



# NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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## **CAMPAIGN ON 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN 2021**

It is sadly ironic that in the week preceding the annual United Nations' Campaign on 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children, that started on 25 November 2021, the quarterly crime statistics for the period June to September 2021, were released by the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Looking at the statistics, one is tempted to ask whether this campaign, in the past number of years, has had any significant impact on the behaviour of males toward women and children in South Africa?

To have more than 9 000 reported rape cases in a period of 3 months is nothing short of shocking. And then we know that most cases are never reported. Add to this the more than 1 100 women and children murdered during this period and it is clear that our situation is dire.

On top of this we had to contend with the recent report on teen pregnancies indicating that in the first quarter of 2021 more than 36 000 pregnancies of girls between the ages of 10 and 19 had been reported, with the further devastating statistic that hundreds of these girls were only between 9 and 12 years of age.

Sometimes it seems that we, as a society, have become statistics fatigued. We hear and see the information and merely await the next set of statistics to express our concern, if the situation is worse, and our gratitude if there is an improvement. What we need is action and programmes to address this problem because it is robbing these girls of a future.

It is NAPTOSA's continued view that the Department of Basic Education should take the lead in combatting the issue of child pregnancies. But the department cannot do this by itself. The Department of Social Development, the SAPS, the Department of Justice and Ministry for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities must all play an active role.

We need to see a proportional number of persons charged and convicted of offences related to these pregnancies. We need to see systems and programmes that support these girls and prevent them from falling prey to further sexual abuse. We need support programmes for the parents of these children and the schools that have to deal with their situations. We need vigilant teachers who will report cases of sexual abuse as required by the Children's Act, 2005.

NAPTOSA supports the 16 Days of Activism campaign. We, however, believe that this type of campaign should be in the face of the public more than once a year, especially in the context of our appalling crime

statistics on sexual crimes and the murder of woman and children. We therefore urge government to launch national campaigns of this nature more regularly (and not wait for the annual UN campaign) to constantly remind the public of the unacceptability of violence against women and children. Maybe, a campaign to coincide with the release of the quarterly crime statistics could be the answer. It will also allow for the effectiveness of such campaigns to be measured more accurately.

But as much as awareness campaigns are important, deterring perpetrators require concrete action. For this we need the wheels of justice to turn faster and to be less lenient. Easy bail and early parole have often led to perpetrators/ convicted offenders merely continuing their reprehensible actions.

NAPTOSA has on previous occasions advocated for our education system to focus on the boy child to instil principles and behavioural patterns in them that will counter unacceptable behaviour towards girls and women. We still stand by it.

**BASIL MANUEL**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**