

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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SA's crime crisis is akin to a low-intensity civil war – IRR

Crime statistics released today show that South Africa is continuing to lose the battle against rising criminality.

The number of murders has increased to over 21 000, a level last seen in the early 2000s. On a per capita basis, this rivals numbers seen in places such as war-torn Syria. It is no exaggeration to say that, on the basis of the number of people killed each year, South Africa is facing a crisis that is akin to a low-intensity civil war.

Sexual offences, which showed a decline over the past decade, are also increasing. According to police statistics, for every person murdered in South Africa, two are raped, with over 40 000 rapes being reported annually. The real number is quite possibly substantially higher, as we know that many rapes go unreported.

These figures mean that, since the end of apartheid, about 500 000 South Africans have been murdered and about one million people have been raped. It is clear that South Africa is losing the war on crime, and that the old ways of doing things are not working.

It is time for the South African Police Service to change the way it fights crime.

The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) recommends the following interventions to turn the tide against crime:

- Increasing staffing and resources for Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units, including expert prosecutors;
- Improving the process of applying for and enforcing protection orders;

- Expediting the process of applying for and being granted firearm licences for self-defence;
- Establishing an inquiry and public hearings into criminality within the police;
- Making all police and prosecutorial appointments on merit alone;
- Increasing the powers of Community Police Forums;
- Granting communities the power to elect station commanders; and
- Employing private sector expertise in policing.

Only innovative solutions will help us to gain ground against criminals and reduce the grave threat they pose to every South African family.

We urge the public to endorse our Community Safety Charter [here](#) as a means to put pressure on the government to rethink policing and take more effective steps to protect citizens.

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