



## **GUNS LEADING CAUSE MURDER, ATTEMPTED MURDER REDUCING GUN AVAILABILITY KEY TO CURING SA'S VIOLENT CRIME EPIDEMIC**

*13 September 2019:* The latest national crime statistics show that guns are overwhelmingly the weapon used to kill, injure, threaten and intimidate:

- 47% of murders are due to gunshot, up from 41.3% last year, which means an additional two people are shot and killed every day compared to a year ago.
- 80% of attempted murders are gun-related.
- 83% of carjackings involve a gun.
- 59% of residential robberies involve a gun.

Presenting the latest national crime statistics yesterday, Police Minister Cele noted that while murder in South Africa had been declining, from about 2012, “something went wrong” and the trend began reversing.

Minister Cele is right, murder and other violent crime has not been this high since late 1990, when the number of gun deaths in South Africa peaked.

Recognising that availability of guns increases the homicide rate in homes and communities, government’s response to the 1990’s crime wave focused on reducing gun availability e.g. through police operations to recover and destroy illegal guns and stricter controls (including the Firearms Control Act, 2000) to regulate legal gun ownership in recognition that the majority of unlicensed guns were once legal before being leaked into the illegal pool.

As gun availability in South Africa declined between 2000 and 2010, so too did murder, particularly gun-related murder.

However, in 2011 these gains began reversing. At the same time evidence of poor gun control began emerging, including:

- Target setting by the police to address gun application backlogs: This resulted in the police processing over 1 million applications in 9 months in 2011, despite the risk that fast-tracking means people who are not “fit and proper” to own guns have been granted licences.
- Fraud, corruption and theft by the police, gun dealers and gun training institutions.
- Dereliction of duty by both the police and gun owners who have failed to implement and comply with the law.

The result is a steady increase in the availability of guns in South Africa since 2011, which has in turn fed the violent crime epidemic sweeping the country since then.

Yesterday Minister Cele stressed that “good practices have been dropped”; that we have had success with “tried and tested methodologies” in the past and we must use these again.

Effective gun control is one such 'tried and tested methodology'. Evidence globally and in South Africa shows that limiting gun availability saves lives. It also creates the conditions for other proven violence prevention interventions like early childhood development, positive parenting and after-school care programmes to be rolled out, as these cannot be implemented when guns are being shot.

Gun Free South Africa calls on the Minister of Police and National Police Commissioner to urgently:

- Proceed with actions to recover and destroy unwanted, obsolete and illegally held guns as soon as possible, including holding a national firearms amnesty and vigorously undertaking crime-intelligence operations;
- Review and upgrade weapons storage and destruction facilities to prevent loss and theft and ensure weapons earmarked for destruction are destroyed;
- Amend the Firearms Control Act (2000) to simplify the administration thereof and to rigorously restrict access to handguns, as it is handguns that are used overwhelmingly in contact crimes like murder, attempted murder and aggravated robbery.

*Ends*