

PUBLIC CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

**THREE CHAPTER 9 INSTITUTIONS TO CONDUCT A JOINT NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO
THE REPORTING, VICTIM SUPPORT, INVESTIGATION AND PRE-TRIAL FUNCTIONING
OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND
FEMICIDE (GBVF) IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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DATE: 18 JULY 2026

South Africa continues to experience a pervasive crisis of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), which remains one of the most serious human rights challenges affecting individuals, families and communities across the country. Despite significant legislative reforms, policy commitments and institutional interventions, survivors continue to report challenges in accessing effective protection, support and justice.

The criminal justice system response to GBVF requires a coordinated, survivor-centred and accountable approach involving law enforcement agencies, prosecution services, courts, health services, social support services, community structures, and other relevant stakeholders.

Concerns relating to delayed reporting processes, barriers experienced by survivors when accessing justice institutions, inconsistent victim support services, fragmented coordination between institutions, and challenges within pre-trial processes continue to require urgent examination and systemic intervention.

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The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission), hereinafter referred to as “the Commissions”, acting within their respective constitutional and legislative mandates, will conduct a Joint National Inquiry into the reporting, victim support, investigation, prosecution, sentencing and rehabilitation of GBVF cases in South Africa. Page | 2

The Inquiry is established in accordance with the constitutional mandate of Chapter 9 institutions to promote, protect, monitor and assess the observance of constitutional rights and to make recommendations aimed at strengthening accountability, equality, dignity and access to justice.

The Inquiry is based on the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), particularly Pillar 3, which seeks to strengthen the criminal justice system's response through improved investigation, prosecution, survivor protection, integrated case management, institutional accountability and coordination between relevant State institutions.

The Inquiry will be conducted in different phases. The first phase of the Inquiry will focus specifically on Stage 1: Survivor Testimony and Lived Experiences and Stage 2: Pre-Trial Functioning and Accountability within the criminal justice system.

SCOPE OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry will examine the experiences, challenges, successes and systemic gaps relating to:

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1. Survivor Testimony and Lived Experiences

The Inquiry seeks to understand the experiences of survivors, families, communities and organisations providing support services, including:

- Experiences when reporting GBVF matters;
- Access to protection orders and other protective measures;
- Experiences with Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), hospitals, shelters and victim support services;
- Access to trauma-informed care and psychosocial support;
- Experiences of secondary victimisation, stigma, discrimination or barriers
- Experiences of children, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ persons, migrants and other vulnerable groups; and
- Family experiences where survivors are deceased, unable to testify or otherwise unable to participate in justice processes.

2. Pre-Trial Functioning and Accountability

The Inquiry will examine the functioning of the criminal justice system before trial, including:

- Reporting processes and police response;
- Investigation quality and delays;

- Handling and processing of forensic evidence;
- Communication with survivors regarding case progress;
- Docket management and movement;
- Prosecutorial decision-making processes;
- Withdrawal of cases and reasons thereof;
- Delays affecting access to justice;
- Bail-related processes and survivor safety considerations;
- Coordination between SAPS, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), courts, health services, social development services and other support structures.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Commissions invite written and oral submissions from survivors of GBVF, families of survivors, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, legal practitioners, researchers, academics, service providers, experts and any interested persons or institutions who have information that may assist the Inquiry.

The Inquiry particularly welcomes submissions from persons and organisations with experience relating to:

- Survivor support services;
- Policing and reporting experiences;
- Investigation and forensic processes;
- Thuthuzela Care Centres and healthcare responses;

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- Shelters and community-based support;
- Child survivor protection;
- Support for persons with disabilities and marginalised groups;
- Barriers affecting access to justice;
- Community and traditional structures affecting reporting and referral processes;
- Institutional successes, failures and recommendations for reform.

The Inquiry seeks evidence-based submissions that can assist in identifying systemic challenges and developing practical recommendations to strengthen South Africa's response to GBVF.

Submissions should clearly indicate:

1. The issue(s) or area(s) addressed;
2. The name and contact details of the individual, organisation or institution making the submission;
3. Whether the submission relates to:
 - * survivor experience;
 - * institutional experience;
 - * research or expert analysis;
 - * service delivery challenges;
 - * recommendations for reform;

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4. Relevant supporting information, records, reports, statistics, research, case studies or other evidence, where available.

Submissions may include requests for confidentiality where individuals or organisations require protection due to the sensitive nature of the information provided.

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SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION

Submissions should be directed to:

Mr. Tsietsi Shuping

Head of Legal Department

Commission for Gender Equality

Email: Tsietsi@cge.org.za

And

Adv. Afika Nqeto

Acting Senior Legal Officer

South African Human Rights Commission

Email: ANqeto@sahrc.org.za

And

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Adv. Sphezulu Zulu

Manager: Investigation & Conflict Resolution Unit

CRL Rights Commission

Email: Sphezulu@crlcommission.org.za

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The closing date for submissions is 3 August 2026.

The Commissions will announce further details regarding public hearings, venues, participation arrangements and procedures in due course. Selected individuals, organisations and experts may be invited to provide oral evidence during the Inquiry proceedings.

The Commissions encourage all persons with relevant information and experiences to participate in this important national process aimed at strengthening accountability, improving survivor protection and ensuring a more effective and responsive justice system.

ISSUED BY THE COMMISSION FOR GENDER EQUALITY, THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, AND THE COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES.

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