

Govt pilots online platform for protection orders

Government is piloting a system in a number of provinces that will enable victims of domestic violence to apply for protection orders online.



Image source: Alex Green from [Pexels](#)

“The violence perpetrated by men against women and girls is an assault on our common humanity. Women do not feel safe in their homes, on the street, in places of work and study and worship,” President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Wednesday.

The President made these remarks during his keynote address at the commemoration of Women’s Day at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

Tougher bail conditions, life imprisonment

He told South Africans that government has responded to the call for tougher bail conditions for perpetrators of gender-based violence (GBV).

“Effective from earlier this month, no police bail may be granted to persons charged with rape or if the victim was in a domestic relationship with the perpetrator. Such bail applications must be formally applied for in court. If the accused was in a domestic relationship with the alleged victim, the court has to issue a protection order against them before releasing them on bail.

“Also effective from earlier this month, gang or serial rapists face life imprisonment, as do perpetrators of date rape, marital rape, child rape and incest,” the President said.

This year’s Women’s Month is being celebrated under the theme: ‘Accelerating Socio-Economic Opportunities for Women Empowerment’. This theme highlights the need to ensure that all women have access to participate equally in all areas of human endeavour.

“Women do not feel safe in their homes, on the street, in places of work and study and worship. It was in response to this crisis that the first Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in 2018 made a firm commitment to

undertake a comprehensive, effective and united response.

“Through an extensive consultative process, the National Strategic Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was launched three years ago. Since then, it has made important progress,” the President said.



CRIMINAL LAW

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More than 12,000 police members have received training to respond effectively to gender-based violence and to focus on needs of victims.

More than one million DNA collection kits have been delivered to police stations around the country since 2019 and there are now just over 1,000 victim friendly rooms at police stations countrywide.

“Over the last year, we opened three new Thuthuzela Care Centres for victims of gender-based violence, bringing the national total to 62. We are improving access to shelters and associated services for survivors of gender-based violence.”

Updated legislation

“In January last year, I signed into law three key pieces of legislation, namely the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Act,” the President said.

He said these new laws provide greater protection to survivors of gender-based violence, to ensure that perpetrators are no longer able to evade prosecution, and to strengthen measures to prevent gender-based violence.

Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said while South Africa has made strides to improve the lives of women since democracy, a lot more still needs to be done.



LEGISLATION & REGULATION

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“South Africa is not free... it will only be free when we are free as women. Let us take the District Development Model approach to address GBV. In every ward, every councillor must be at the forefront of the fight against GBV and the religious leader in that ward must also be at the forefront of fighting against GBV.

“Women must have access to justice. There are very serious problems with women accessing justice. The LGBTQIA+ community must stop being killed and discriminated against,” the Minister said.

Women in sport

The President paid tribute to the women of the country who are excelling in sport.

“Banyana Banyana and the Protea Netball Team did our country proud recently. Banyana Banyana won the African Women’s Cup and reached the top 16 in the Women’s Fifa World Cup and our netball team played very well and are now ranked 6th in the world.

“As a country, we are very proud of our women as they fly South Africa’s flag high. We need to pay them well and their pay must be equal to that of men and even exceed what we pay men,” Ramaphosa said.

Dlamini Zuma echoed the President's sentiments as she congratulated Banyana Banyana for making history under difficult conditions.

"There is no women's soccer league in the country and they get paid less than their male counterparts. The wage gap in South Africa is still there. Our ancestors are happy because Banyana Banyana has made history," the Minister said.

Premier of Gauteng Panyaza Lesufi said the 9th of August is an affirmation that women are special.

"The 9th of August is not a ritual. It is an affirmation that we will empower women, it is an affirmation that will empower and support women," he said.

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