



H1 Newsletter

January-June 2026

Welcome to our H1 newsletter. Inside, you will find highlights from our grassroots work, community partnerships, and the impact we have made together in the first half of 2026.

This newsletter amplifies community voices, shares lessons from the field, celebrates collaboration and demonstrates what is possible when people and institutions unite around a common purpose of building safer communities and preventing gun violence.

Thank you for joining us in building a country where safety is not a privilege, but a right.

Enjoy reading the newsletter!

2 903

Participants reached across Gauteng & Western Cape

966

**MEDIA
MENTIONS**

32

**GUN FREE ZONES
WORKSHOPS &
LAUNCHES**

14

**YOUTH
DIALOGUES**

5

**WOMEN FOCUSED
WORKSHOPS**

The first half of the year has reaffirmed something I have long believed: public safety is everyone's responsibility. No single organisation, institution or sector can build safer communities on its own. Lasting change depends on partnership, shared responsibility and a collective commitment to protecting life.

One commitment I have made throughout this year is to spend time in communities every week. These visits keep me connected to the realities people face, the resilience they demonstrate and the solutions they are already creating. Regular engagements with government, policymakers, civil society, academia, the private sector, faith communities and the media complement them. Together, these conversations ensure that our work remains grounded in lived experience, informed by evidence and strengthened by collaboration.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Gun Free South Africa Board for its strategic leadership, sound governance and commitment to our mission. My heartfelt thanks go to our dedicated staff, volunteers and interns, whose professionalism, compassion and commitment bring our vision to life every day. I am equally grateful to our donors, partners and supporters across civil society, academia, the private sector, communities, the media, among others. Your trust, expertise, and collaboration are strengthening this growing movement.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are advancing public safety, preventing gun violence and helping to build a South Africa where everyone can live, learn, work and thrive in safety.

Dr Stanley Maphosa - Executive Director

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



On March 5, GFSA [signed a Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) with the Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL), followed by the implementation through the launch of the **Gun-Free Gauteng campaign** at Jeppe Police Station.

This initiative is part of the committee's role to involve the public, raise awareness about gun violence, promote safer communities, and build stronger partnerships to move towards a gun-free society.

The campaign was launched amid renewed concern, following the Cleveland mass shooting, where 12 people were killed.

The event featured speeches from community leaders, law enforcement officials, and victims' families, all highlighting the urgent need for change for a gun-free environment and encouraging active participation in the movement.



On May 19, Gun Free South Africa's founding member and former director, Adèle Kirsten, **received the Order of Luthuli in Bronze**, one of South Africa's highest honours. The award recognises her lifelong work for peace, democracy, justice, and safer communities. Kirsten's activism began during the anti-apartheid struggle, where she stood for conscience and human dignity through the end conscription campaign.

In 1995, she helped establish GFSA, shaping it into a respected voice against gun violence. Her influence has reached beyond South Africa, ensuring that local lessons inform global conversations on violence prevention and small arms control.

This honour comes at a time when South Africa is reflecting on peace, justice, and child protection. It reminds us of the urgent need to silence the guns and protect young lives.



On April 10, we hosted a powerful Youth Dialogue on the impact of violence on young people in South Africa, in partnership with the University of Johannesburg Community Engagement, International Peace Youth Group SA, the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, and the South African Youth Council.

Young people must be at the centre of safety changes that affect their lives, not only as beneficiaries, but as decision-makers and partners.

This dialogue created a safe, reflective space for youth to speak openly about the violence they face and to co-create youth-led solutions for safer communities.



STATE ACCOUNTABILITY



In February, GFSA helped launch the [Global Coalition for WHO Action on Firearm Violence](#), which was set up with international partners, including Dean Peacock. Peacock is the Founding Co-Director of the coalition, a Co-Commissioner for the Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health, and an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Cape Town. The launch attracted various local and international media outlets - **see the Narrative Shift section.**

Also, in February, GFSA was one of five civil society organisations invited to present orally to the Parliament's ad hoc committee investigating the allegations made by General Nhlanhla Mkhwananzi, but did not participate due to scheduling issues.

During the first half of 2026, GFSA placed research and evidence at the centre of decision-making by producing reports, raising questions in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature Community Safety Committee, and analysing gun violence trends. In March, GFSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Committee, followed by the launch of the Gun Free Gauteng Campaign in June 2026. GFSA also strengthened South Africa's role in global firearm governance by engaging with UN

processes, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and other international platforms to promote evidence-based approaches to reducing armed violence.

GFSA also took part in national policy discussions on the Firearms Control Amendment Bill through the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC).

The Prinsloo firearms class action remained a key effort to hold the state accountable for poor firearm management that allowed guns to reach criminal networks. The case seeks compensation for affected families and aims to prevent similar failures in future. Families continued to receive counselling and updates from GFSA's team.

