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**Background Notes for NCOP Debate: The Impact of Crime in South Africa. Moving With Utmost Speed to Address the Causes and Effects of Crime in Communities**

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# SOUTH AFRICA’S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP): BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

Outcome of 3 of South Africa’s National Development Plan (NDP) envisions a South Africa where everyone is and feels safe. The NDP’s objective is to build safer communities in South Africa by 2030 where people would no longer fear crime, but feel and be safe at home, school and at work. The NDP further recognises that achieving safer communities is only possible with a professional police service which is free of corruption and values respect for human rights. By 2030 the NDP envisions that the police service is a well-resourced professional institution staffed by highly skilled officers who value their work, serve the community, safeguard lives and property without discrimination, protect the peaceful against violence, and respect everyone’s rights to equality and justice.

# NATIONAL 2015/16 CRIME STATISTICS

**2.1 CONTACT CRIMES**

The South African Police Service’s Annual National Crime Statistics was released in September 2016. The statistics for 2015/16 revealed an increase in contact crimes which include murder, assault with the intention to do grievous bodily harm, and robbery with aggravating circumstances, while reported sexual crimes decreased.

* The **national murder rate has increased four years in a row**.
* In the 2015/16 financial year the **murder rate increased by 4.9% to 18 673 murders (up from 17,805** in the previous year), translating to **51 people killed every day.**
* **Most murders (59%) were committed indoors, most likely by people who were known to the victims and often during domestic violence disputes and/or the use of alcohol**.
* There has been an **increase in the number of murders linked to robberies and other forms of theft** (linked to organised crime/ syndicates).
* **Car hijackings increased by 14.3%**
* **Violent protests increased from 2 289 to 3 542** (linked to dissatisfaction over service delivery).
* **Sexual offence crimes reporting decreased by 3.2% in seven provinces, but remain unacceptably high, at approximately 150 sexual offences per day**. According to the ISS the decrease in reporting sexual offence does not show a decrease in the commission of this crime category as only 1 in 13 rapes are reported by approximately 46% of victims due to fears of stigmatisation and secondary victimisation.

**2.2 PROVINCIAL CONTACT CRIME AND MURDER RATES**

* Only three provinces showed a decrease in contact crimes,
* The murder rate increased in all provinces except the Northern Cape where it decreased by 9.9%.
* KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of murders, followed by Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape.
* The province with the highest increase in murder rate was Limpopo, followed by the Eastern Cape and the North West.

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| **PROVINCE** | **CONTACT CRIMES** | **MURDER** |
| 1. Eastern Cape | 67 258 (2.4% **decrease**) | 3 649 (**9.9% increase** |
| 1. Western Cape | 116 858 (0.6% increase) | 3 224 (1.2% increase) |
| 1. KwaZulu-Natal | 97 870 (0.99**% decrease**) | 3 929 (**3.1%** **increase)** |
| 1. Free State | 41 100 (2.99% **decrease**) | 993 (**5.3%** **increase)** |
| 1. Northern Cape | 18 971 (0.5% increase) | 372 (**9.9% decrease)** |
| 1. Gauteng | 172 814 (3.3% increase) | 3 842 (4.7% increase) |
| 1. North-West | 35 224 (0.4% increase) | 907 (6.3% increase) |
| 1. Mpumalanga | 32 737 (2.7% increase) | 859 (3.4% increase) |
| 1. Limpopo | 40 391 (6.4% increase) | 898 (**15.6% increase)** |

# CRIME TRENDS – MAIN Causes / Factors

* **Gang violence**

The United Nation’s Global Study on Homicide places Cape Town as one of the murder capitals of the world, while a Mexican NGO places Cape Town at number 20 world-wide. In 2006 the city averaged five murders per day. While murder rates have decreased since 2006, the murder rate remains unacceptably high.

Earlier in 2016 Johannesburg was named as the most dangerous city in South Africa. Globally, Cape Town is regarded as the gang capital of South Africa, with the most notorious gangs the “Hard Livings” headquartered in Manenberg, the “Americans” in Lavender Hill and the “Numbers” gang in Pollsmoor prison.

