



MEDIA STATEMENT

Welcome destruction of 30,000 illegal guns on eve of global gun destruction day

9 July 2020: GFSA welcomes the destruction of over 30,000 illegal firearms by the SAPS on the eve of International Small Arms Destruction Day.

Every day we hear about the destruction *caused by* firearms. SAPS' destruction of 30,000+ illegal firearms, mostly seized by the police in intelligence-driven operations and through tip-offs from citizens concerned with the proliferation of illegal firearms in communities, means these guns can no longer cause harm.

SAPS' 7 July destruction of 30,913 handguns, 1,452 rifles, 894 shotguns and 725 firearm parts comes on the eve of International Small Arms Destruction day, which is marked globally every year on 9th July.

When International Small Arms Destruction was first declared by the United Nations in 2001, the South African government supported the initiative.

Says GFSA's Director Adèle Kirsten, "Almost 20 years later South Africa is in a unique position to lead support of this important day. As chair of the AU, which has identified silencing the guns as a key strategy to creating conditions conducive to Africa's development, the destruction of firearms conveys our government's commitment to silencing the guns in Africa."

It is globally recognised that the destruction of firearms, ammunition and firearm parts is the *only* way to guarantee that these are not leaked through loss, theft, fraud or corruption into the illegal pool of weapons.

Global experience also shows that firearms, ammunition and firearm parts in storage awaiting destruction are particularly vulnerable to being diverted, with risk increasing once details have been published. South Africa's own experience confirms this risk as in the example of ex-colonel Prinsloo who was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment for selling confiscated and surrendered guns, including guns handed in during amnesties, to Western Cape gang leaders.

There are several key steps GFSA has urged SAPS to take to reduce the risk that weapons earmarked for destruction are not leaked back into the illicit market. Two of these are:

1. Marking of firearms: All firearms scheduled for destruction to be marked prior to destruction using a manual stamp to hammer a small mark in to the receiver to show that the weapon was held within a destruction programme storage, and

2. Independent verification: An independent verification taskforce is established prior to the destruction which is tasked with ensuring that firearms, ammunition and firearm parts listed on schedules published on www.saps.gov.za are indeed destroyed.

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