

CENTRE FOR CHILD LAW & SECTION 27 CONCERNED ABOUT THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Centre for Child law and SECTION27 are concerned by recent reports of incidents of teachers being assaulted by learners. We understand the concerns arising out of these revelations of violence against teachers. However, we are apprehensive about the public sentiments expressed on this issue. In particular we are worried about the sentiments indicating the need for more punitive measures to be put in place to deal with the learners. The manner in which the discourse is developing, for instance the call to bring the SAPS into schools, is alarming.

We do not agree with the involvement of police in schools or believe that corporal punishment or any heavy handedness is the answer to the problem of violence in these cases. We are of the view that schools are a microcosm of communities, therefore responses must start both at schools and at home.

We are of the view that preventing violence has to be a priority for everyone in South Africa. Furthermore, we would like to underscore the need for a holistic approach to resolving the problem. One which focuses on the *individual* learner and seeks to probe the underlying reasons as to why that learner is resorting to violence as an appropriate response to the situation.

Research evidence suggests that violent behaviour by children is often a reflection of the communities we live in. According to the [Birth to Twenty Plus study](#) that observed children in Soweto over 28 years, more than 80% of children in their primary school years and more than 90% during their secondary school years, reported being victims of violence at home, at school, in their community or in their intimate relationships. This research shows that children who have few safe spaces at home, school or in their community can become desensitized to violence. In addition, the high levels of violence in South African society has at least some of its origins in violence witnessed and experienced in childhood.

With this in mind, we believe that providing families and communities with support is a good way to start dealing with this issue holistically. Furthermore, given that schools are one of the most influential institutions in children's lives, we can then look at what can schools and/or other duty bearers such as the Department of Social Development do to provide better support to learners and teachers in these cases.

According to the [Institute for Security Studies](#), South African society is becoming more, not less, violent as confirmed by the 2017/18 crime statistics released by the South African Police Service (SAPS) this month. We strongly believe that calls to re-introduce corporal punishment as suggested by most, would cause even more

violence. Evidence already suggests that children who grow up in violent households are more likely to use or become victims of violence later in life.

We need to conduct research to better understand the causes of violence in schools and communities so that we can put in place prevention and early intervention strategies and positive discipline measures that may assist in building a non-violent society.

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For more information, please contact:

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