



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**ADDRESS BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES,
NKOSI PHATHEKILE HOLOMISA (AH! DILIZINTABA), MP,
DELIVERED ON 2 DECEMBER 2020 AT THE NATIONAL CORRECTIONAL MALE
CHAPLAINCY AND MEN'S FORA CONVERSATIONS SESSION ON GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG MANAGEMENT
AREA, KWAZULU-NATAL**

Programme Directors,

Traditional Leaders here present,

Faith-Based Partnership on GBVF: MCSA YMG General President, Rev. N. Geja,

Acting Regional Commissioner of KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Kenneth Mthombeni,

Senior Management and Officials of the Department of Correctional Services and other
sister Departments,

Esteemed Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all!

I am happy to be sharing this platform with you, as a fellow man, as you grapple with the strange and inhumane phenomenon called Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, a scourge that is perpetrated by men against women and children.

While the Covid-19 epidemic is claiming the lives of many people around the globe, the gruesome pandemic, called Gender Based Violence and Femicide is also destroying the South African society relentlessly and unashamedly. Attacks on women and children are becoming a daily occurrence. It is now clear that we have an enemy in men who are thriving on the absence of a strong value system endowed with moral authority. Yes, the enemy is us, men.

Some have been looking for excuses and trying to find passable causes, asking why men have become the enemies of society. There is no need for such a futile exercise. Be it rape, femicide and other forms of violence against women, none can ever be justifiable.

Men must drive the agenda of instilling the principles of equality, human rights and respect in the upbringing of boys and girls, and for men to commit their families, friends and peers to the reversal of toxic masculinities.

I am, accordingly, pleased that today we have a platform like this, where as men we can look at each other in the face and state that we are not doing enough to save this nation. Frankly, we must hang our heads in shame. I say this because we know the perpetrators of Gender Based Violence. We socialise with them. We work with them. We attend church with them and yet we still call them friends.

From the strengthening of government institutions to restoring trust and faith in the justice system; from faith-based institutions to families, schools, civil society organisations, corporate South Africa and communities – it is time for us as men to step up and fight viciously against Gender Based Violence and Femicide. It requires a form of unprecedented solidarity and collective action from all of us.

I am happy that this gathering involves ministers of religion - abefundisi bakwaLizwi, for I believe that faith-based institutions should reform themselves and play a critical role in dismantling patriarchy and negative social norms. Different churches have been vocal about the role of men, creating a Gender Based Violence and Femicide pledge for men – as well as preaching against Gender Based Violence and Femicide from the pulpit. We need to scale up initiatives of this nature.

We all have a role to play and end the normalisation of Gender Based Violence and Femicide and make it impossible for the perpetrators to attack. This calls for men to stop tolerating behaviours that perpetuate patriarchy and negative gender stereotypes.

The Department of Correctional Services is part of the law enforcement agencies. Our centres are located in almost every corner of this country. Even the smallest village or town does have a Police Station, a Correctional Centre and a Church. We need to commit ourselves to serve and protect. Women must never be afraid to go to any man and seek protection whenever they feel vulnerable, powerless or even worse, abused.

This notion of saying, it is a household matter, therefore, I cannot intervene is pure nonsense and rubbish. Such can only empower the perpetrator. I am yet to see a funeral being a household matter. The entire community gets involved not just to console and comfort the bereaved, but to give presence and a helping hand during the time of need. Gender Based Violence and Femicide is, therefore, every man's business irrespective of household boundaries.

The institution of traditional leadership was and continues to be a pivotal part of the social structure. We expect traditional leaders to play a meaningful role in the fight against Gender Based Violence and Femicide. After all royal residences, the Great Places, amaKomkhulu, are places of sanctuary for all who are persecuted by their enemies. It is the traditional leaders who are in a position to exert their moral authority

against men who abuse women by either beating them up, neglecting to feed, clothe and provide shelter to their wives and children. Female and child-headed are a foreign concept to African communities, for everyone has a family or clan to which they belong and from whom they can claim assistance in times of need and protection from abuse.

We have indeed learned a lot from traditional societies and traditional leadership in our history, particularly the importance of values of equity and justice, respect, dignity, solidarity and ubuntu. Today, South Africa is a beacon of hope because of its progressive laws, and a thriving human rights ethos. But all these ethos are in danger and likely to dissipate when we fail to fail to protect women and children.

Let us make our presence felt in all our actions – in all our spaces. When we tackle Gender Based Violence and Femicide, we must include sexual harassment and assault in the workplace.

Women around the world often find themselves working in an intimidating environment, which at times can be described as being hostile or even humiliating. Quite often we hear of allegations of men in positions of authority demanding sexual favors from women on pain of losing their jobs or prospects of promotion even when they deserve to be placed in such positions. Hence it becomes critical that all employers must not only have policies in place, but must implement measures for zero tolerance for sexual harassment, and to have mechanisms for staff members to voice out their fears, frustrations and violations.

It is totally unacceptable that women are continuously asked for sexual favours, exposed to inappropriate jokes, insinuations, and comments, and unwanted physical contact that can amount to assault. It is us men who do these things. The time has come for us to turn the tide and start acting differently and responsibly.

In conclusion, I will want to state that evil can only triumph when good men and women opt to do nothing. We can no longer keep quiet when women and children are abused and killed.

Time for impunity is long gone. Thethani, madoda; isizwe siyaphela!

I thank you.