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# THE SCOURGE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) ON WOMEN PLAGUING SOUTH AFRICA

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## Abstract

Despite the existence of a constitutional legal framework, criminal sanctions to address violent behaviour by men are not enough. The killing of women by men has reached a disproportionate crescendo in South Africa. It is critical, that as a society we denounce the continuation of this trend and address the underlying causes of violent masculinity and physical abuse against women. Social norms, religious and traditional values, patriarchy, and gender relationships contribute to dominant notions of masculinity, which eventually undermine women's inalienable right of existence. Developing strategies to mitigate against intimate partner Gender-Based Violence is imperatively needed to curb these physical attacks on women. The purpose of this article is to highlight some forms and the causes of Gender-Based Violence, the impact of it, and with aim of finding lasting solutions to it. Some of the findings of the author are, first, religion has played a fundamental role to perpetuate gender-based Violence on women over time. Second, a clear understanding of different types of Gender-Based Violence is needed by both men and women in society before. Gender-Based Violence if not controlled and eliminated can lead to femicide as we have seen in South Africa in recent years. Third, more protective laws for women need to be properly implemented within our criminal justice process. Tougher and stiffer punishment for perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence is needed to curb the scourge of femicide, plaguing us in South Africa.

**Keywords:** gender, women, violence, family, patriarchy, cultural.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1. 1. Christianity and feminism

Several religions over time since time immemorial have always historically treated women differently. In Christianity, the biblical creation story of Adam and Eve substantiates the author's line of argument that women have always been treated differently by men. Women at the beginning of humanity were portrayed as too weak to be independent, introduced as a helper, subsequently created to support male hegemony and dominance. So also, women were portrayed as demonic possession who the serpent connived with and made Adam eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Samson, one of the strongest men to have lived on planet earth was betrayed lustfully by Delilah his wife, making way for his demise. Christianity has consciously or subconsciously made women to be held at suspicion by men. Women should not be trusted due to the historical genealogy of having the capacity to betray men. In the contemporary Roman Catholic Church women are not allowed to lead the church.

In Islam religion, women are treated as inferior to men. They are not allowed to worship in mosques in the same area as males. Even if they are married under Islamic rites as husband and wife. The Quranic rules do not allow males and females to worship in the same room or place. The author argues that, this rule is not only oppressive but discriminatory against women. To make matters worse, some male Muslims cover their wives' faces with black cloth to keep them private from the eyes of other men. The Muslim male is allowed to marry up to four wives on the one proviso that he can provide for all of them [1]. The author argues that the Quran is vague as to which criteria respective families should apply when measuring the standard of living. What we have seen in some countries like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan and Qatar where the Sharia law imposes strict control over women. Women are treated in some instances, in an unbearable, inhumane condition with loss of their dignity and freedom. Women's rights of existence are all fully taken away in the guise of religion. The Islam religion allows males to reprimand their wives physically, make use of whips, provided such whip is no longer than their

arms. Women have no right to divorce. If you are in a very abusive relationship as a woman, your only choice is to remain in the marriage for as much as you can endure. The well-being and state of mind of women become a secondary issue to men [2]. The author argues that one can understand why some women resort to either killing their abusive husbands or committing suicide themselves.

Polygamy: In some communities, multiple wives are considered a measure of a man's wealth or status, with the resulting competition, rendering as many as 40% of marriages polygamous. Similarly, men may seek out multiple wives to increase their wealth and number of offspring, using these large family networks to forge familial alliances. As a result, polygamy is most common among the wealthy, powerful, or high-status men within a country. Polygamy sometimes has roots in religion. Under Islamic law, for example, a man (but not a woman) may take up to four spouses, so long as he can support them, treat them equally, and supplies a reason. Such religious customs may keep polygamy thriving in countries that would otherwise prohibit the practice [3].

### 1. 2. Judaism and feminism

While in Judaism, there is however a deep conflict between Judaism and feminism, which stretches from the public (in synagogue) to the private. For example, in all Orthodox synagogues, men pray separately from women, and inside it women are relegated to a secluded area, designated for women. Gender hierarchies are deeply entrenched in Jewish beliefs. Some of the Jewish recitals by men "thanks to God for not creating me a woman" [4]. Role in traditional Jewish life is limited and constrained by laws, developed by (male) Rabbis. A clear example will be women whose husbands are refusing to grant them divorces, so they cannot remarry [5–7]. Rabbinic Judaism's understanding of the female role as one centered around the marital home can be summarized in the three positive commandments (sometimes regarded as punitive reminders of Eve's disobedience) that remain women's gender-specific obligations in Orthodox Judaism today. These are to light the Sabbath candles (*nerot*), to separate and burn a portion of the dough when baking the Sabbath loaf (*hallah*), and to observe the laws of menstrual or family purity that regulate physical contact between husbands and wives (*niddah*). Women are also obligated to observe the Sabbath, the dietary laws, and all other *halakhic* prohibitions [8].

