



## Media Statement

### Response to the SA Football Association's Gun Control Campaign

*Tuesday, 4 November 2014:* Gun Free South Africa supports the Gun Control Campaign launched by the South African Football Association (SAFA) this morning in honour of Senzo Meyiwa and the 17 other people shot and killed every day in South Africa.

We also welcome the opportunity to be part of the Special Committee responsible for coordinating the Campaign, which is focused very much on reducing illegal firearms in South Africa.

In response to the Campaign's call for a national firearms amnesty to mop up the pool of illegal guns in the country, we urge that this be based on three principles: no questions are asked; amnesty sites are neutral venues; and firearms handed in are destroyed on site:

- Section 139 of the Firearms Control Act (2000) gives the Minister of Police the power to declare an amnesty via a notice in the Government Gazette and with the approval of parliament. The law also allows the minister to impose certain conditions during an amnesty, such as the ballistic testing of any firearm handed in, which can result in prosecution if the firearm is linked to a crime. Guns are robust commodities that are used repeatedly to commit crimes. As such, Gun Free South Africa urges the Minister to not impose any conditions on people wishing to hand firearms in, so as to mop up as many illegal guns during the amnesty as possible.
- The Firearms Control Act requires that firearms surrendered to the state be handed in to the police. Gun Free South Africa believes this requirement will inhibit people from handing in illegal guns out of fear of recognition and prosecution. We urge that gun hand-in points be neutral venues such as churches and schools - as happened in the 1994 amnesty - to mitigate this risk.
- Gun Free South Africa is often approached by people wanting to hand in their firearms for destruction, but expressing mistrust in the police to execute this request. Such fears were justified in May this year when an arms cache discovered in Norwood was found to include firearms handed in to the police for destruction during the 2010 national firearms amnesty; but rather than being destroyed these guns were stolen and sold to criminals, allegedly by corrupt police officials. As such, Gun Free South Africa urges that any firearm handed in during the amnesty be destroyed on-site in front of the person handing the gun in.

We also support SAFA's request for accurate and updated information on where illegal firearms come from in order to stop leakage. Indications are that illegal guns come from three sources: first, smuggling from neighbouring countries, though police data shows this is low. Secondly, fraud, corruption and poor implementation of the firearms licensing system, which means that people who shouldn't be granted the responsibility of gun ownership are issued licences. The final way involves loss and theft from licensed gun owners; police stats indicate that this is a significant source of illegal guns - since 1994 an average of almost 50 guns were reported lost or stolen every day from licensed guns owners, with civilians losing 8 times more guns than police officers over the past 10 years. Up-to-date information on the source of illegal guns will allow the Special Committee to develop evidence-based interventions to close the tap through which guns are leaking into the illegal pool.

**Gun Free South Africa is working towards making South Africa a safer more secure country by reducing gun violence**