

The SafeCitizen Campaign

Building hope for law abiding citizens

MEDIA STATEMENT



‘Africa’s *Silence the Guns* nothing to do with lawful gun owners in South Africa’

8th December 2020 – For Immediate Release

Much ado has been made by the anti-gun lobby in SA about Africa’s *Silence the Guns* campaign. In fact, News24, (Monday, December 7th,) reported that President Ramaphosa missed an NEC meeting because he was chairing an African Union (AU) event at which he hosted the ‘extraordinary African Union summit on Silencing the Guns’. It is reported that South Africa ‘organised’ this initiative in Ramaphosa’s year [2020] as AU chairperson.

South Africa needs factual context around this issue. According to the African Union Commission’s Operations Manager of the “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020”, Ms. Aïssatou Hayatou¹; ‘Silencing the Guns, is a slogan of a project that targets silencing all illegal weapons [sic] in Africa. We have an amnesty month in September [2020] where those with illegally acquired guns can hand them in to the authorities without penalty, she confirmed.

The African Union is clear about the objectives of its Silence the Guns Campaign. At a keynote address in June 2020², the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, observed that: “the threat posed by COVID-19 has considerably slowed the momentum of the silencing the guns agenda, and our intention is to further accelerate our collective efforts to end conflicts and crises in Africa, while expressing concern that **terrorists and armed groups have failed to**

¹ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2019-march-2020/silencing-guns-campaign-kicks-2020>

² <https://au.int/en/flagships/silencing-guns-2020>

heed the calls of the AU and UN leadership for a global ceasefire” [emphasis added].

This statement was supported by Ambassador Cessouma Minata Semate, (Commissioner for Political Affairs of the AU), who emphasized that "a sustainable strategy to silence the guns must directly address the **structural root causes of violent conflict in Africa**, [emphasis added] including governance deficits, as well as promote equitable management of natural resources for the overall benefit of the citizenry”.

On May 6th 2020, Gun Free South Africa embraced this trans-African theme³ as their own vehicle to lobby for the total disarmament of South Africans. This is not only disingenuous, but it smacks of deception. There is no doubt at all that the AU objective is focused on unlicensed military firearms and the terrorist groups and war-mongers who facilitate the movement and supply of such firearms to facilitate and fuel armed conflict across Africa. There is indeed a place for lawfully owned firearms in South Africa, and the anti-gun lobby must not be permitted to float this trans-African theme - focused on unlicensed military firearms – as a mandate to disarm lawful gun-owners in SA.

To be unequivocal: ‘Silence the Guns’ has nothing whatsoever to do with lawfully owned small-arms in South Africa.

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³ <https://www.gfsa.org.za/take-action/item/137-silence-the-guns-during-covid-19>