### 1. 3. African Traditional Religion and feminism

In African traditional religion, for example, cultural practice in the Zulu tradition where payment of bride price "Lobola" is seen as a rite of passage for all women. It is a tradition, designed to test the long-term love and sustenance of the man's ability to provide for his family. A union of two families, coming together to family lifelong partnership. Over the years the lobola practice has become commercialised, suitors for marriages are no longer screened by families. Women are given away to persons of questionable character. Some men are opined that it does not matter even if I was to be a rapist or murderer, I can still get married to who I want, provided that I can afford the bride price. The author argues that this kind of male dominance and mind set is a warning sign of male violence, found within the family. Women have become objects and commodified in the hands of men due to some of our customs, tradition, and social values and beliefs [9]. The groom is given a license to abuse women who he thinks he has successfully purchased with a few cows. Though the author is a believer in African Traditional religion, he differs and opposes some of the myopic and parochial beliefs of men with this kind of mind set. First, the mere fact that you are in a position to pay with few cows for your wife does not make you become her owner, the wife as the author understands it, is not a property but a human being and should be treated with respect and dignity at all times. The bride price payment is not a condition for any man to abuse any woman. Second, the African traditional beliefs systems are designed to transcend the physical realm of materialism and inhumanity.

### Ukuthwala

The traditional practice of "Ukuthwala or bride capture", which persists in some rural areas of the former Transkei, in the Eastern Cape Province is worth exploring...as part of the male

collective coercion marriage process, which has long been deemed as acceptable. Ukuthwala is the culturally legitimized abduction of a woman, through which a circumcised adult man can take a wife-this custom, demonstrates that a woman's lack of consent does not automatically turn an act of sexual coercion into rape because the act involves her future husband...rape is believed cannot occur within marriage [10].

In some parts of the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal, young girls are tested for their virginity before marriage. In some instances, the prospective groom is a promiscuous sexual abuser over the years. The culture and economic power, endangered by these practices, give him the power to test available young girls. The author argues that this amounts to the very abusive, discomfoting, unfair, and unacceptable treatment of young girls and women in our society. How can such men who have subjected their wives through this kind of ordeal under the guise of cultural beliefs ever claim to love their wives or treat them as equals in marriages? [11, 12].

The author unequivocally and unapologetically calls for a review of these practices. The South African government should be at the forefront of calling for a review of these unacceptable cultural practices. The women's month in South Africa should vigorously and relentlessly challenge these ongoing injustices against women in our society until it is completely eradicated. The author argues that upholding our African cultural values is a good thing but sexual predators should not be given a platform to abuse women. To conceptualise gender-based violence in proper context. The author looks at a few definitional concepts, relating to Gender-based Violence as follows: Family, Gender, Domestic Violence; Violence; Patriarchy; Femicide; Feminism; Sexual Gender- Based-Violence, and Violence Against Women.

#### **1. 4. Family**

A group of people, living together and functioning as a single household, that will provide for the needs and protection of children and all its members. It is the first socialisation unit of a child. It is an environment where the child is nurtured, raised, and imbibed with certain norms and values of the society that are transmuted and transferred to children. The family unit is the foundation of a child that determines its future and wellbeing. A well-functioning or organised family unit provides the child with emotional, social, spiritual, and material wellbeing in early life, made possible by parental guidance and a stable environment. The organised family is the ideal type of family with both mother and father present to raise their children to maturity.

#### **1. 5. The Conjugal role of the family**

The assigned roles in the family are based on an individual's gender. Women are the main caregivers and housewives, whilst men are breadwinners, heads of the family, and disciplinarians of the household [13]. A conjugal family is a nuclear family that may consist of a married couple and their children either by birth or adoption or an unmarried or under-aged couple. Conjugal by definition simply means there is an existence of a marriage relationship based on emotional bonds and extended kinship [14].

