



## CREATIVELY COMBATting GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

12 November 2021

**TO:** Chairperson of the National Council  
of Provinces

**Attention:** Honourable Nkosiyakhe Amos Masondo  
Parliament of the Republic of South Africa  
Parliament Street  
Cape Town

**Email:** [chairpersonoffice@parliament.gov.za](mailto:chairpersonoffice@parliament.gov.za)  
[zhlathwayo@parliament.gov.za](mailto:zhlathwayo@parliament.gov.za)  
[tntoahae@parliament.gov.za](mailto:tntoahae@parliament.gov.za)

**AND TO:** Secretary of the National Council  
of Provinces

**Attention:** Honourable Advocate Modibedi Phindela

**Email:** [mphindela@parliament.gov.za](mailto:mphindela@parliament.gov.za)

**AND TO:** Select Committee on Petitions and  
Executive Undertakings

**Attention:** Secretary of the Select Committee  
on Petitions and Executive Undertakings,  
Mr Nkanyiso Mkhize

**Email:** [nmkhize@parliament.gov.za](mailto:nmkhize@parliament.gov.za)

Dear Honourable Chairperson

### COLLECTIVE PETITION: COMPLAINT REFERRAL REGARDING OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY

1. We wish to refer a complaint, in the form of a collective petition, to the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings ("Select Committee") in respect of the Office of the Presidency's unresponsiveness to two petitions handed over to it on 6 March 2020

#### The Embrace Project

**Directors:** Leanne Berger and Lee-Anne Germanos

#### SA Women Fight Back

**Director:** Bronwyn Litkie

#### Website:

[www.theembraceproject.com](http://www.theembraceproject.com)  
NPC reg no: 2020/613113/08

#### Social Media:

IG, FB & LinkedIn  
[@theembraceprojectza](https://www.instagram.com/theembraceprojectza)

#### Contact:

[leanne.van89@gmail.com](mailto:leanne.van89@gmail.com)  
[leeanne.germanos@gmail.com](mailto:leeanne.germanos@gmail.com)

#### Website:

[www.sawomenfightback.com](http://www.sawomenfightback.com)  
NPC reg no: 2020/069258/08

#### Social Media:

IG, FB & Twitter  
[bronwynmlitkie@gmail.com](https://www.instagram.com/bronwynmlitkie)  
[@sawomenfb](https://www.facebook.com/sawomenfb)

and 30 August 2021, respectively, pertaining to gender-based violence and femicide. In each case, the Office of the Presidency had undertaken to respond to the petitions within between seven days and three weeks. Not only has there been no response to the petitions in almost two years, but the Office of the Presidency fails to respond to calls and outright ignores email follow-ups. Examples of the follow-up emails sent are annexures to this complaint, entitled annexure A.

2. The signatories to this collective petition before you are the authors of the aforementioned petitions handed over to the Office of the Presidency. The Embrace Project and SA Women Fight Back are non-profit organisations established to combat gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa, while Ms Laura-Lee Gillion is an individual activist.
3. Both the petitions referred to in paragraph 1 above, copies of which are annexures B and C to this complaint, ask His Excellency, the President, to account for unfulfilled undertakings, and his government's clear lack of political will to combat gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. The petitions collectively gained almost one million signatures. The [petition entitled annexure B](#), handed over by Ms Laura-Lee Gillion and SA Women Fight Back on 6 March 2020, has gained more than 800 000 signatures to date, while the [petition entitled annexure C](#), handed over by The Embrace Project on 30 August 2021, has attained more than 30 000 signatures. Thus, the Office of the Presidency has effectively ignored the voices of almost one million people.
4. With regard to the South African government's lack of political will to combat gender-based violence and femicide, the petition entitled annexure C makes reference to two reports that were released in April and May 2021 respectively by South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality, and the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ("UN Committee"). In sum, the Commission for Gender Equality reports that the South African government failed to effectively implement (or implement at all) the Presidency's Emergency Response Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide two years after its release. While the UN Committee found the South African government to be in systematic and grave violation of Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, because of South Africa's obscene rates of domestic violence, and the

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##### Contact:

[bronwynmlitkie@gmail.com](mailto:bronwynmlitkie@gmail.com)

government's repeated failure to take measures against it. Copies of both of the reports are annexures to this complaint, entitled annexures D and E, respectively.

5. It would also be useful for the Select Committee to note that prior to the handover of the petition entitled annexure C on 30 August 2021, The Embrace Project sent a letter to the Office of the Presidency on 9 August 2021 – the content of which was identical to its petition. In an email response sent by a Mr Robert Ngobeni-Hlongwane from the Office of the Presidency on 11 August 2021 (which is the only communication received from the Office of Presidency to date), The Embrace Project were advised to re-direct their letter to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities instead. This attempt to pass off accountability was challenged by The Embrace Project in both in emails sent on 11 August 2021, and a letter, dated 30 August 2021 ("letter of motivation"), which was handed over together with its petition on the same date. In both the email and the letter of motivation, The Embrace Project pointed out that the policies and funds aimed at eradicating gender-based violence and femicide all emanated from the Office of the Presidency, and thus the issues raised in the petition entitled annexure C fell within its mandate. Copies of the emails sent on 9 and 11 August 2021, as well as the letter of motivation, are annexures to this complaint entitled annexures F, G, H and I. When handing over the petition entitled annexure C, with the letter of motivation, to the Office of the Presidency, The Embrace Project was informed by an official, a Mr Shonisani, who received the documents, that a decision on both the letter of motivation and petition would be communicated to them between 7 to 14 days therefrom. As mentioned previously, no response to either has been received to date, despite follow-ups.
6. We accordingly request that the Select Committee question the Office of the Presidency on the dereliction of its duty to the public through its total disregard of the petitions. The Commission for Gender Equality also raises the Office of the Presidency's unresponsiveness as an issue in its report entitled annexure D. We also request that the Select Committee question His Excellency, the President, on the content of the two petitions handed over to His Office – being the lack of political will to eradicate gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. This is not only evident from the annexed reports, but also from South Africa's latest crime statistics released on 20 August 2021 by the Minister of Police. The statistics show that the rate of rape and sexual offences in the country has increased in comparison to even pre-COVID statistics, at 110 reported

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[@sawomenfb](https://www.sawomenfb.com)

cases of rape a day, and 140 reported cases of sexual offences daily. In addition, the World Population Review has ranked South Africa the number one most dangerous country in the world for women in 2021.

7. Should you require any further information from us in respect of this collective petition, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully



**Lee-Anne Germanos**

**Director, The Embrace Project**

[leeanne.germanos@gmail.com](mailto:leeanne.germanos@gmail.com)



**Leanne Berger**

**Director, The Embrace Project**

[leanne.van89@gmail.com](mailto:leanne.van89@gmail.com)



**Bronwyn Litkie**

**Director, SA Women Fight Back**

[bronwynmlitkie@gmail.com](mailto:bronwynmlitkie@gmail.com)



**Laura-Lee Gillion**

[gillionlaura@gmail.com](mailto:gillionlaura@gmail.com)

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