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South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa's GBV commitments must now become action

Concrete deadlines and accountability measures are welcome, but implementation will be the test

S.A President, Cyril Ramaphosa's address on 29 September 2026 acknowledges what women across South Africa have been saying for years, existing efforts to prevent gender-based violence and femicide have not been enough. ACTSA welcomes the concrete measures announced, but stresses that commitments must now translate into measurable improvements in women's safety.

"The test is no longer whether we recognise the crisis. The test is whether these commitments are implemented, properly resourced and whether women are actually safer." - Rachel Palma Randle (Director ACTSA)

Key facts / information:

- The President announced a national case-recovery operation focused on unresolved murders, attempted murders, rapes and serious sexual offences involving women and children.
- Government has been directed to develop a funded plan to reduce forensic backlogs, with priority processing for cases involving the rape or murder of women and children.
- Municipalities are to conduct women's safety audits covering issues including broken streetlights, unsafe transport routes, abandoned buildings and other high-risk areas.
- Government will develop a coordinated legislative and enforcement package to address alcohol-related violence.
- The measures include 60- and 90-day deadlines and quarterly public reporting.

"We welcome the recognition that women cannot be made responsible for preventing the violence committed against them. Women should not have to reorganise their lives around the threat of violence. They need protection, prevention and accountability." - Anele Gcwabe (Campaigns and Communications Officer ACTSA)



About ACTSA/ the case :

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) is a UK-based organisation working in solidarity with civil society organisations, activists and social movements across Southern Africa. ACTSA campaigns for human rights, justice, equality and peace and uses its international platform to raise awareness and hold political and economic power to account. Gender-based violence and femicide are fundamental human rights issues, making the safety, dignity and rights of women and girls a direct concern for ACTSA and part of our wider work to advance human rights across Southern Africa.

“The President is correct: a woman reporting abuse must be heard. A protection order must provide protection. Forensic evidence must be processed without unreasonable delay, and cases must be properly investigated and prosecuted. We are relieved to hear the President acknowledge this, and we reiterate that these cannot remain commitments on paper.”- Rachel Palma Randle (Director ACTSA)

Notes to Editor:

In his address on 29 September 2026, President Cyril Ramaphosa acknowledged that government’s previous efforts had not been sufficient to prevent violence against women and to make women safe. He stated that “what we have done has not been enough” and announced four immediate measures with specified deadlines and reporting requirements.

The President also stated that institutions and programmes are of limited value if they do not work when women need them, citing failures such as women being turned away when reporting abuse, protection orders not providing effective protection, forensic samples remaining unprocessed and cases collapsing because of institutional failures.

ACTSA’s response emphasises implementation and accountability. The organisation will be watching whether the announced measures are properly resourced, implemented within the stated deadlines and reported on publicly.

The President’s address also explicitly rejected placing responsibility for violence on victims and survivors, stating that responsibility belongs to the person who commits the violence.

ENDS

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