#### **1. 6. The Dark Side of the family**

All activities in the family are not always happy, blissfulness and rosy as expressed in works of literature and the media. There are several forms of abuse emotionally, economically and physically, going on with the family context that is kept secret from the outside world. Domestic violence, verbal abuses, physical confrontations, divorces, rape, murder, suicide. Collectively, sociologists termed all these abuses into one conceptualisation 'the dark side of the family'. As wives, women serve and service their husbands by doing the housework, cooking meals, and satisfying their sexual needs. Their husbands are, thereby refreshed and restored, ready to return to the world of exploitative and domineering position in society. Family is a very oppressive institution that has always favour men to the detriment and exploitation of women. Women's unpaid domestic work is in most cases never accounted for monetarily. A situation which family damages its own members but such physical and mental damages are shrouded in secrecy.

### 1. 7. Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system, in which men hold primary power and dominate in roles of moral authority, political leadership, social privilege, and control of property [15].

Sylvia Walby [16, 17] identified six patriarchal structures, manifested in the greater probability that women have of receiving abuse, of taking care of the home and children, of being represented with little fidelity in the media and popular culture, of being paid less than men for the same work and that their sexuality is viewed negatively. They also tend to be underrepresented in the power and decision-making spheres. These patriarchal structures are as follows:

- **Paid work:** Men continue to dominate and earn more than women in paid employment.
- **Household production:** individual men have always benefited directly from women's unpaid labour. Women still do most housework and provide childcare that cannot be quantified monetarily.
- **Culture:** the key sign of femininity today is sexual attractiveness to men, represented in the objectification and promotion of pornography, which threatens the freedom and dignity of women.
- **Sexuality:** the existence of a double standard in most societies where males see women who are sexually active as slags and those not active as drags and men with sexual conquests are admired for their sexual prowess over women.
- **Violence:** is seen as a form of control by men over women. The stronger sex takes advantage of the weaker one to perpetuate consistent male dominance.
- **The State:** is still patriarchal, racist and capitalist. There have been few attempts to improve women's position in the public sphere as equality legislation even when enacted is hardly successfully implemented.

The concept of patriarchy serves to introduce a very relevant dimension to the conception of the problem of femicide. It makes it not to be seen as an isolated problem that can be simply reduced to violent tendencies of some individuals, but rather has to do with the submissive situation of the female gender and that of the male dominance. While South Africa is lauded for enacting some of the most progressive laws and policies in the world towards protecting women and girls, there is still more work to be done to curb gender-based violence. The Constitution of the republic articulates the rights to equality for all. At the same time, enforcement of the law against perpetrators of gender violence has received more attention in recent years due to the increase of victims of gender-based violence and South Africa's government's determination to tackle the GBV related crimes. The relationship between women and patriarchy was highlighted in a landmark decision by the Constitutional Court of South Africa in 1999. The Court found out that South Africa Constitution imposed a direct obligation on the state to protect from domestic violence. The Court linked this right to protection to the right to equality, and non-discrimination. Judge Albie Sachs explained that 'to the extent that it is systemic, pervasive and overwhelmingly gender-specific, domestic violence both reflects and reinforces patriarchal domination and does so in a particularly brutal form [18].

### 1. 8. Gender

The socially constructed identities are assigned to the biological characteristics of people in society. The concept of gender includes the values, attitudes, feelings, and behaviours, as well as the interactions and relationships, associated with being a man (masculinity) in a given cultural setting, and these are also influenced by social, historical, and cross-cultural factors [19].

### 1. 9. Violence

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation [20]. Violence is one of the social ills that deprive women and girls of their right to life [21]. A line of argument is also supported by [22] who clearly articulated that Men violence against women mirrors the misogynous repression that women across the world still have to endure.

### **1. 10. Violence Against Women**

According to United Nations [20] declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private

### **1. 11. Misogyny**

Misogyny is an integral part of patriarchy because it promotes anti-femininity and finds men’s sense of superiority, justifying male oppression and aggression towards women normal even when it is abnormal. Misogyny views women as objects not the subject of human existence [23].

### **1. 12. Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-Based Violence is the general term, used to qualify all forms of violence that occur as a result of the normative role expectations of women in society. This could be as a result of one sex, assigned to at birth or due to unequal power relations between genders in any given society [24].