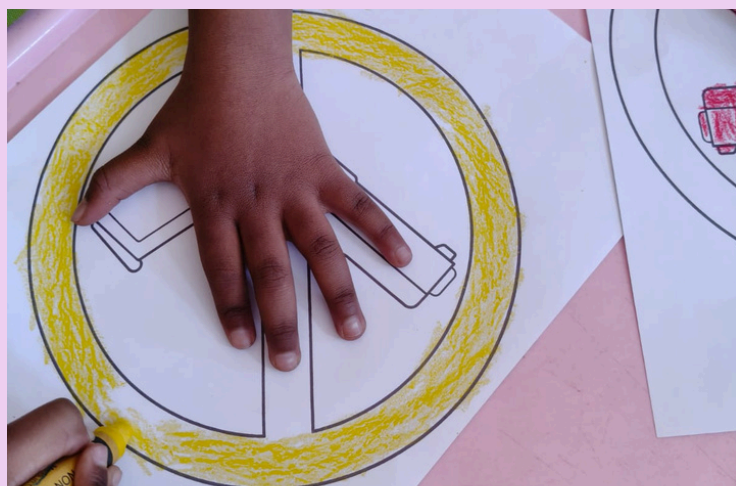
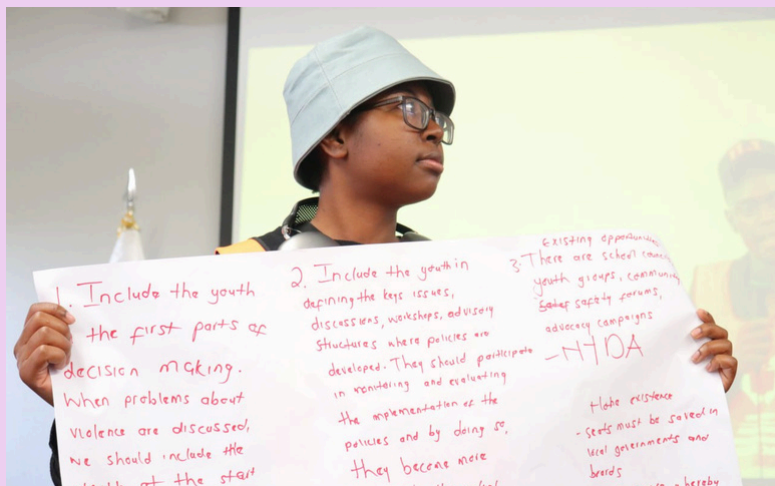
Across Johannesburg, Gauteng, and national institutions, GFSA engaged policymakers, legislators, and oversight bodies to promote practical solutions to reduce gun violence. This included contributing to policy and legislative processes, urban safety forums, provincial and national dialogues, and consultations on the Firearms Control Act.



Recent crime stats from SAPS show that murders have **dropped** compared to last year, and overall violent crime is also down. But guns remain the weapon of choice in murders and attempted murders.

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COMMUNITY MOBILISATION AND SAFETY



GFSA is dedicated to collaborating with young individuals to create a safer, gun-free future. In the first half of 2026, our outreach efforts intensified, engaging communities in Atlantis, Mitchells Plain, Westbury, Thembisa, and students at the University of Johannesburg, a hub where youth from across the nation come together, many bringing their lived experiences.

Throughout our workplaces, we successfully held **14** youth dialogues, surpassing our goal of one per month.

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Children are harmed both in gang crossfire and through accidental shootings at home. In the Western Cape alone, the provincial health department [reported 333 children](#) treated for firearm-related injuries and 58 child deaths in the first half of 2024.

Through our Gun Free Zones work, we reached out to **32** ECD centres and communities across Alexandra, Atlantis, Delft, Mitchells Plain, and Westbury, promoting safer environments where young children can learn, play, and grow free from gun violence.

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Gun violence's lasting scars



It's been 1 year and 5 months since a mother lost her son in the crossfire of gun violence. The pain of such loss never fades, gun violence tears families apart and leaves lasting scars. It has been one year and five months since Priscilla Adams lost her son, 21-year-old Shafik, to gun violence.

Shafik was shot on the night of 1 January 2025 while spending time with friends in Westbury. Since then, no gun has been found, no witnesses have spoken up, and the case has not reached court.

The last time Adams spoke directly with the detective was in August 2025, she was told the case is still open, but there are no leads. For Adams, the silence from the justice system deepens their grief and makes them feel forgotten.

She lives with the painful question every parent fears: Will I ever see justice for my child?

Moms Justice for Our Sons, part of the Gun Free South Africa programme, offers support to mothers like Priscilla. It helps them understand the legal process, provides safe spaces to grieve and heal, and connects them with other women facing the same loss. For mothers like Adams, this community is the only place where their pain is acknowledged, and their voices are heard.

Through the GFSA Mothers' Programme, women like her find support: guidance through court proceedings, safe spaces for healing, and solidarity with others who share their grief.

 [WATCH NOW](#)

NARRATIVE SHIFT

Media coverage



Our media presence has grown significantly, with **966 mentions** across print, broadcast, and digital platforms in the first half of 2026. From national television and radio interviews to online news coverage and opinion pieces, GFSA's voice has reached millions of South Africans.

The launch of the Global Coalition for WHO Action on Firearm Violence attracted coverage from various [international media outlets](#), including The Trace, Geneva Solutions, Health Policy Watch, Daily Maverick, Folha de São Paulo, and Estadão.

