



MEDIA STATEMENT RESPONDING TO 2017/18 NATIONAL CRIME STATISTICS URGENT ACTION TO REDUCE GUN AVAILABILITY KEY TO CURING SA'S VIOLENT CRIME EPIDEMIC

11 September 2018: The latest national crime statistics show that guns are overwhelmingly the weapon of choice to kill, injure, threaten and intimidate: A shocking 41.3% of murders and 59.5% of aggravated robberies in 2017/18 were gun-related. The vast majority of these crimes involve handguns: Between 1999/2000 and 2013/14, handguns were used in 94% of murders and 97% of aggravated robberies.

Violent crime has not been this high since late 1990, when the number of guns in South Africa peaked. Government's response to the 1990's crime wave focused on reducing the availability of guns in communities e.g. through police operations to recover and destroy illegal guns and stricter controls (including the Firearms Control Act, 2000) to regulate legal gun ownership in recognition that the majority of illegal guns were once legal before being leaked into the illegal pool.

As the number of guns in South Africa declined between 2000 and 2010, so too did violent crime. However, in 2011 these gains began reversing as evidence of poor gun control emerged.

Says Ronald Menoe, Chairperson of Gun Free South Africa, "Fraud, corruption and a dereliction of duty have resulted in a steady increase in the availability of guns in South Africa since 2011, which has in turn fed the violent crime epidemic sweeping the country since then."

According to Menoe, "Experience shows that the crime epidemic threatening public safety can be treated. Interventions to reduce the number of guns in circulation between 2000 and 2010 saved thousands of lives nationally in these 10 years. Thousands more can be saved if government takes urgent and decisive action to decrease the ready availability of guns in our communities."

Gun Free South Africa calls on the Minister of Police and National Police Commissioner to urgently:

- Proceed with actions to recover and destroy unwanted, obsolete and illegally held guns as soon as possible, including holding a national firearms amnesty and vigorously undertaking crime-intelligence operations;
- Review and upgrade weapons storage and destruction facilities to prevent loss and theft and ensure weapons earmarked for destruction are destroyed;
- Amend the Firearms Control Act (2000) to simplify the administration thereof and rigorously restrict access to handguns, which are highly prized by those who cannot get access through legal channels and are thus overwhelming targeted and used to commit crimes.

Ends