

Ramaphosa's broken promises have real consequences

Speech By Andrew Whitfield MP, DA Shadow Minister of Police

Mr President, South Africans are less safe and feel less safe today than they were when you came to office.

How can we possibly feel safe when we are governed by a criminal syndicate that steals from the poor to give to the politically connected? A government run by a political party in which political killings have become standard operating procedure to climb the patronage ladder. What example are criminals in South Africa to follow if not the example set by their very own government?

At every SONA your broken promises on fighting crime echo across the country and into the homes and broken hearts of South Africans living in fear. When you became President you promised to halve violent crime within ten years but murder has increased by nearly 20% since you took office while all contact crimes are up 12% in the last year. Last year in your reply to the SONA debate you acknowledged my call for the more effective use of technology but one year later SAPS phone lines aren't working, there are no drones in the sky and no body cams on police officers.

Recent mass killings in the Eastern Cape further expose your broken promises. Two mass killings in rural Bityi outside Mthatha in as many months have left the community shocked and shaken. This is not the kind of shock which you often exclaim Mr President, this is real and painful shock at the brutal and unrelenting killing of family members and neighbours. In Kwazakhele in Nelson Mandela Bay there have been two mass killings in just two weeks leaving 12 people dead and many more injured.

In the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay gang violence has taken the lives of more than 20 people since the beginning of the year while the Chatty Police Station in that area remains understaffed and under resourced. In fact, police officers at this station lock themselves inside at night during load shedding because their generator is broken and they fear being attacked like the five officers who were killed in the Ngcobo police massacre.

Across Kwa Zulu Natal the fear in the aftermath of the violent unrest of 2021 still lingers yet of the 10 police stations I visited last year only one had a generator that worked while others complained that they hadn't worked for years or that they couldn't get diesel due to centralised procurement challenges.

In your SONA last week you said government will partner with the private sector to support the proper functioning of the 10111 centres and while this is welcomed if it is to be believed, it only made its way into your speech because in January this year the DA exposed the complete dysfunction at our 10111 centres across the country. Dysfunction which has left millions of victims and witnesses of crime helpless on the end of 7 million dropped calls over three years because 10111 only has 40% of the required staff. These dropped calls are crime statistics Mr President, there are victims on the end of these calls.

In one message I received recently a grandparent wrote:

“We need help...my grandson has been shot more than 5 hours ago. His body is still in the house. They shot him. Do you know who to contact. Police don’t respond”

So here is a challenge for you Mr President. If you can turn this situation around and have 75% of required staff employed with less than 10,000 dropped calls and uninterrupted power supply to every 10111 centre by your next SONA, I will literally eat the words off these pages.

You see without an actual plan, a deadline and the results which follow, your words are meaningless while lives are lost.

Over the years you have successfully created the illusion that you are bolstering the ranks of SAPS with more members when the truth is that there has been a nett loss of 20 000 SAPS members in the last ten years. You need only read the SAPS annual report which reveals that there were 199 000 staff in SAPS at the end of 2012; 182 000 at the end of 2021 and that there will be 178 000 by the end of this financial year. This includes your new recruits!

And while we have many excellent SAPS members who go above and beyond the call of duty under the most difficult circumstances, they are being outnumbered by the unfit, poorly trained and corrupt. SAPS needs to promote merit within its ranks and ensure that all appointments are beyond reproach if we are to have any hope of reversing the decline.

South Africans want results not more broken promises and this is what they will vote for in 2024: a party that delivers results!

In Parliament last year you committed to investigating the Western Cape’s LEAP safety model after acknowledging its successes, well now is the time for you to act in order to keep your promise to keep our communities safe by throwing your full support and the fiscus at a tried and tested policing model with proven results.

The quarterly crime statistics released in November last year reveal that after LEAP was deployed to Philippi-East in 2022, that station has completely fallen off the list of top 30 crime zones in South Africa.

Over a 12-month period between October 2021 – September 2022, Gugulethu noted a 30,6 percent decrease in murder.

Over the same 12 months, Delft has seen a 17,4% decrease in murder, with contact crime also declining by 12,1%.

There has also been a decline in contact crime in Gugulethu, Delft, Harare and Khayelitsha.

Just this year, the Western Cape has availed R400 million to ensure that LEAP members are visible and active in areas where the murder rate is highest and in January 2023 alone, LEAP officers made a total of 839 arrests.

These are the results which should follow from a promise, this is the kind of leadership we deserve to build a safer South Africa for all. This is how you get things done, Mr President. You make a promise and then keep it.

We don't need more hollow words and broken promises from an empty suit - We need results!