



MEDIA STATEMENT

RESEARCH SHOWS SOUTH AFRICA'S GUN LAW HAS SAVED LIVES, MADE COUNTRY SAFER

Cape Town, 10 November 2015: Evidence that South Africa's Firearms Control Act (2000) has saved thousands of lives and made South Africa safer was publicised at a seminar hosted by Gun Free South Africa in partnership with the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum and the Institute for Security Studies today.

The research presented by Dr Richard Matzopoulos and Professor Naeemah Abrahams shows that:

- A total of 4,585 lives were saved from gun violence across five South African cities (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria) between 2001 and 2005.
- While men make up 90% of gun homicide victims, women are most vulnerable to being shot in their home with a licensed gun owned by their intimate partner.
- The number of women shot and killed halved between 1999 and 2009, from 32% to 17%, slightly improving South Africa's femicide rate; while four women were killed every day by their intimate partner in 1999, in 2009 this decreased to three intimate partner murders a day.

According to Matzopoulos and Abrahams, the introduction of stricter gun laws in 2000 is the only plausible explanation for the lives saved.

Speaking at the seminar, Adèle Kirsten, Gun Free South Africa's spokesperson said, "The message is clear, strong gun laws reduce violent crime".

Although the Firearms Control Act has saved thousands of lives, Gareth Newham, Head of the Institute for Security Studies' Governance, Crime and Justice Division, warned that gun violence in South Africa remains worryingly high, "South Africa's homicide rate is six times higher than the global average and firearms are responsible for many of these deaths, with latest mortuary data (from 2009) showing that 18 people are shot dead every day in South Africa."

According to Sean Tait, Director of the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum, the importance of Matzopoulos' and Abrahams' research in demonstrating interventions that reduce violence cannot be overstated, "By highlighting that firearms are a primary tools of violent crime in South Africa, their research can help build a secure and peaceful country by guiding policies aimed at achieving the vision of a safe South Africa as articulated in the 2030 National Development Plan."

Kirsten agrees, noting that the current review of the Firearms Control Act "provides a unique opportunity to strengthen control over the use of guns in South Africa, and using evidence such as this research, to consider greater limitations on civilian handgun possession and reduce the presence of guns in the home. The cost of not doing so is lives lost to gun violence."

Note to editors

- Dr Richard Matzopoulos: Epidemiologist and specialist scientist at the School of Public Health and Family Medicine [University of Cape Town], and the Burden of Disease Research Unit [South African Medical Research Council].

- This research has been published in the American Journal of Public Health: March 2014, Vol. 104, No. 3, pp. 455-460, read more at:
<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2013.310650>
- Professor Naeemah Abrahams: Deputy Director of the Gender and Health Research Unit [South African Medical Research Council].
- This research has been published in PLoS Med: April 2013, Vol. 10, No. 4, read more at:
[e1001412.doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001412](http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001412)
- Latest mortuary data shows that 6,428 people were shot and killed in South Africa in 2009¹, i.e. 18 people were shot and killed a day. This is half the number of people shot 10 years ago; in 1998, 12,298 people were shot and killed, averaging 34 people a day².

¹ Matzopoulos, R. et al. 2015. Injury-related mortality in South Africa: a retrospective descriptive study of post-mortem investigations. Bull World Health Organisation. Published online: 13 March 2015. 93: 303–313: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.14.145771>.

² Chetty, Robert. 2000. *Firearm Use and Distribution in South Africa*. Pretoria: The National Crime Prevention Centre.