



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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**Debate on 16 days of Activism for no violence against women and children:
Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.**

UCDP : Hon IC Ditshetelo

Thursday, 22 November 2012

Chairperson,

The painful time of the year has arrived yet again, when we all appear to focus our energies to one of the worst scourges in our society, which is violence against women and children. It's the commencement of the 16 days of Activism against women and children, we'll all talk the talk and attempt to walk the walk.

The media will feed us with stories of all forms of abuse against these vulnerable groups, at the end of the 16 days, decision-makers will make new promises and pledges, and we shall then all go back to live 349 days in a patriarchal system that just refuses to protect its women and children.

During the 16 days most of our men will say politically correct statement condemning violence against women and children, and then they will go back to their homes, their churches, to their workplaces and continue to entrench patriarchal values. Sad indeed.

Some lucky few women, extremely few in fact, will go on in oblivion of the extent of the violence against women, but the majority will go on to live the 349 days in absolute fear, fear of being raped by someone close to them, by a stranger they've never seen, of being killed, fear of bringing children in a world where they



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cannot protect them, fear of violence and abuse they face every day from intimate partners, fear of being made to feel inferior at home, in churches and in the workplace.

It is a sad scenario when research points out that one in four women is raped in South Africa, yet one in twenty five rapes will be reported to the police and conviction rate in these cases remains disappointingly low.

One columnist wrote that it is difficult to have the freedom to choose when you don't have freedom from systematic advantage. It is difficult to have the freedom to act when you don't have freedom from violence. It is difficult to have the freedom to speak your mind when you don't have freedom from stigma, shame and social suspicion. So while we have beautifully written rights on perfectly prepared parchment, these are the reasons why women are not free.

The irony of the world we live in is that we all want the same things. I believe that victims and perpetrators, deep within the human soul, want the same things. We all want to be safe in our streets, we all want to be care free. I therefore urge all of us here, men and women, to make it an individual commitment, one person at a time, on day at a time, one family at a time, to work to achieve a society where mothers can take their daughter to school knowing they'll be safe on the road; where children witnessed no violence between their parents; where it is safe to send children out to play with no fear, where nurses never have to treat children that have been raped, where our girls can wear what they want without thinking they were inviting rape. I believe its achievable, if we commit ourselves 365 days a year instead of 16 days.