



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

31 OCTOBER 2023

**CONTRIBUTION BY THE HONOURABLE TJEKUPE MAXIMALLIANT
KATJIMUNE ON THE MOTION BY HON. MIKE. R VENAANI FOR THE HOUSE TO
DEBATE THE CAUSES OF THE HIGH CRIME RATES IN NAMIBIA AND URGENT
INTERVENTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE IT**

**Honourable Speaker
Honourable Members**

1. I rise in support and to contribute to this imperative motion tabled by the Honourable Mike Rapuika Venaani, which calls on this August House to debate the causes of the high crime rates in Namibia, and seek urgent interventions required to reduce these high crime rates. As the mover correctly stated in his motivation, we cannot, and must not, turn a blind eye to this growing menace that threatens the very fabric of our society. To effectively combat this challenge, we must delve into the root causes that fuel this wave of criminality. We must develop a systematic and methodological manner of addressing these high crime rates, one that develops a proper diagnosis that speaks to the root of the problem, and not a reactionary one.

In developing this methodology, the questions we ought to ask ourselves as the legislature are:

- i) What is it that propels our men and women to slaughter their wives and husbands through brutal acts of GBV on an almost daily basis?
 - ii) What it is that pushes our young men and women to venture into criminality?
 - iii) What informs the prevalent rate of even white collar crimes, such as corruption, which we seldom discuss in the larger conversation around criminality because we consider these crimes as ‘soft crimes’?
2. Is it that the moral fabric of our society is in disarray? Or is it that crime is in fact a natural response to a much larger systemic problem? These are the critical questions that we as legislatures have to ask ourselves as we attempt to reduce these high crime rates as per the mover’s plea.

Honourable Members

3. It is perhaps prudent that I begin by delving into one crime that is particularly disturbing to me, the Gender Based Violence (GBV) that disproportionately affects our women and children. It is common cause that the significant majority of those who perpetrate GBV related crimes are men, and that these crimes are mostly committed within romantic or family relationship settings, or by a perpetrator/s known to the victim.
4. At the core of gender-based violence lies a long-standing and deeply rooted gender inequality. Traditional gender norms and stereotypes, along with power imbalances, create an environment where one gender is unfairly treated, often resulting in violence as a means of control and dominance. Cultural norms and practices also play a significant role in perpetuating domestic violence. Norms that condone controlling actions, aggression, or even the normalization of violence within intimate relationships can further exacerbate this issue. This normalization makes it difficult for victims to seek help and break free from abusive situations.
5. Insufficient education and awareness about gender equality, rights, and healthy relationships contribute to the perpetuation of these harmful behaviors. Educating individuals about respectful relationships, consent, and gender equality is essential in breaking the cycle of violence. To effectively combat domestic and gender-based violence, we must confront these root causes through targeted policies and initiatives aimed at fostering gender

equality. We need public education initiatives, support services for victims, and a collective effort to challenge the harmful societal norms that perpetuate violence within our households. Let us unite, as the representatives of the people, to eradicate domestic violence and create a society that is safe and nurturing for all.

6. During the 2021 to 2022 period, 4783 cases of GBV were recorded, while 1288 cases of rape were recorded within the same period. These crimes are perpetuated in the most heinous of ways. They are brutal and merciless, and demonstrate just how heinous we have become as men. I will proceed to demonstrate just a few of these brutal incidents:

- ❖ Early this month, the life of a 31-year-old woman from Eehnana in the Ohangwena region was tragically cut short by her 42-year-old boyfriend after he allegedly slit her throat because of allegations regarding the verification of DNA results of their children.
- ❖ In August 2023, a 28-year-old man from Otavi in the Ohangwena region was arrested after allegedly snatching his biological son from his mother's arms and leading him to the railway line, where he allegedly hit the son's head twice on a concrete pole and threw the body away before fleeing, possibly in retaliation to issues the suspect had with the mother.
- ❖ In July 2023, it is alleged that a 31-year-old woman from Okapya KaMbidhi village in the Omusati region was murdered by her 38-year-old boyfriend after being hit with an iron on her head, after which the boyfriend proceeded to hang her on the roof of their shack before taking his own life.
- ❖ In December 2021, a 23-year-old woman from Stinkwater in the Dordabis area lost her life in the most gruesome way when she was raped, murdered and body parts mutilated, allegedly by a 32-year-old man after attending a wedding. Her mutilated body was discovered in the mountains.

