



## Media Release

### **If your partner owns a gun, you could be the next target**

*11 February 2016:* Gun Free South Africa, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and Sonke Gender Justice today launched the #GunFreeValentine campaign to highlight that women in South Africa are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by a stranger, with firearms in the home posing a specific risk.

Research by the Medical Research Council (MRC) of South Africa shows that 57% of women killed in South Africa are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends and that a woman is killed by her intimate partner every eight hours.

Romi Sigsworth, a gender expert with the ISS, notes that the complexity of intimate partner violence means a range of interventions are needed to reduce risk and build resilience. 'The problem is that interventions like early childhood development, creating jobs and tackling substance abuse are often long-term and expensive'.

'A short-term and effective response to reduce the lethality of intimate partner violence is to remove the weapon used to threaten, injure or kill,' says Sigsworth. 'Guns by their nature are especially deadly. Proactive action by the police and courts to get guns out of the home can save lives by reducing the lethality of domestic violence'.

Gun Free South Africa's Adèle Kirsten explains why the #GunFreeValentine campaign is being launched on Valentine's Day: 'In a patriarchal country like South Africa, gun ownership is sometimes seen as a sign of love; a man buys a gun to protect himself and his family from stranger danger'.

'However, it is a myth that a gun in the home increases a family's safety. Research shows that a woman is more at risk of being shot in her home with a legal gun owned by her partner than of being shot by a stranger', says Kirsten.

The MRC research found that a legal gun is used in 75% of cases in which a woman is shot and killed, and in 60% of cases this shooting occurs in her home.

'The #GunFreeValentine campaign, which runs from 14 February until International Women's Day on 8 March is a call to action', says Angelica Pino from Sonke Gender Justice. 'It aims to alert women to the risks of a gun in the home; and how the law can be used to save a life. Both the Firearms Control Act and Domestic Violence Act give women the power to take action against domestic violence by requiring police or court officials to confiscate firearms or other dangerous weapons when a domestic violence complaint involving a gun or other weapon is made'.

Any woman who lives in fear of a gun or other dangerous weapon in her home can ask the police or the courts to remove the weapon immediately.

**Support the #GunFreeValentine campaign.**

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