

Media Statement

Wednesday 07 December 2016

Women's rights organisations tell parliamentary committee that the Domestic Violence Act needs urgent review.

The Women's Legal Centre (WLC) and the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) submitted to a High Level Parliamentary Panel Committee that women continue to bear the brunt of non-implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. Women endure the double prejudice of abuse and violence at the hand of their abuser as well as the inability of the government through the South African Police to respond to the violence.

Yesterday, Tuesday 06 December 2016, the Women's Legal Centre (WLC) and Legal Resource Centre (LRC) made a joint submission to a High Level Parliamentary Panel Committee on the Domestic Violence Act and its implementation.

Both organisations submitted that there has been a significant increase in domestic violence and that this has a ripple effect throughout the justice system designed by the Act, and which has been implemented in a haphazard manner almost since inception.

Additionally, the organisations stated that women continue to bear the brunt of non-implementation of the Act as they are mostly abused by someone with whom they share a domestic relationship.

They therefore endure the double prejudice of abuse and violence at the hand of their abuser as well as the inability of the government through the South African Police to respond to the violence.

In its submission both the WLC and LRC identified non-compliance in particular by the South African Police Service (SAPS) as a major stumbling block.

Says Seehaam Samaai, Director of the WLC; "The SAPS are often the first interaction or engagement that women will have with the justice system. They become the public face of government's commitment to address and eradicate gender based violence. There must therefore be a commitment within the highest ranks to address and meet these obligations."

There has been non-compliance with the reporting framework set out in the Act in that the National Police Commissioner has periodically not submitted the required reports to Parliament on the implementation of the Act.

Commenting on how to move forward Charlene May, Attorney at LRC said that the Act in its entirety is in need of an urgent review and possible amendment. The legislation does not deal with counselling or mediation and therefore provides no service that speaks to future prevention or addressing the cycle of abuse that is present. "We would strongly suggest that such an element be introduced to show governments commitment to addressing gender based violence in a non-punitive manner."

In conclusion both organisations submitted that we cannot move forward as a country and community if we don't address the violence that women are subjected to on a daily basis in our country. We cannot

rely on the current system that we have in place, new and creative methods need to be introduced at legislative and policy level to address violence against women.

Media queries contact Angie Richardson on angie@thepressoffice.net or 083 397 2512