a higher risk of gun violence: Not only are legal guns used to commit crimes; they are also the primary source of illegal guns in South Africa where they are outside of any controls and significantly fuel the ongoing crisis.

The responsibility for enforcing gun control and ensuring public safety rests squarely on the shoulders of government. Without meaningful action and accountability, South Africa's gun violence epidemic will only worsen, deepening the fear and suffering of individuals, families, communities and the country as a whole.



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Gun Free South Africa
— *Making South Africa safer*