



**MEDIA STATEMENT**  
**Global Gun Destruction Day 9 July 2019**  
**Gun Free SA calls for destruction of guns to stop leaks fuelling murder**

9 July 2019: 11 people were shot and killed in Philippi East on the Cape Flats this past weekend. The guns used were most likely once legal before they were lost or stolen.

These murders could have been prevented if stockpiles of unwanted, confiscated and recovered guns had been destroyed.

The 9<sup>th</sup> of July was declared by the UN as #GunDestructionDay, making it the official date for destruction of small arms worldwide. In the past decade global gun stocks have increased, fuelling crime, conflict, gender-based violence, forced migration and more.

Stockpiling weapons costs more than destroying surpluses.

It also creates a high risk of diversion into illegal markets as we've seen in South Africa with the 2016 case of Christiaan Prinsloo – a police officer who sold 2,000+ guns handed in to the police for destruction to gang leaders on the Cape Flats.

Gang violence has become endemic in Cape Town, largely as a result of illegal firearms being distributed to the Cape Flats. This year alone almost 2,000 people have died from gun violence and as recently as Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July, six women were gunned down in one incident in Philippi East.

To avoid similar cases and to stop gun violence from escalating even further, Gun Free SA urges the South African Police Service to destroy seized and surrendered firearms.

The last such destruction took place in April this year, when the Minister of Police noted that there are still 60,000 firearms in SAPS stores that can be destroyed.

Says Adèle Kirsten, Gun Free SA's Director, "It is globally recognised that destroying excess, unwanted and recovered firearms, ammunition and firearm parts is the *only* way to guarantee that these are not leaked into the illegal pool of weapons."

Leakages have a lasting impact. First, as gun availability increases, so does gun violence. Guns have again replaced knives as the leading cause of murder in South Africa: Currently 23 people are shot and killed every day, up from 18 a day in 2009.

Secondly, public trust in the police is eroded. When gun owners hand their guns in to the police, they trust the police to destroy these guns. By not destroying these guns, the police

fail the public and South Africa as a whole. The result of this loss of confidence is that members of the public with unwanted guns are less likely to hand them in to the police for destruction. Instead, they remain in people's home, where they can be used in domestic violence and suicide or be stolen by house robbers. In 2017/18 members of the public reported the loss or theft of 24 guns every day.

Under the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (called the UN PoA), which South Africa ratified in 2000, South Africa is obliged to:

1. Destroy surplus firearms, including surrendered, confiscated and obsolete weapons to minimise the risk that these guns will leak into communities.
2. Submit annual reports on compliance with the UN PoA to the UN.

Based on SA's experience of guns earmarked for destruction being leaked from police stores as well as global good practice, on 21 March 2019 Gun Free SA made a written submission to the police calling for three steps to ensure that weapons earmarked for destruction are indeed destroyed:

**1. Marking of firearms**

All firearms scheduled to be destroyed must be marked prior to destruction to show that the weapon was held within a destruction storage programme.

**2. Independent verification**

An independent verification mission must be established and tasked with ensuring that firearms, ammunition and firearm parts listed for destruction on schedules published on [SAPS' website](#) are still in police stores and are destroyed.

**3. Data sharing**

Data sets listing the details of all firearms, ammunition and firearm parts scheduled to be destroyed must be shared with regional and international policing agencies to monitor transnational diversion.

*Ends*