

**Makgabo Matlala, the four-year-old granddaughter of judge Bernard Ngoepe, was thought to have been kidnapped by three armed men who broke into her family's home in Lenasia in March 2006. However, the next day the child was found dead and half naked.**



**Three-year-old Joey Joseph went missing in September 2005 while playing outside her home in Delft. Her body was found in a bush the next day, 3km from where she was last seen. She had been sexually assaulted and murdered.**



**Leighandre 'Baby Lee' Jegels, 25, was shot dead by her estranged police officer boyfriend, against whom she had a protection order, in Mdantsane on 30 August 2019. The man was arrested after a head-on collision in the Eastern Cape and died in hospital.**



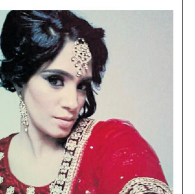
**Captain Anna-Marie Potgieter, 39, was working at the child protection and sexual offences unit in Benoni, when she was shot three times at the home of her boyfriend Peter Don Brandt. His handyman and an accomplice were arrested for the murders and convicted.**



**Six-year-old Kim Abrahams was found floating in Koffiedam after walking to a nearby shop by herself in Delft, Cape Town, in August 2005. She had been assaulted and strangled. A neighbour was arrested but then acquitted due to lack of evidence.**



**Felicity Cilliers, 28, was strangled and raped in the vineyard of a farm near Stellenbosch in May 2007. The case was reopened 10 years later and family friend Andrew Jordaan was arrested after he was linked to the murder by DNA evidence. He was sentenced to life.**



**Fatima Patel, 28, died from a single shot to the head in her home in Polokwane in April 2015, allegedly after a heated argument with her husband Rameez Patel about his extramarital affairs. Rameez is on trial for the murder.**

By NIVASHNI NAIR

● The government has failed the women and children of SA, who continue to face horrendous crimes against them, as leaders pay lip service to the scourge of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide.

That's the message from activists and experts ahead of Women's Day on Tuesday. They say there does not seem to be any political will to rein in the rapes, murders and other crimes.

"No country in which women and children are as unsafe as in South Africa dare call itself democratic," said Stellenbosch University philosophy professor Louise du Toit.

"And it seems to me that since the power struggles have now reached the levels of violence they have, the only way to contest the current culture of power and politics is for a new grassroots women's movement, independent of party politics, to engage in a kind of nonviolent resistance movement, where we withdraw our co-operation with institutions that are unresponsive to our demands."

Gender Links special adviser Colleen Lowe Morna said the government had not put "real leadership, energy and resources" into reducing GBV. "Declare a state of disaster, like we did during Covid-19, and put effective measures and resources in place to end this pandemic," she said.

This year Amnesty International SA launched a campaign, #InterruptBrokenPromises, that focuses on promises made under the current administration.

Its executive director, Shenilla Mohamed, said the state had an obligation to protect people's rights to life and security but "we are not seeing this obligation realised".

"There does not seem to be any political will to bring down these [crime] numbers. Each of these numbers is a human being with a family, and we need to stop looking at these as statistics. These are people whose lives have been brutally taken away or traumatised."

The quarterly crime statistics released in June for January to March showed murders of women rose 17.5% year on year, with 898 women killed in the period. Rapes increased 13.7% with 10,818 reported cases.

Amnesty International SA notes that in March 2020 the cabinet approved the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBV, but a national council on the issue that is supposed to oversee implementation of the plan has yet to be established.

It adds that in 2020 the government committed to reducing the DNA-testing backlog in GBV cases from 16,000 to 5,000. But not only did the backlog skyrocket to 82,000 cases during 2021-2022, the total backlog for all DNA tests stands at 154,240.

At the launch of the GBV response fund on February 4 2021, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the government had allocated R21bn to implement the NSP in its



**Activists and experts say the statistics and experiences of women speak for themselves — all the government's promises to tackle gender-based violence are so much hot air.**  
 Picture: Allister Russell

medium-term expenditure framework.

"However, it is not clear how the money has been used and where it has been allocated," said Mohamed.