### **1. 13. Domestic Violence and Domestic Abuse**

According to South Africa law, domestic violence includes all forms of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; entry into complainant residence without her consent or any other controlling or abusive behaviour, taking place in domestic relationships [25]. While domestic abuse can also be in the form of Economic abuse when the abuser has complete control over the victim’s money and other economic resources. Usually, this involves putting the victim on a strict “allowance,” with holding money at will, and forcing the victim to beg for the money until the abuser gives them some money. It is sometimes manifested in the unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property, in which the complainant has an interest.

### **1. 14. Sexual gender-based violence**

Any sexual act or unwanted sexual comments or advances using coercion, threats of harm, or physical force, by any person regardless of their relationship to the survivor, in any setting. It is usually driven by power differences and perceived gender norms. It includes forced sex, sexual coercion and rape of adult and adolescent men and women, child sexual abuse, and rape [12].

### **1. 15. Femicide**

Femicide for this article is defined as the intentional murder of women or girls by men based on their gender differentiation. The term “femicide” therefore refers to a specific type of homicide, in which a male murders a woman or girl for being female. Unlike other types of murder, femicides usually occur in the home as a consequence of gender-based violence. Within the context of this definition, femicide can be understood as the most extreme manifestation of abuse and violence from men to women. While intimate femicide, which is very prevalent in South Africa, is defined as the murder of women by intimate partners, husbands or boyfriends or rejected would-be lovers, or same-sex partners [26]. Intimate femicide is related to the consumption of alcohol and other substances and accounts for 35 % of all murders of women (not only those committed by men), which makes it the most frequent of all types of femicide.

### **1. 16. Honor Killing**

Honor killing is a special type of femicide, committed against women who are said to have dishonored the family. Common grounds for “disgrace” include being a victim of rape and being accused of adultery [27, 28].

Honour femicide cases are committed with high levels of impunity in many parts of the world. Women or girls are killed because of ‘unacceptable’ choice of partner, education, employment, mode of dress, behaviour, or contact with men who are not relatives. The behaviour of the



woman is viewed as casting shame upon her family or concerned person, and only with her death can honour be restored. In South Africa, honour femicide cases have been detected mostly from incestuous relationships and in sordid sexual relationships, which resulted in unwanted pregnancies or exposures. These cases often go unreported because of secrecy, concealment, and mystery, attached to the killing [29]. Honor crimes as “acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members who are perceived to have brought dishonor upon the family. Honor killings may be motivated by “a perceived violation of the social norms of sexuality,” or they may be crimes of passion, wherein a husband kills his wife whom he or other family members suspect of adultery. Motives for honor killings have included: suspicion of adultery, premarital sex, or some other relationship between a woman and a man; being a victim of rape or sexual assault; refusing to enter an arranged marriage; seeking a divorce or trying to escape marital violence, and falling in love with someone unacceptable according to the victim’s family. Even seemingly minor transgressions have been identified as the reasons for carrying out honor killings [30].

This research has two aims. First, the author willingness to highlight the impact of gender based violence on women, family and society. Second, to explore and finding a lasting solution to gender based violence in South Africa.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The author uses a qualitative research approach, relying on previous existing works of literature, relating to research topic ‘Gender -Based Violence’. Collected data were analysed manually using a thematic coding process. Themes are arranged consistent with related concepts, grouped into one after the other in a logical sequence. The author consulted a range of secondary data in order to broaden the area knowledge of gender based violence.

### 2. 1. Radical Feminism Theory

Andrea Dworkin became a major figure in feminist theory, and she wrote in the spirit of radical feminism. The radical feminism school of thought views domestic violence as a result of living in a patriarchal society deeply rooted in male dominance, encapsulated in social-cultural values, held over time. Men use violence, threats, economic dependency, culture, traditional religion to control women and make them subservient to their whims and caprices, ego, and masculinity. For Dworkin, all oppressions are fundamentally linked in that they exist within the confines of a binary sex-gender-sexuality system, in which all humans are divided into male and female and then hierarchicalized. The hierarchy is based on a principle of domination, and that domination is made to be romantic and sexy. Men and women are acculturated into the structure and reproduce it through their daily life practices, including, crucially, sexual intercourse. Dworkin’s claim is that gender as sexualized domination can be seen most keenly in sexual intercourse because of its dependence on the male-female dyad hegemony, made possible by patriarchy [31]. Our sexual definition is one of ‘masochistic passivity’: ‘passivity’ not because we are naturally passive, but because our chains are very heavy and as a result ... the result of the valorization of the female as the mother or idealized love or sex object is the obliteration of woman as human agent [17, 32].