After the launch, GFSA Board Member Professor Sithombo Maqungo wrote in the Daily Maverick about the [crisis in trauma units](#).



while coalition member Mbuyiselo Botha shared the [lifelong impact of gun violence](#) in a GroundUp essay. This led to an editorial in the South African Medical Journal, co-authored by Dean Peacock and GFSA's Claire Taylor, which called for gunshot wounds to be legally recognised as preventive medical conditions - **see in the research and insights session**.

This visibility strengthened public awareness about gun violence, amplified community voices calling for safer streets, and kept pressure on policymakers to prioritise evidence-based firearms control. Our consistent media engagement ensured that the conversation around gun violence prevention remains urgent, informed, and solutions-driven.

Research & insights



A South African Medical Journal study shows trauma units can lead to hospital-based violence intervention programmes. Co-authored by UCT's Dean Peacock, GFSA's Claire Taylor, and Groote Schuur's Professor Pradeep Navsaria, it argues that gun violence is a public health crisis requiring care beyond emergency treatment, extending to mental health and community reintegration.



Every gun is a mistake waiting to happen is a useful reminder that guns are not harmless objects; they create deadly risk the moment they are carried, stored, or used carelessly. In South Africa, where firearm misuse and leakage already fuel violence, Gun Free SA would frame this as another reason to reduce gun availability and tighten control.

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ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Partnerships



From January to June 2026, GFSA partnered with the Gauteng Legislature, the International Peace Youth Group (South Africa), and the University of Johannesburg Community Engagement to work with partners to amplify the work we do.

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To amplify our voice for a gun-free South Africa, GFSA partnered with Radio Atlantis, a community radio, and UJFM, a campus radio, to create platforms where young leaders share their stories, challenge harmful norms, and inspire collective action.

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Become a Volunteer

Volunteer work often opens doors, says Shir-nay



BY COURTNEY
ARENDSE

Shir-nay (left) in a workshop with a learner, transferring valuable community-building skills

Here she had the opportunity to speak openly about important issues affecting young people, including mental health and gender-based violence. It was here that she discovered her passion for speaking up and using her voice to create awareness. Around the same time, she also began

volunteering with Gun Free South Africa. This experience deepened her passion for justice and community safety. For Shir-nay, volunteering was never just about giving time; it was about learning, growing, and understanding the realities that many communities face. "It helped me find my passion and grow as a person. I learned to take every opportunity, no matter how big or small, with my family's encouragement. It also made me realize that I want to complain about problems in my community, I must also be part of the solution," she said.

*** For those inspired to start volunteering, there are several organisations and spaces in Atlantis where one can get involved. IkamvaYouth in Atlantis offers tutoring and mentorship programmes for high school learners, as do local schools, Rise Sports and Development in Mamre, Survivors Haven in Mamey, and even Gun Free South Africa. These organisations are among many that provide opportunities for people to give back while also developing their own skills and networks.

Volunteering is often seen as something people do to help others, but many do not realise how much it can transform the life of the person who volunteers.

It holds many benefits, but because the payout is not instant, it is often disregarded. However, this could be a side hustle in the form of a ladder to the top. For 20-year-old Shir-nay May, volunteering opened doors she never imagined and eventually led her to working for Gun Free South Africa as the Western Cape Programme Officer, an organisation dedicated to reducing gun violence in communities.

Her journey into community work began at just 13 years old when she started participating in programmes with MoloSongolo, an organisation focused on children's rights. It was here that she first began learning about advocacy and the importance of young voices in social change. Through this work, she met her mentors Meagan Lubbe and Monique Hansen, who introduced her to an exciting new opportunity at the local radio station in Atlantis.

Donate

Scan the QR code or click the [link](#) to access our banking details.

Support our work | Scan to donate



No matter the amount, your donation makes a real difference in our mission to reduce and prevent gun violence.

OUR CURATED READS

In April, Julius Malema was sentenced to five years for firing a weapon in public, which shows why the Firearms Control Act must be enforced consistently, no one should be above the law, and every unlawful gun use puts communities at risk.

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In April, a road rage incident ended in tragedy in Emmarentia, Johannesburg. Two drivers were involved in an altercation, which escalated into a shooting. According to reports, a female passenger allegedly retrieved a firearm from one of the vehicles, while one of the drivers also drew a gun.

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Weak firearm security, poor stock control, and governance failures allow guns to leak from official systems into criminal gangs. Every missing gun is a future tragedy, and that stronger control, accountability and enforcement are urgent.

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MYTHBUSTING

Who should be involved in addressing gang problems?

Only the police

Just the government

Exclusively educators

Communities, police, and families

What is a fact regarding the presence of guns in the home?

Guns in the home increase risk of fatal outcomes.

Guns are commonly used for self-defense.

Guns at home make you safer.

Discuss gun violence issues with your loved ones, share on our social media platforms and tag GFSA.

Learn more about the [cost of carrying a gun](#) on the SiyaKhulaLive podcast, powered by the University of Stellenbosch Centre for the Advancement of Social Impact and Transformation, as well as the HR division

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