

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA disturbed by murders and sexual assaults at schools and calls for stringent measures against perpetrators
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is deeply disturbed by statistics on violations occurring at South African learning environments schools, reflecting that 25 murders, 42 attempted murders, 197 rapes, and 577 assaults that took place within six months.

These reported atrocities occurred at schools, daycare centres, creches, nursery schools, preschools, special schools, and tertiary institutions. The PSA is further concerned that many parents prevent their children from reporting incidents to avoid embarrassment or the stigma associated with sexual violence, whilst others are allegedly paid by perpetrators not to report cases. The PSA is aware that some school governing bodies and school management teams collude to cover these crimes and allow parents to deal with the matter away from the school, thus abdicating their responsibilities. The PSA has been at the forefront of this battle where various cases of assault were reported to South African Council for Educators and the Human Rights Commission.

Learning institutions are no longer safe spaces that are conducive for teaching and learning. It is concerning that educators who are tasked to protect learners account for twelve cases of rape, whilst 104 rapes were perpetrated by other learners. KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng each reported 35 rape cases, Limpopo 25, Free State 24, with the North West and Eastern Cape each reporting 23 such cases. It is concerning that learners are raped at schools where educators are tasked with the responsibility of protecting them.

Many learners who are victims of these criminal acts will experience trauma that may affect them psychologically into adulthood. The violence experienced at learning environments can be attributed to various factors, however, it will never be acceptable that a learning environment becomes a place for criminality. The South African Police Service (SAPS) must ensure that offenders face the rule of law to dissuade such acts. Learners are a most vulnerable group. The Department of Education must thus review relevant policies. Partnerships with the SAPS and the Department of Social Development must be enforced to ensure that issues of bullying, sexual awareness, and children rights are addressed.

The PSA undertook a collaborative programme where issues of harassment and bullying were addressed at various schools to assist in addressing the situation. The PSA calls on private-sector stakeholders to adopt schools in their operational areas and provide the necessary support and resources to eradicate criminality. Law enforcement stakeholders must further regularly patrol and visit schools to prevent an escalation of violations involving vulnerable learners.

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