#### Forms of Gender-Based Violence

1. Violence against women within the family
2. Intimate partner violence – the most common form of violence against women in South Africa and globally.
3. Sexual violence by partners and non -partners
4. physical violence.
5. Psychological and emotional violence.
6. Economic violence –a denial of access or control basis resources.
7. Harmful traditional practices.
8. Violence against women in the community [33, 34].

### 3. Results

#### 3. 1. Causes of Gender-Based Violence

There are several factors responsible for gender-based violence as follow:

- Patriarchy and other relations of dominance and subordination.
- Cultural violence against women over time.
- Economic inequalities and disparities between men and women in society.
- Women disempowerment and lack of opportunities.
- The over-reliance on the use of violence as a conflict resolution.
- State inaction and failure to protect abused women
- The use of alcohol and drugs by perpetrators of gender-based violence [9, 35].

#### 3. 2. The extent of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa

Gender-Based Violence has reached an extreme proportion in South Africa (Clark, 2021). Within the first week of the Covid 19 lockdown around March 2020, it was reported, that the South African Police Service received 87 000 calls related to domestic violence by an intimate partner. One police officer was also arrested for raping his wife [36].

According to the South African Police Service annual crime statistical report, someone murders a woman every three hours, which equates to about seven per day. In contrast, someone murders a man every 30 minutes, about 50 per day. Despite the lower murder rates for women, most female homicides are much more violent than males. Many of the female victims suffer assault, rape, and burning before their perpetrators dump them. In comparison to other countries, this rate of femicide is almost five times higher than the world's average. South Africa ranks fourth in the world for the highest rate of violence against women. Additionally, people reported 39,633 rapes and 6,253 sexual assaults in 2017 alone [37].

Rates of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa remain unacceptably high:

- One in three women in South Africa are victims of domestic violence
- South Africa's femicide rate is almost 5 times the global average
- Every 8 hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner
- 9 556 people were raped between July and September 2021.

The author provides the reader with a detailed insight into the Extent of gender-based violence within the last few years, relying on the statistical reports, produced by the South African Police Service as follows:

- In the year 2018/2019, 2771 were brutally killed by men
- In the year 2017/2018, 2930 were murdered, victims
- In the year 2016/2017, 2639 women were killed by men
- In the year 2015/2016, 2416 women were killed by men
- In the year 2014/2015, 2234 women were murdered by men
- In the year 2013/2014, 2354 women were killed by men [38].

Within six years a total of 15344 met their untimely deaths in the hands of callous men. One concludes the total, reported to the police, was too high and unacceptable. It shows that both the government and all men are killing women in South Africa. The utter condemns all such killings as utter madness and insanity that shames us all in South Africa. Violent men have declared war on the extermination of women and we should not remain bystanders to all cruel and dastardly acts of men who kill women. It is wrong for women in South Africa to live in perpetual fear of men who are supposed to protect them from harm. Undoubtedly, GBV is a systemic social issue that is deeply entrenched in institutions, cultures, and traditions with a tragic effect on all regardless of age, race, gender, or sexual preference [39, 40].

#### 3. 3. Effect of the police culture of masculinity

The Police service is a male-dominated organisation where practices both lawful and unlawful are exchanged within members of the organisation. In some instances, the police see members of the public through the “them and us” factor. The police stick together because of the exigencies of the job and the risk factor element, associated with policing. Police officers always rely



on the camaraderie of their colleagues whilst on duty. It is difficult to perform practical policing without solidarity even if it means sometimes bending the rules to be accepted into the group [11]. The author argues that the police culture is an overwhelming issue in the police and that breaking the code of silence means the officers stand the risk of being isolated by all colleagues. Police officers by their male chauvinist approach to things do not consider dealing with domestic violence real police work [41]. This is one reason why some police officers are not very keen on dealing with domestic violence. They are opined that family issues should be best dealt with by social workers, not the police. In some instances, victims of rapes, domestic violence are sometimes turned away and discouraged from lodging a criminal case against their perpetrators.

