

MEDIA STATEMENT

TEKANO CALLS ON RAMAPHOSA TO TAKE THE LEAD

Attention: Eds
24 November 2021

Tekano¹ Atlantic Fellows for Health Equity - like many social justice organisations working at the coalface of gender-based violence (GBV) - is neither shocked, nor surprised by the 4,7% increase in sexual offences, such as rapes, domestic violence and child murder, as released by the South African Police Services (SAPS) on 19 November 2021.

In three months from July to September this year, 9 556 people, mostly women, were raped. Rape in South Africa is overwhelmingly committed within the home. 3 951 of the 6 144 rape cases were perpetrated within the home of the victim or the home of the rapist.

Again, women's rights activists and others working to end the scourge of violence against women and girls (VAWG), highlighted at the outset of the pandemic, that COVID19 would simply exacerbate the existing pandemic of GBV and conditions that existed before March 2020.

Tekano, as an organisation situated at the intersections of health and social justice, is keenly aware of the ways in which the COVID19 pandemic - and the nation-wide lockdown - exacerbated existing inequality, as well as the crises of poverty, unemployment, and deeply-entrenched racial divides. And that the pandemic would widen existing socio-economic inequalities and subject those already vulnerable - women, children, people with disabilities, gender-non-conforming individuals - to further victimisation.

The crime statistics released by Police Minister Cele on 21 November 2021, have vindicated the worst - but not entirely unexpected fears - of those of us who work for social justice and for whom 'health' is much more than being 'the absence of disease', but the total economic, social, environmental wellbeing of individuals.

The pandemic of violence against women and children in South Africa is one of the biggest structural obstacle in the attainment of health and well-being for women,

¹ **Tekano** - (*teh-ka-no*) (from the SeSotho word for equality) - is a non-profit organization, established in 2016 and built upon a commitment to the Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. Tekano was established in to foster dynamic, visionary, values-based, politically informed, and socially conscious leaders.

children and other vulnerable groups. 13 000 of the 73 000 cases of assault reported between July and September were domestic-related and the rate of child murders has climbed by nearly a third, compared to the three months before July 2021.

Health and justice are inter-related, inter-dependent, and indivisible human rights. And an equitable society is one in which justice has been served - and justice is served when health disparities are not entrenched by structural social advantage or disadvantage. These are the foundational values of Tekano.

While Tekano welcomes President Cyril Ramaphosa's call to 'men in positions of authority to take the lead in ending GBV', we call on President Ramaphosa to lead by example in securing answers as to why the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) missed the deadline to appeal the judgment by Acting Judge Tembeka Ngcukaitobi and Judge Nyameko Gqamana, which overturned the rape conviction of Loyiso Coko. This judgment is an egregious violation of women's rights and an affront to decades of activism by the women's movement to broaden public understanding of consent. Foreplay is not consent.

"Talk is cheap in a country in which a convicted child rapist, like Jeffrey Donson, mayor of Kannaland who raped a 15-year old while in office in 2004, get's re-elected into office in 2021, with the support of the ruling party, headed by the President, " says Ms Lebogang Ramafoko, Chief Executive of Tekano.

"Again, it is only thanks to pressure from the women's movement that the ANC decided to review its coalition with Donson. In a country that takes rape seriously, this coalition should never have happened. In a country that values women and girls, a convicted child rapist would be listed on the Sex Offenders' List. In a country that values actions over speech, a convicted rapist should not be eligible for elections," adds Ramafoko.

"The country deserves answers as to why this deadline was missed? Why was this matter not been prioritized, in view of the statistics released by Minister Cele, to which the President must have been privy? And has the ANC in fact ended its coalition with Donson? There are 16 days between the 25th November and the 10th December, international human rights day and the day the Constitution was signed into law in 1996.

"Sixteen days should be sufficient time for the President to exercise his authority, lead by example, and secure answers to these questions on a judgment that significantly undermines women's human rights, enshrined in the Constitution," said Ramafoko.

The women and girls of South Africa are waiting.

ENDS/

For more info or media interviews, please call **Bongani Maseko** on **061 545 9425**