

South Africans urged to **#MakeTime** to teach our sons that crimes against women and children are unacceptable

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Already recognised as having one of the highest rates of rape and domestic violence in the world, according to the South Africa 2020 Crime and Safety Report, the frequency at which women in South Africa are murdered by their partners is also five times higher than the global average, according to the World Health Organisation.

There are 114 rapes reported every day in South Africa. Between April and June this year, there were 65 femicides, 122 attempted femicides, 2,413 assaults with the intention of causing grievous bodily harm and 6,214 common assaults on women that were reported to the police. These crimes were all attributed to domestic violence and abuse.

Five months on and there is no evidence that the situation is improving.

“Close on 100 women and children have been murdered over the last few months in South Africa, not forgetting all the women and children who came before them, or those we don’t know about. And this is only set to rise with the lifting of alcohol restrictions last week”, says Tina Thiart, one of the Co-Founders and Trustee of 1000 Women, a NGO that creates awareness, organises safe spaces for women and mobilises resources to amplify the voices of women and girls in South Africa.

“Our girls have more chance of being raped than learning to read. Sickeningly, from babies and children to young girls and elderly women, all women are targets for rape, abuse and murder, and something needs to be done”.

In an effort to spread this message, NGO 1000 Women today launches a major national movement campaign urging parents to do the brave thing by making a pledge to **#MakeTime** to speak to our sons to teach them about consent, boundaries and respect for women - and in this simple act, join the cause of fighting against the ongoing, horrific levels of gender-based violence.

The campaign centres on a children’s doll – Krissy Doll – that appears to have been brutally assaulted, exhibiting all the hallmarks of domestic violence. In a digital film, two young girls are playing with the doll, putting make-up on the doll’s face to cover up cuts and bruises.

“Our Krissy Doll is a strong denotation of how women cover up or hide the abuse or violence that is inflicted upon them. By showing a potential future in which little girls accept battered and bruised dolls as if this were the norm, we are hoping to shock South Africans into having critical conversations with their sons”, says Thiart.

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa has said, "Gender-based violence thrives in a climate of silence. With our silence, by looking the other way because we believe it is a personal or family matter, we become complicit in this most insidious of crimes."

To assist adults in navigating these difficult conversations, 1000 Women have made free-for-all digital resources available at maketime.org.za. The site hosts age-appropriate talking points and tips on how to speak to boys from the age of one to young men in their teens, an auto-calendar function to set a reminder to make time, and the option to share a pledge to **#MakeTime** on Facebook and Twitter to drive further awareness of the need to “teach our sons the right way”.

“All we’re asking is for South Africans to **#MakeTime** to speak to their sons. Words are powerful and children’s behaviour and attitudes are learnt, shaped and moulded by those who care for them. If every South African took just half an hour a month to talk to their sons, or boys in their care, about the right way to think and act, consent, boundaries and respect for women, we would soon see less violence, abuse, rape and murder,” says Thiart.

But it is not only our sons. Women also need to rethink how they view themselves. A recent survey indicated that when asked if it is acceptable for a man to hit a woman, 3.3% of men and 2.3% of women in South Africa said that it is. Despite the percentage being small, it will never be possible to completely eliminate violence against women while there are still women who believe that it is acceptable to be hit by a man, at the same time not understanding their constitutional rights or what is regarded as socially unacceptable behaviour.

“So, while making time to talk to our sons, we also need to encourage our daughters and help them understand that abuse is not okay. Abuse against them, or against anyone they care about should not be covered up. We can’t remain silent, we need to speak up if we want change,” says Thiart.

“Through this campaign we hope that each and every South African will take up the responsibility to have these types of conversations with our children from an early age, so that it becomes a social norm and prevents these crimes from following our daughters into the future”.

To find out more, pledge your support to make time to talk to your children, visit maketime.org.za and join the conversation at **#MakeTime** on social media.

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