### **3. 4. South Africa's government initiatives to Combat Gender-Based Violence**

Within the last ten years, the South Africa government has dedicated time and efforts to deal with the unlawful social behaviour issue of gender-based violence and has not been very successful in curbing this plague. The government strategic planning document titled the National Development 2030 dedicates Chapter 12 to the issue of gender-based violence, destroying the social fabric of society. Annually, there is a special event, tagged '16 Days of Women's Activism where everyone has been reminded of the ills of gender-based violence. This is followed by the observation of both the women's day event, women's month event in South Africa to create awareness of gender-based violence. Although these are all special events, the statistical reports of women who continue to lose their lives at the hands of men are worrying and unacceptable. In the past few months, the South African Government, together with partners, including the private sector, trade unions, and individuals from civil society and other development partners have been working hard to implement the National Strategic Plan (NSP) [15] on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). This plan came as a result of the 1st National Summit on GBVF in South Africa in 2018. The plan centers mainly on six pillars as follows:

- Accountability, Coordination, and Leadership.
- Prevention and Prebuilding of Social Cohesion.
- Justice, Safety, and Protection.
- Response, Care, Support and healing.
- Economic Power, and
- Research and Information Management

President Cyril Ramaphosa has made it clear that the implementation of the NSP is a national priority. Since then, a lot of progress has been made. The most recent innovation has been to engage six districts in organizing 100-Day Challenges that will mobilize ordinary South African citizens in the fight against GBVF.

### **3. 5. Suggested Solutions**

1. South Africa government should declare a state of emergency, given the police more powers to prevent, detain or arrest any perpetrators of gender-based violence. Policing must adopt intelligence-led preventative measures, basically identify potential perpetrators, prevent them from causing any form of GBV related offences.

3. Government and private businesses must co-create an enabling environment to economically empower women, making them lesser dependent on men.

3. Education by road shows amongst young school males on how to deal with conflict.

4. Religious and political leaders champion the campaigns against gender-based violence.

5. Effective criminal justice process, measured by successful prosecutions.

6. Tougher sentences for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

7. Patriarchy should be eradicated from society.

8. A multi-sectoral approach to supporting families who are victims of gender-based violence.

9. Adequate housing provisions for victims of gender-based violence.

10. Police officers need more specialist training in dealing with gender-based violence-related crime.

#### 4. Conclusion

In South Africa today, we cannot continue to hold claims that apartheid is a mono-causal explanation for the pervasive gender-based violence, plaguing us. As there is a myriad of multiple factors that give rise to gender-based violence enumerated above. No one can dispute the claim that successive apartheid regimes were characterized by oppressive minority governments, represented by state law enforcement agencies that were commonly used for the brutalization and murder of citizens. The high level of violence in South Africa, observed worldwide, occurred on an unimaginable scale. Political murders marred the political landscape of society. Apartheid brutalized all – its victims, as well as its beneficiaries. Through the migrant labour system and homelands, apartheid sowed the seed for the breakdown of the institution of the family. The breakdown of both family and societal moral values manifests itself in many ways and all sections of our society, the rich and poor, urban and rural, black and white, young and old. The molestation of children and infants is a symptom of this degeneration'. One must surely ask why, in today's South Africa, where the apartheid regime is no longer in power for over twenty-seven years, gender-based violence, sexual violence and other forms of violence have all spiralled out of control. The author argues that it would be misleading for us to continue to lay blame on apartheid for some of the crimes, now being committed by suspects who were not even born in the days of apartheid. This leads us to the inevitable question of: what is wrong with our society and how can we fix it? All citizens must be educated and well informed about respecting human rights, especially those who are in family and relationship social context and that all differences must not always end in violence. Sanctions for promoting unlawful violence against the person must be clearly articulated and provided for in our legislation and the enforcement and prosecution of such deterrent legislations. The efficacy of such legislation must be measured against how many perpetrators of gender-based violence are behind bars after convictions.

States must protect women from violence, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide justice and remedies to victims. Eliminating violence against women remains one of the serious challenges of our time. Violence against women is a global, systemic social phenomenon we cannot ignore any further. It needs to give attention by national governments, regional bodies, and international organisations to curb its pervasiveness. Violence against women prevents them from making valuable contributions to society, it restricts their potential by living in constant fear anxiety as not knowing when they are going to be verbally or physically attacked by men at home, at work, and in communities. Women are subjected to living in poverty and dependency, created and sustained for years through male dominance in all spheres of society. All these discriminatory practices and oppression against women must stop now. This article is a clarion call for all men and women of goodwill to join hands together to defeat gender-based violence, plaguing us all in South Africa. One of the inherited legacies of our late president Nelson Mandela of his blessed memory, which he imparted to us about women, was that 'Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. Our endeavors must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man, and the liberty of the child.' Until women are safe and their contribution to society and the economy is recognized equitably, we cannot prosper as a nation.

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