

A shocking new report by United Christian Action presents evidence that South Africa's murder statistics are even worse than official statistics have so far admitted.

For every 1000 crimes committed in South Africa, only 430 criminals are arrested. Of these, only 77 are convicted and barely 8 of these are sentenced to two or more years of imprisonment. It is also calculated that South African convicts have a 94% recidivism rate (that is, 94% of all persons released after serving a sentence immediately become involved in crime again).

Serious Underreporting

The 22-page United Christian Action report by Robert McCafferty, is based on original source documents, government archives, the Central Statistics Service, Interpol, the South African Medical Research Council statistics, and many other sources. The Report casts serious doubt on the South African government's claim that the murder rate has been decreasing.

Victims' surveys have consistently uncovered between 60% and 70% more crime than reported by official sources. Upwards of 50% of crime in many serious categories goes unreported.

Statistical Discrepancies

While police crime statistics show that there were 21 683 murders in the year 2000, the Medical Research Council puts the figure at 32 482. The MRC's estimate is close to the figure from the Department of Home Affairs, which is 30 068. This is a third more murders than reported by the SAPS, a discrepancy of more than 10 000 murders.

So, while the Democratic Alliance leaflet "Fight Crime" puts the average daily murder rate in South Africa at 55 murders every day, the Medical Research Council's statistics reveal that 89 murders are committed, on average, every day in South Africa.

Interpol claims even higher numbers of murders in South Africa. While the SAPS claims that there were 26 883 murders in 1995, Interpol claims that there were 54 298 "murders known to the police" in 1995/96. Interpol's figures are approximately double the numbers of "recorded murders" in South Africa.

According to Interpol, South Africa has the highest recorded per capita murder rate of the countries covered in their report for 1998, second only to Columbia. In that year, Interpol recorded the per capita murder rate in the USA as 6 per 100 000, while in South Africa it was 59 per 100 000.

Organised Crime

A report from the World Economic Forum claimed that South Africa's organised crime was second only to Columbia's, with its frightening drug cartels and Russia, with its omnipresent mafia. Their report claimed widespread corruption in the South African police service – where one in four police officers in the greater Johannesburg were under criminal investigation at the time of the report.

Police estimate that there are currently “about 700 extremely well financed and superbly armed crime syndicates operating in and from South Africa.” However, it was also reported that “not a single ring leader of any of the 700 crime syndicates operating in South Africa has been arrested.”

The Failure of the Criminal Justice System

In 2000, only half of all murder cases were sent to court, and only 4007 of the ‘official murders’ resulted in a guilty verdict. The MRC reported 32 482 murders in 2000. This means that for every 8 murders in 2000, only one murderer was convicted. Obviously there is a delay factor to sentencing; however, the murder rate has been consistently high and the conviction rate considerably low by comparison.

One report is quoted claiming: “Despite the President’s boast that South African crime statistics are improving – with reductions in incidents of some serious categories of offences – other figures showing the decline of convictions suggest that the forces of law and order are alarmingly on the retreat. Convictions for using and dealing with drugs, for example, collapsed ...”

Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol abuse is also shown to go hand in hand with South Africa's culture of violence – “according to the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, 56% of homicide victims sampled for blood alcohol levels tested positive.”

The Most Murderous Societies On Earth

The Nedcore Project has concluded that: “South Africa and Southern Africa are probably the most murderous societies on earth, even with the probable under-reporting.” The Nedcore Project claims the results of their surveys “underscore the fact that crime has become South Africa’s pre-eminent sociological problem. It now eclipses even unemployment in concerns of all South Africans.”

The bizarre behaviour of the ANC government in, at one stage, imposing a moratorium on crime statistics is also questioned. The report shows that in the first seven years of ANC rule, violence and crime in South Africa increased by 33%, officially.

Worse Than War

The UCA Report on Murder in South Africa reveals that according to the official statistics, in the 44 years from 1950 to 1993, there was an average of 7036 murders per year. This covered the turbulent strife of the apartheid years of warfare, conflict, terrorism, riots and repression.

However, in the first eight years (of peace) of the new democratic dispensation, under the ANC, an average of 24 206 murders were committed each year. However, if the Interpol statistics are accepted, then the murder rate in South Africa during the ANC years has averaged 47 882 per year.

When The Death Penalty Deterrent Is Removed

The report notes that the sharp exponential increase of violent crime, particularly murder, in South Africa, also coincides with the suspension of the death penalty in 1989 and its abolition in 1996.

Official Cover Up

Sharp discrepancies between official statistics and those of Interpol and the Medical Research Council are considered. One observer is quoted as saying that the “easiest way for the police to reduce the crime rate is simply to do nothing but record only those crimes where a case number is absolutely mandatory ...” Numerous experts are quoted as suspecting “serious under reporting”; “perhaps these figures are concealed for political reasons”; “the reason for this under reporting could be the desire to change the ongoing reputation of South Africa as the crime capital of the world.”

Living Behind Bars and Locks

Of course, few South Africans would need the impeccable research documented in this report to convince them that security has deteriorated and crime has escalated during the last ten years.

No matter what the official statistics may claim, many South Africans remember a time when most children walked or cycled to school on their own, when most homes were not surrounded by high walls, razor wire and spikes. When homes did not need burglar bars and security gates, alarm systems and armed response companies and when many roads did not need security booms. When vehicles did not need gear locks, steering locks, alarm systems and satellite tracking devices. When we did not carry such huge bunches of keys.

The Releasing of Criminals

Not considered in this report is the impact of the early release of well over 100 000 criminals including murderers and rapists from South African prisons.

Some Of The Causes Of The Crime Wave

However, the Crime Information Analyst Centre (CIAC) of the South African Police Services is quoted as offering some socio-economic explanations for the horrific crime rates in South Africa: "Urbanisation of the youth ... extremely conducive to crime ... the role of rapid, abnormally high rates of urbanisation (and urban unemployment) ... when influx control was removed in 1986, it released a massive urbanisation process ... a massive influx of especially young work seekers (economic refugees) to our cities from especially neighbouring countries, but also from as far afield as Nigeria, Morocco, Europe and China ... at least 6 million undocumented immigrants live in especially our cities ... massive unemployment, with no extended family (social support network) and subsistence economy to support their basic needs. In the cities the only support they may find is within their peer group. A very strong sense of relative deprivation and resultant rising expectations may also develop. The difference between rich and poor in the city is very obvious and stark. ... during the years of political struggle ... many members of the former security forces and liberation armies were trained in guerilla warfare skills, like intelligence gathering, ambush techniques, the handling of firearms and explosives, etc. Many of these combatants are now out of work and many of these skills can be used to commit hijackings, house and business robberies, bank robberies and robberies of cash in transit."

Disarming The Potential Victims Of Crime

With the massive increase in organised crime, and violent crime in South Africa, it is all the

more incomprehensible that the government should be turning their attention towards disarming the potential victims through more rigid firearms control laws, rather than re-instating the death penalty as a deterrent for violent crime.

“When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.” Ecclesiastes 8:11

It is also an undeniable fact that criminals prefer unarmed victims.

The full report, [Murder in South Africa: A Comparison of Past and Present](#) by Robert McCafferty, is available from United Christian Action. It can also be viewed on the web

Peter Hammond

United Christian Action, P.O. Box 23632, Claremont, 7735, South Africa

Recommended Reading

[Security and Survival in Unstable Times](#) ; [Shooting Back](#) ; [South Africa – Renaissance or Reformation?](#) and [Biblical Principles for Africa.](#)