

#THETOTALSHUTDOWN

For accountability. For implementation. For the right of womxn to live free from violence.

24 September 2026

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

RE: #TheTotalShutdown 24 Demands, the National Strategic Plan on GBVF and the State of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in South Africa

Dear President Ramaphosa,

We write to you as #TheTotalShutdown Womxn's Movement against GBVF, eight years after womxn and gender non-conforming people across South Africa took to the streets on 1 August 2018 and delivered 24 demands to the State.

Those demands represented years of frustration, organising and advocacy by womxn who had repeatedly experienced the failure of institutions intended to protect them. They were not presented as abstract aspirations. They were a call for specific action from the State to prevent gender-based violence against women (GBVAW), strengthen accountability, transform the criminal justice response, support survivors, and address the structural conditions that enable violence.

When you received our memorandum at the Union Buildings, you undertook to carefully consider each demand and the issues raised.

Since then, there have been significant developments.

The 2018 Presidential Summit on GBVF took place. The National Strategic Plan on GBVF was adopted in 2020. Legislation has been amended. Thuthuzela Care Centres and other survivor-support mechanisms have expanded. The National Council on GBVF was legislated for in 2024 and its members were appointed in 2026. The Council held its inaugural meeting in August this year.

We acknowledge these developments.

But, the existence of laws, strategies and institutions cannot be equated with implementation, accountability, or impact.

The State's own assessment of the NSP demonstrates the scale of the unfinished work. At the five-year review point, only 65 of 191 tracked indicators were recorded as achieved, while 104 remained in progress and 22 had not been achieved.

This means that, eight years after #TheTotalShutdown, we are entitled to ask not simply what government has announced, but:

> *What has been implemented?*
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> *What remains outstanding*
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> *Who is responsible?*
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> *What has been budgeted?*
>
> *By when will these commitments be delivered?*

Demand 1 remains particularly urgent

We want to draw your attention specifically to Demand 1(a).

Our demand was for:

> *"A strong message from the office of the President that gender based violence against womxn cannot be tolerated at any level of society."*

Crucially, this included a commitment:

> *"never to appoint any individual who has been implicated or minimises the causes and consequences of GBVAW to cabinet or to lead a state institution."*

This was a clear demand for leadership and accountability from the highest office in the country.

Eight years later, we are asking the Presidency a simple question:

Does this commitment still stand?

The question is particularly urgent given the recent arrest of a serving senior SAPS officer on allegations including the sexual grooming of a 16-year-old girl and the alleged rape of an 18-year-old young lady. These are allegations before the courts, and we respect due process and the presumption of innocence.

Our concern, however, extends beyond one individual case.

It concerns the standard that the State applies when appointing, retaining,or entrusting individuals with positions of public authority, particularly within institutions responsible for protecting womxn and responding to GBV.

Demand 1(a) was clear. We therefore ask you to publicly reaffirm that commitment and explain how it is operationalised today.

Specifically:

1. Does the commitment made in 2018 remain the position of the Presidency?
2. Are individuals being considered for senior government and state-institution leadership positions screened for allegations, findings or records relating to GBVAW?
3. What formal mechanisms govern that screening?
4. Which institution or office is responsible for it?
5. What circumstances would disqualify an individual from appointment?

6. Does the standard apply across Cabinet, senior government appointments and leadership of state institutions?
7. Will the Presidency make this framework publicly available?

We are not asking the Presidency to prejudge criminal cases.

We are asking for a clear standard of public accountability.

Demand 1(b): What happened to the comprehensive process?

Demand 1(b) called for:

> *"A commitment to establish & drive a multi-stakeholder & comprehensive process to address & reduce GBVAW."*

It also called for the dates of a National Gender Summit to be announced before 30 August 2018.

The Summit consequently took place, and the NSP became the principal national framework for addressing GBVF. The National Council on GBVF now has a statutory mandate to provide strategic leadership and coordinate a multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral response.

But this raises the next question:

Where is the transparent, measurable implementation of the comprehensive process we demanded?

Our 24 demands were interconnected. They addressed prevention, policing, justice, survivor support, shelters, protection orders, accountability, training, data, funding, communication and the inclusion of people facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

The NSP consequently incorporated many of these areas. Indeed, the NSP's own implementation framework identifies specific #TheTotalShutdown demands within its pillars, including demands relating to presidential leadership, screening criteria, the NSP itself, parliamentary oversight, and government training.

This gives the government a clear accountability framework.

We are therefore asking the Presidency to account for the distance between the demands made in 2018, the commitments consequently adopted by the government, and what has actually been delivered.

The 24 demands and the NSP

We recognise that there has been progress against several of the demands.

There has been movement on national coordination, legislative reform, survivor services, Thuthuzela Care Centres, protection mechanisms, specialised justice responses, and the establishment of the National Council.

