



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **POLICE LEAVING GUNS AT WORK WOULD SAVE LIVES**

*Friday, 5 June 2015:* Gun Free South Africa urges government to protect police and their families by legislating members to leave service pistols at work when off duty. GFSA's call follows the shooting to death of 5 people on Wednesday night, when a police constable shot and killed his girlfriend, two of her relatives and a police colleague at Alexandra police station as she tried to open a domestic abuse case against him; the constable was later killed by police.

Research shows that the use of service pistols in domestic abuse murders is common. An SA study looking at the circumstances in which men kill their wives or partners (called intimate femicide) before committing suicide, showed that 66% of perpetrators owned a legal gun and are professional or white-collar workers, mostly employed in the police, military or private security industry, reflecting easy access to guns in these professions as a risk factor<sup>1</sup>. The researchers note that 91.5% of these double deaths (intimate femicide-suicide) "might have been prevented should gun ownership have been restricted".

Adèle Kirsten, Gun Free South Africa's spokesperson, notes that this latest police shooting comes as government tightens the Firearms Control Act (2000), which controls who owns what weapon for which purpose: "We urge government to use the Firearms Control Act amendment process as an opportunity to protect police officers and their families from gun violence involving service pistols by requiring police officers to leave service pistols at work when off-duty."

Globally, it is recognised that strong gun laws save lives; South Africa is no exception – latest mortuary data confirms that the Firearms Control Act has saved lives and made South Africa safer. The 2009 data – which is the most recent mortuary data available in South Africa – shows that while gunshots remain a leading cause of injury-related death, the number of people shot and killed since the law was implemented has halved – from 34 people a day in 1998 to 18 a day in 2009.

Kirsten notes that amendments to the Firearms Control Act requiring police members to leave their service pistols at work when off-duty would reduce the risk of gun-related domestic abuse and suicide, as well as loss and theft of service pistols. Latest statistics show that police officers lose between 2 and 5 firearms every day; once these guns fall into criminal hands they are used repeatedly to threaten, injure and kill others.



**18 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa .  
Gun Free South Africa is working towards a safer,**

**more secure South Africa, by reducing gun violence.**

***Ends***

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<sup>i</sup> Mathews, S. et al. 2008. Intimate Femicide-Suicide in South Africa, WHO Bulletin 86/7 (2008), p552-558.