

# Press Release

For immediate release

5 September 2019

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South African Institute of Race Relations

*The power of ideas*

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## **South Africans commended for speaking up against violent crime – IRR**

The IRR commends the thousands of women and men who gathered outside Parliament today to speak up for their fundamental freedoms – their freedom to live as they wish to without fear or risk of abuse, assault, rape or murder.

Today's courageous stand in Cape Town – which the IRR attended – underlines the unignorable erosion of South Africans' rights and freedoms through a combination of violent criminality, inadequate policing and a weak State.

It is shocking that nearly 500 000 South Africans have been murdered since 1994, and 1 000 000 women have been raped and assaulted since 1994. There are 500 reports a day of women being assaulted, raped or murdered.

Violent crime declined for a decade from 1994, but the trend has reversed in recent years, coinciding with the increasing ineffectiveness of the State's protection of its citizens, and their declining trust in the police.

All South Africans are victims of crime, but women are right in bringing national attention to categories of society who are especially vulnerable.

While it is true that more men are murdered than women, women are especially vulnerable to violent crime, not least from intimate partners or family members. The IRR agrees that, as in the case of South Africa's farmers or, for example, foreign nationals living in the country, criminality against particularly vulnerable groups demands a particular and concerted response.

The IRR applauds the willingness of today's protesters and the public in general to speak out and to hold the government to account. The IRR urges South Africans to go beyond public demonstrations of their frustration and anger and to endorse practical solutions in addressing the threats against their lives and well-being.

The IRR recommends

- 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 licenses 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.

It is only through exerting concerted pressure on the country's political leadership that the kinds of reform and strategies needed to ensure South Africans' protection from violent crime will be achievable.

**Ends**