Honourable Speaker

7. I can go on and on about these incidences, however the point I am trying to make is that we have a major problem on our hands. We have to ask ourselves as legislators:

- i) What is it that leads our men to commit these heinous crimes against our women and children?
- ii) What are we doing wrong as a society, from the grassroots level, in regards to how we raise our boy-child and their posture towards romantic relationships and patriarchy?
- iii) Has it not become prudent that we introspect within ourselves and transform the manner in which we bring up the boy child and his attitude towards romantic relationships and the role of a woman in society?

I implore upon the relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee to which this motion will be deferred to methodically investigate these prudent questions.

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

8. It is undeniable that the first diagnosis which informs other forms of violent and petty crime in Namibia is the high rates of poverty and socioeconomic inequality. A significant portion of our population grapples with inadequate access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The lack of a stable livelihood pushes individuals towards criminal activities as a means of survival or to address their basic needs.

9. The 2021 Multidimensional Poverty Index released by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) indicated that 43.2% of Namibians are multi-dimensionally poor. Additionally, the prevalence of unemployment, particularly among the youth, has significantly contributed to the rise in crime and these high unemployment rates are expected to persist. According to global macro models, the youth unemployment rate in Namibia is projected to be around 47.4% this year, and a significant portion of the population lacks stable employment and a regular source of income.

10. These statistics are not mere numbers—they represent the daily reality for a considerable segment of our population. When individuals face desperate circumstances, with limited or no access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, they are left with few options for sustenance. Regrettably, some turn to criminal activities out of sheer desperation, attempting to secure a livelihood or meet their most basic needs. Therefore, addressing poverty and its associated disparities is not only a matter of social justice but a direct strategy for reducing crime rates and enhancing public safety.

Honourable Speaker

11. To effectively tackle this issue, we must invest in comprehensive social and economic policies that uplift the marginalized and bridge the widening gap between the affluent and the underprivileged. This involves empowering Namibian people economically. We must foster an environment conducive to job creation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth, and encourage investments in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology that can stimulate employment opportunities. We must also ensure accessible, affordable, and high-quality education for all, so that Namibians are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the modern job market.

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

12. Furthermore, in our pursuit to comprehensively address the rising rates of crime in our nation, we must turn our attention to a critical component that often receives inadequate consideration - the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-convicts. Without appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities, individuals leaving the prison system often find themselves unable to reintegrate into society, leading them back into criminal activities. We need to invest in rehabilitation programs and support systems to help former offenders reintegrate and contribute positively to society.

13. In Namibia, like in many societies, we grapple with a situation where individuals exiting the prison system face a daunting challenge - a lack of

adequate support systems and rehabilitation programs. The significance of this challenge cannot be overstated. When individuals complete their sentences and re-enter society, they are faced with a myriad of obstacles and these hurdles can range from social stigma to limited employability due to their criminal records, often pushing them towards the perilous path of re-offending.

Honourable Members

14. Without effective rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities, we inadvertently contribute to a recurring cycle of criminality. The lack of necessary support and guidance can deter these individuals from successfully reintegrating into society, making them vulnerable to re-engaging in criminal activities simply due to a lack of viable alternatives. This perpetuation of criminal behavior not only adversely affects the individual but also has a ripple effect on families and communities, ultimately impacting our overall societal well-being and safety.
15. Therefore, it is imperative that we invest in robust rehabilitation programs and comprehensive support systems for former offenders. This investment extends beyond financial commitments; it demands a commitment of time, resources, and a shift in societal attitudes. By providing tailored rehabilitation programs that focus on skills development, counseling, mental health support, and fostering a sense of responsibility, we can empower these individuals to break free from the cycle of crime and contribute positively to our society.
16. The reintegration of ex-convicts is not just a matter of compassion and social justice; it is a strategic imperative to reduce crime rates and enhance public safety. We must make concerted efforts to invest in rehabilitation programs and support systems that equip former offenders to rebuild their lives, fostering a safer and more prosperous Namibia for all.

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17. In conclusion, to effectively combat high crime rates in Namibia, we must address the root causes methodically. These include poverty and socioeconomic inequality, unemployment, lack of rehabilitation and reintegration support, harmful patriarchal norms and drug abuse. Together, as members of this esteemed House, we must collaborate and prioritize initiatives that address these underlying issues and create a safer and more secure Namibia for all its citizens.

I therefore support this motion as moved by the Honourable Mike Rapuika Venaani.

I so move.