However, other commitments remain partial, delayed or insufficiently demonstrated.

In particular, concerns remain around:

- prevention and the implementation of a comprehensive prevention approach
- accountability within the criminal justice system

- police conduct and responsiveness
- prosecutor-led investigations
- protection-order systems
- shelters and interim housing
- survivor-centred and accessible services
- services for marginalised groups
- sustained public education and communication
- training across government
- reliable, integrated GBVF data
- funding and expenditure transparency
- mechanisms through which civil society can meaningfully monitor implementation

These are not new concerns.

They are reflected in demands made in 2018 and remain visible in the implementation challenges identified through the NSP.

The five-year assessment recorded only 34% of tracked indicators as achieved, with 54.5% still in progress and 11.5% not achieved.

We are not suggesting that every indicator classified as "in progress" represents failure. We are saying that "in progress" cannot become a substitute for delivery, particularly where commitments have already had years to move from planning to implementation.

We therefore request a Presidential account on four matters

1. What is the government's plan for the current GBVF crisis?

South Africa is again confronting intense public concern following the discovery of nine womxn's bodies in Ekurhuleni over a period of approximately two months. Investigations into the circumstances and possible connections between the cases are ongoing.

At the same time, the arrest of a senior SAPS officer on serious sexual-offence allegations has raised renewed questions about accountability within an institution responsible for public safety.

We therefore request a clear account of government's immediate and medium-term plan to address the current situation, including:

- prevention
- policing and investigative capacity
- responses to missing women
- accountability for SAPS members who fail survivors or are implicated in GBV
- survivor support
- shelters and places of safety
- Thuthuzela Care Centres that are fully functioning
- prosecution
- community-level prevention

- implementation of the GBVF national disaster response

We need to know what is being done, by whom, with what resources, and within what timeframe.

2. When will Demand 1(a) be publicly reaffirmed and operationalised?

We request a direct response from the President on whether the 2018 commitment remains government policy.

If it does, we request that the Presidency:

- formally reaffirm it
- explain the screening and appointment mechanisms supporting it
- identify the responsible authority
- make the applicable framework publicly accessible

A commitment of this nature should not depend on who happens to occupy the Presidency or which institution is making an appointment.

3. Provide transparent NSP implementation information

We request publication of a consolidated NSP implementation dashboard showing, for each outstanding commitment and indicator:

- current status
- responsible department/institution
- responsible political and administrative authority
- original and revised deadline
- budget allocated
- expenditure to date
- measurable outputs and outcomes
- reasons for delays
- corrective action
- revised timeframe
- mechanism for public and civil-society monitoring

The State has already undertaken monitoring and expenditure work around GBVF. The public should therefore be able to see how the commitments are being funded and implemented.

We also request clarity on how the NSP connects to the newly operational National Council on GBVF and the GBVF national disaster response.

4. Clarify the role of civil society and the private sector

The response to GBVF has always required more than the government.

But partnership must not become a mechanism through which the State outsources its constitutional and statutory responsibilities to civil society.

We therefore request clarity on:

- the formal role of national civil society and feminist organisations in NSP implementation
- how survivor-led organisations participate in decision-making
- how civil society will participate in monitoring and oversight
- what funding and resources are available to support this role
- what responsibilities have been assigned to the private sector
- how private-sector commitments will be monitored
- how government will ensure that civil society remains a partner in accountability rather than simply a service provider filling gaps in the State's response

We are asking for an accounting, not another commitment

President Ramaphosa, #TheTotalShutdown was born because womxn had reached a point at which another expression of concern was no longer sufficient.

Eight years later, we find ourselves asking many of the same questions.

The State has developed policies, amended legislation, and established institutions. We recognise this progress.

But womxn cannot experience a policy.

They experience whether the police respond when they report violence. Whether a protection order is enforced. Whether a survivor is believed and supported. Whether a perpetrator is investigated and prosecuted. Whether a womxn can access a shelter. Whether prevention reaches her community. Whether public officials are held accountable. And whether the State does what it has promised.

That is the measure that matters.

We therefore request a written response from the Presidency addressing the four areas above and providing the requested implementation information and timeframes.

We also request that the response distinguish clearly between what has been achieved; what is underway; what has been delayed; what has not been implemented; and what the government intends to do about each outstanding commitment.

The 24 demands were delivered to the State in 2018. They were specific enough to become part of the country's consequent GBVF policy architecture.

Eight years later, we believe the womxn of South Africa who made those demands, and the millions of womxn who continue to live with GBVF, are entitled to know:

> ***What happened to the commitments made to us?***

We await the Presidency's substantive response.

#TheTotalShutdown Womxn's Movement against GBVF - *My Body Not Your Crime Scene*

Contact: *candi@thetotalshutdown.com*
lolo@thetotalshutdown.com
ntsiki@thetotalshutdown.com