The main causes of murder and drug-related crimes in Cape Town are attributed to gangsterism, especially on the Cape Flats in places like Manenberg, Lavender Hill, Hanover Park, Delft and Mitchells Plain as well as in the prisons. According to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Mitchells Plain has for many years experienced the highest violence and property crime rates in the country. On 12 September 2016 newspapers reported that teens in Mitchells Plain and Delft were fleeing for the lives and have gone into hiding as gangs go on a deadly recruiting spree, with the only option being to join a gang or be killed.[[1]](#footnote-1) In a period of 30 days as many teens have been killed in these areas. These developments coupled with the recent surge in gang violence on the Cape Flats calls for urgent in-depth multi-disciplinary interventions in Mitchells Plain and surrounding areas.

* **High unemployment rates**

Nyanga is regarded as the murder capital of South Africa, despite the fact that the area is not known for gang violence. According to the ISS the residential areas of Nyanga, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Harare have the highest murder rates in Cape Town and have experienced abnormally high murder rates for more than a decade. In Nyanga an important contributor to the high murder rate is the very high unemployment rate of 45%. This is slightly higher than the unemployment rate in Lavender Hill, and much higher than the unemployment rates for Mitchell’s Plain, Manenberg and Khayelitsha.

* **Alcohol / Drug Abuse**

Most murders (59%) were committed indoors, most likely by people who were known to the victims and often during domestic violence disputes and/or the use of alcohol.

* **Culture of violence**

According to the Police Minister, South Africa struggles with a “prevalent culture of violence”. Other commentators have referred to a prevalence of “perverted masculinities” and an inherited culture which sees violence as an accepted and natural means of solving conflict, often from a very young age.[[2]](#footnote-2)

* **Inequality**
* Studies have shown a link between inequality and violence and crime. Inequality in South Africa is also linked to high unemployment rates and perceived inequalities in the rendering of services to communities. In the South African context this often relates to dissatisfaction over services delivery by municipalities and other government departments which causes frustration and anger to spill over into violent protests.
* The Khayelitsha Commission Report shows that when the police do not respond adequately to communities’ dissatisfaction with police services, it can lead to a lack of trust in the police and vigilantism against alleged perpetrators as community members take the law into their own hands. The Khayelitsha Report also found that “Apartheid” style allocation of policing resources persisted as the police stations with the most serious crimes were often the most under-resourced compared to police stations in predominantly white areas with less crime.[[3]](#footnote-3)

# RECOMMENDED STEPS TO ADDRESS CRIME AND BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES

* In-depth multi-disciplinary interventions are needed in areas plagued by gang violence.
* Invest in at-risk youth[[4]](#footnote-4) - including through education, job creation and opportunities as well as mentoring.
* Keep children safe and support parents – reinforce through educational campaigns the importance of parental responsibility to ensure their children’s whereabouts are known at all times.
* Less alcohol, guns and drugs – enforce stricter by-laws on the establishment and location of shebeens and liquor outlets in communities to curb under-age drinking and the sale of alcohol to minors.
* Police to improve relationships with communities to foster trust so that people will come forward with information, this can be done through inter alia sports, adopt-a-school and adopt-a-cop programmes.
* Deal decisively and transparently with disciplinary action against abusive and corrupt police officials to improve relationships between the police and communities.
* Have regular *izimbizos* in communities[[5]](#footnote-5) and listen to community complaints about police inaction or slow response times and put actions in place to address this, including placing **more visible police** on patrol and **improving police response times**.
* Improve street lighting and infrastructure in townships to provide greater access to police vehicles to patrol communities.
* Allocate appropriate vehicles to police stations in accordance with the size of the population and type of terrain.
* Police, Department of Justice and Social Development to improve responses and actions to address domestic violence that will have lasting effects, including addressing the financial reasons why women in particular choose to stay in abusive relationships.
* Address drug-related crime holistically as set out in the Drug Master Plan, including through drug rehabilitation and alternative sentencing options other than imprisonment.
* Police must improve crime intelligence capabilities and forensics, especially in relation to detecting and solving organised crime.
* Reinstate SAPS gang units to deal decisively with gang violence in communities.
* SAPS must improve co-operation with other crime-fighting agencies, academia and civil society organisations like the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, Business Against Crime, the ISS and universities.
* Apply some of the recommendations of the Khayelitsha Report more broadly, e.g. alternative ways to improve police responsiveness through better reporting options (such as social media groups); and structures such as neighbourhood watches, Community Policing Forums and Street Committees.

# CONCLUSION

The undertaking by SAPS to release quarterly crime statistics is welcomed as this will foster a more rapid response to emerging crime trends and allocate resources where they are most needed. This will also contribute in the long run to building a more professional police force that is better able and equipped to deal with crimes in communities and build the safer communities envisaged in the NDP.

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