



South African Council of Churches (Free State)

Provincial Executive Council

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4th of August 2022

Media statement on the escalation of violence in our society
Office of the SACC Free State

Protest against escalating violence in our society

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) Free State hereby raise its serious concern about the escalation of violence and a downward spiral of lawlessness in our communities. The recent horrific murder of seven women and one young boy on a farm in the Kestell area unambiguously brought this stark and ominous reality home. In the past weeks our communities have been bruised and battered by senseless killings in various shoot-outs, tavern attacks, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and a targeting of African migrant communities. It is as if criminals and those intent on destroying our fragile society have free reign, with the value of a human life meaning nothing.

We thank those SAPS members who courageously and diligently keep on trying to stamp-out this tide of violence that is threatening to plunge our society into an abject state of anarchy. We applaud the arrests that have been made in some of these cases. However, we also lament the fact that far too many killings still remain unresolved, and we are concerned about a growing lack of trust in those agencies responsible to keep us safe and secure. We do have questions about proper training, competencies and the necessary resources, ethical leadership, and the political will to enable the SAPS to fulfil their constitutional role and to eradicate criminality in all corners of our cities, towns, and rural areas. We are painfully aware of the mounting frustrations in our communities which have at times led them to taking the law into their own hands which only exacerbates the already volatile situation.

Our communities are crying out.

Therefore, the SACC Free State calls upon Provincial and National government and all our leaders:

1. To leave no stone untouched in restoring the safety and security of our communities by prioritizing the allocation of adequate resources to stop the upsurge of lawlessness and violence in our communities;
2. To take those issues creating a fertile seedbed for criminality and lawlessness in our communities very seriously and launch practical sustainable initiatives to address the dehumanizing poverty, lack of proper education for all our children, unemployment and accompanying hopelessness holding sway over far too many peoples' lives.

3. To take hands with and include civil society, NGO's and private sectors who are more than willing to co-operate in a peaceful and constructive way with government on all levels, restoring our common human dignity and helping our beloved country out of this dire situation.
4. To refrain from harmful political rhetoric and opportunism which is only contributing to the growing polarization in our already fragile democracy and to rather use inclusive language building our social cohesion and leading us all towards a safe and prosperous future.

As the SACC Free State, we also call on our various constituent communities:

5. To refrain from resorting to violence in reaction to the lawlessness and killings in their midst, but to report or call upon the law enforcement authorities for intervention.
6. To be always vigilant and exercising great awareness as families within communities in creating and keeping safe living spaces.
7. To refrain from targeting any minority or specific groups of people or individuals, such as the African migrants/foreign nationals as the cause for the community's woes.
8. To stand in unity with other peace-loving people of our country and those arms of government that are trying to bring this volatile and unsafe situation under control.

In these times of crisis, let us all commit to *"act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly before our God"* (Micah 6:8).

We also hereby call on all churches in our province to unite in prayer this coming **Sunday, the 7th of August 2022** (alternatively any conducive Sunday in this August month), in their services and meetings, not only remembering the courageous role women played in the history of our country in the struggle for freedom and dignity, but also lamenting the fact that many of them are now again suffering under injustices, poverty, and violence.

Lord, hear our Cry!

God bless South Africa, we pray.

SACC Free State