



## **2019-20 CRIME STATS: GUNS LEADING CAUSE MURDER REDUCING GUN AVAILABILITY KEY TO CURING SA'S VIOLENT CRIME EPIDEMIC**

*31 July 2020:* The latest national crime statistics show that murder rates have again increased with almost half of all murders for which the weapon is known being from gunshots: 45% of murders were firearm-related, followed by knife wounds at 28%.

Says Claire Taylor, GFSA's researcher: "This is scandalous. Guns, unlike knives, are controlled by laws, regulations and protocols. But poor implementation as a result of weak enforcement and lack of compliance has facilitated the increasing availability of guns. And, as research globally and nationally has proven time and again, gun availability tracks gun violence."

In 2019 President Ramaphosa envisioned halving violent crime in SA in the next 10 years.

If we do not act to reduce the ready availability of guns in our country, our communities, our homes, his vision will remain just that.

Acting means reducing existing stockpiles of legal and illegal guns and stopping new guns entering the market.

As a country, we have done this already: Between 2000 and 2010 a range of interventions – a new gun law that raised the bar for gun ownership, amnesties, intelligence led recovery operations and regular gun destructions all helped reduce the availability of guns.

The result was a halving of gun-related deaths, from 34 people shot and killed a day to 18.

South Africa's experience between 2000 and 2010 is a detailed account of how to reduce gun violence. Hundreds of people – fathers, mothers, sons and daughters – are alive because guns were less available in this time.

SA's experience between 2000 and 2010 is a map to halve violent crime in the next 10 years.

What we need now is action.

GFSA calls on the Minister of Police and National Police Commissioner to urgently:

- Strengthen 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.
- restrict access to firearms by at-risk individuals, specifically those with a history of violence and problem drinking.

GfSA also urges that, like Covid-19, gunshots be made notifiable. Mandatory reporting of gunshot injuries by health centres would allow the authorities to track gun violence in real time, identify hotspots and take appropriate action.

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