



Gun Free SA calls on voters to focus on the gun

21 May 2024: While almost all major political parties include addressing violent crime as a key feature of their 2024 election manifestos, most don't mention gun control, even though [guns are the leading weapon used in murder](#) and attempted murder.

Gun violence is at crisis levels. 34 people are shot and killed in SA every day with mass killings becoming increasingly common.

"Addressing gun-related crime must be a priority for any political party if they are serious about making South Africa safe for all who live in it," Says Adèle Kirsten, Director of GFSA.

The few political parties that do mention guns in their manifestos suggest that the solution to violent crime is to deal with illegal guns, with some parties supporting licensed civilian gun ownership for self-protection.

Says Kirsten, "this ignores the evidence and perpetuates the [myth that guns are effective for self-protection](#). It also fails to recognise that while removing illegal guns in our communities is a crucial first step to reduce gun violence, it is not enough, as it stops short of addressing the source of crime guns."

The latest information shows that most crime guns – guns used to commit crimes including murder, attempted murder, sexual violence and aggravated robbery – are legal guns owned by the state (police, military, other official institutions) and civilians (private individuals, private security industry).

There are three main ways that [legal guns feed violent crime in SA](#):

1. Loss and theft of licensed guns is the most common. Between 2020 to 2023, civilians reported the loss and theft of 16,486 guns to the police, with the SAPS, SANDF and Correctional Services reporting a combined loss and theft of 2,381 guns, of which 85% were SAPS service pistols. On average 24 legal guns enter the illegal market every single day.
2. Legal guns also leak into the illegal market through fraud and corruption involving the police, businesses such as gun dealers and private security companies, and individuals.
3. Legal guns are used by licensed owners in crimes such as intimate femicide-suicide, where a man kills his current or previous partner and himself.

In the first years of democracy SA's gun violence levels were as high as today, with 34 people shot dead a day. As a result of stricter gun controls that focused on both recovering and destroying illegal guns and tightening controls of licensed guns to stop their leakage and illegal use, the number of people shot dead almost halved in 10 years.

"SA's own experience shows that [gun control is crime control](#)," says Kirsten. "Without a comprehensive approach to gun control, gun crime will not reduce, and crime guns will continue to be the weapon of choice to murder, injure, threaten and intimidate."

We all want a safer country. We urge voters to stop gun violence on 29th May by asking: Does the party you are thinking of voting for have a plan to combat the rising levels of gun violence in SA? What is your party's position on illegal guns, and how does it plan to stop legal guns becoming crime guns?

**34 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa.
Gun Free South Africa is helping build a safer country by reducing gun violence.**

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