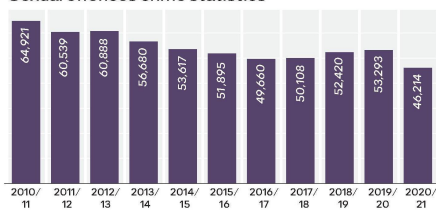
"Amnesty International SA submitted a Promotion of Access to Information Act application to the presidency to get detailed information, but we were disappointed in the response we got and subsequent follow-ups have been unanswered," said Mohamed.

She added that the police service had failed to keep its promise to train additional officers to handle GBV cases — 919 in proactive intervention and 565 in reactive intervention.

"We agree that the fight to eradicate GBV (gender-based violence and femicide) is not only the job of the state, and society needs to play its part," said Mohamed.

"However, it is not enough to only focus on changing social and cultural norms within society, just as it is not enough to only place the responsibility of addressing GBV at the feet of the justice system. It requires action from everyone and every sector, including interdepartmental collaboration

### Sexual offences crime statistics



Graphic: Roby-Guy Mar in Source: SAPS

across the government, as well as strong and capable leadership and accountability, which we are not seeing."

She said that merely amending legislation without ensuring its implementation is not

enough. "The criminal justice system is also failing victims of GBV. The conviction rate for crimes of reported rape is less than 10% due to a high number of cases dropping out of the criminal justice system, and most re-

ported cases never being prosecuted," Mohamed said.

"The quality of investigations is also crucial in securing convictions, and this responsibility sits with the police. Yet, too often, basic mistakes such as missing information from dockets, inadequate collection of evidence and missing signatures from complainant statements lead to the decision not to prosecute a case."

Stellenbosch University's Du Toit said the promises and undertakings by past and present presidents might have been well intentioned but none of them — "all of them men" — had an accurate grasp of the enormity of the problem.

"For none of them was it important enough to do what was really needed, against certain opposition from their own constituencies," she said.

"To be sure, they seem all to have attempted legal reform, and also to throw money at the problem. However, the real issue is one of how power is distributed in the country, at the level of the home, community, city and province, the civil organisation, and by what

means.

"The sexual abuse of women and children is written into the DNA of our country," Du Toit said.

People Opposing Women Abuse (Powa) spokesperson Thandwe McCoy said patriarchy and gender inequality were the root causes of GBV.

"However, a contributing factor is high rates of alcohol abuse in communities in SA. There is a strong relationship between alcohol and GBV," she said.

GBVF Response Fund spokesperson Tshapo Setothelo said while the fund was grateful to its donors, the R169m raised so far was a drop in the ocean. "As a country, we need to start being aggressive in arresting GBV by making resources available," he said.

The fund has disbursed funds to 110 community-based GBVF organisations and four intermediaries across nine provinces.

Presidential spokesperson Vincent Magwenya said government had made inroads into the fight against GBV.

"With respect to GBV survivors, they can access efficient and sensitive criminal justice services quickly, in an accessible, responsive and gender-inclusive manner. This is done through the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCC) across SA. The TCC model embodies the spirit of the GBVF national strategic plan."

He said that in between 2016 and 2021, 165,832 matters were reported and victims assisted at the then 53 existing TCC sites.

"The current conviction rate for matters emanating from the TCCs is 76.4% versus in 2010 when it was 60.3%."

"Whilst it may appear the country is losing the war against GBV, government continues to increase its efforts. Five additional TCC sites have been established during this fiscal year, bringing the total to 60. During the reporting period, 34,456 matters were reported at the TCCs.

"The sexual offences and community affairs (Soca) unit in the NPA, under the leadership of Adv Bonnie Currie-Garnow, continues to focus on cases involving the victimisation of women and children."

Magwenya said in the 2021/2022 financial year the unit achieved a conviction rate of 94.3% (396 convictions from 420 verdict cases) in femicide prosecutions and 74.3% (3,379 convictions) in sexual offences cases.

A partnership between Soca and SAPS Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL) to reduce the backlog in DNA processing entailed prioritising long-outstanding DNA results. This has been a substantial increase in verdict cases related to sexual offences, from 3,349 in the previous budget year to 4,547 verdicts in the year under review.

"Certainly, against the scale of the challenge, more needs to be done. Whilst commending the work done by the police and the Soca unit President Ramaphosa calls on law enforcement agencies to double their efforts in the fight against GBV."