

# THE PEOPLE VS. HER\*

Demanding action on violence against women and non-binary people.

## AN OPEN LETTER

To the Police of South Africa, led by Minister Fikile April Mbalula

Dear Minister Mbalula,

We Write to you as the person who holds the political responsibility for the South African police services. We address this letter of demand, of concern and of a need for action to you specifically as we believe that the scourge of violence against womxn and gender non-binary people, in South Africa deserves a political commitment. Violence is primarily about the exercise of power by perpetrators, enablers and institutions.

With regards to your responsibilities, the Police are culpable for failing to effectively respond to increasing violence against women and non-binary people. Police stations are sites of violence where women and non-binary people are further victimised and assaulted.

For Womxn and gender non-binary people in South Africa, experiencing multiple forms of violence, over their lifetimes is not a possibility, but rather an eventual certainty as confirmed by police statistics that emanate from the institution to which you hold ultimate responsibility and as confirmed by our lived realities and experiences of being womxn and gender non-binary people in South Africa. It is common knowledge that at least three womxn die at the hands of their intimate partners every day. The scale of the problem, is so massive that all institutions, individuals and the State ought to have a dedicated and resourced National Strategic Plan that seeks to end violence. Currently, South Africa has no such plan in place. But it is time that this violence stops! **#Know their Names** – The two cases of the womxn below, is one of thousands, which we will be highlighting daily during our campaign.

- The body of Matiisetso 'Nonkie' Smous, a 28 year-old lesbian womxn, was discovered in Moakeng, Free State. She had been murdered and her body burned beyond recognition. Although suspects were arrested for robbery it took four months for the suspects to be arrested for murder. 8 months after her death, the suspects are still out on bail and threatening other lesbians within the community. Local police say the case cannot proceed because forensic results have not been delivered.
- Ncumisa Mzamelu a 21-year-old womxn was brutally murdered and raped in Bhambayi, KwaZulu Natal and her remains were found in a deserted toilet.  
A case was opened with no arrest to date.

**The People vs. Her\*** campaign aims to highlight the many ways the state, and all other places where we learn how to behave, act, respond and feel in the world violate women. We call these places institutions of socialization, and they include faith based institutions, schools, the home, the community, the media, the workplace and spaces of cultural activity, production and experience. It is in these places where beliefs and attitudes and rules are set, and where violence against women is permitted.

Men and communities, in these institutions systemically, structurally and socially enable, condone and perpetuate violence against women, children and non-binary people. Ours is in addition to highlight the negative social norms and behaviors that perpetuate all forms of violence, and that underpin violence.

We use the asterisks\* to highlight diversity in the different identities that exist when we talk about women or her. We use the asterisks incite a long-term conversation about gendered violence that isn't limited to a cis-gender and heterosexual women, but includes those who are genderfluid or have their gender imposed on them or reject gender as a social construct completely.

It is with this inclusive approach that our campaign aims to confront institutional culpability and demand accountability from the State and the Police for sustained violence. We demand systemic, structural and social accountability and action on the violence against women and non-binary people. We demand for the State to recognize, plan and act to shift negative social norms and behaviours that perpetuate all forms of violence.

### From the Police:

- We demand that the police prioritise national and provincial guidelines on visible policing in informal areas to be developed in consultation with womxn and non-binary people.
- We demand the police to deal with missing dockets and unresolved case files.
- We demand that there is proper crime reporting to help build strong cases in court.
- We demand the discipline and arrest of all police officers who are perpetrators of violence against womxn and non-binary people, especially those who misuse their power with refugees, sex workers and minors.

- We demand an end to secondary victimisation, where police further violate survivors reporting crime. All police officers must be trained and sensitised on social norms and behaviours that perpetuate the violence.
- We demand for the police to play an active role in realising a fully funded multi-sectoral national strategic plan on ending violence.

**From you, as the minister of police**

- We demand that you publicly denounce all violence committed in the name of the police, and display the commitment through making public the records of prosecutions for violence against womxn in your own force over the course of your ministry.
- We demand that you lobby the national executive, and use the powers entrusted in you to declare violence a national disaster
- We demand that you provide us with a detailed and costed plan, as to how you have previously engaged Campaigns to end violence in South Africa and how you will engage and ensure that the voices of civil society are the ones shaping your responses and plans.
- We further avail ourselves to dialogue with you and any relevant people in your immediate line of authority on the matters that we raise. We look forward to an invitation for a meeting, where we will action the political commitment to violence.
- We demand that at every moment where you address the nation, you highlight a case of violence against womxn and non-binary people that you will personally follow up on, in a police station. **We know that you are very active on social media. Use this platform in a constructive way**

**Yours in eradicating violence**

**A collective of womxn and non-binary people**

**Find us on these platforms.**

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**Twitter** <https://twitter.com/ThePeopleVsHer>