

SAGA MEDIA STATEMENT: 5 March 2020

SAGA, on behalf of South Africa's responsible and law-abiding gun owners, take exception to and condemn Police Minister Cele's recent remarks that "it would be better when ordinary citizens of South Africa are not armed". Better for whom? And why must ordinary citizens be distinguished from protected politicians, the military and the police? Is the minister's viewpoint that some people are more equal than others?

This must be the third or fourth time the minister said that. Is that his personal viewpoint or is that the ANC's? And does he believe crime will automatically disappear? While criminals have access to smuggled firearms and those lost by and stolen from the police and the military, they will always be armed. SAGA reiterates that not a single robbery committed with automatic rifles (shopping mall and cash-in-transit heists) has been committed with firearms stolen from licensed firearm owners. While it is true that private citizens' firearms are robbed and stolen from them and they also lose firearms, this is regretted, but inevitable. Unfortunately, the focus is on the victim rather than the criminal, hence the call for civilian disarmament.

While SAGA applauds all the good efforts, often under difficult circumstances, by the SAPS, the men and women in blue are incapable of protecting South African citizens (while South Africa is one of the most violent countries, it also has just been declared third on the list for economic crimes). Armed citizens are, and remain, the first responders to violent crime. Not only do armed citizens feel safe when carrying a firearm for personal defence, others in their vicinity are also safe. Responsible and law-abiding gun-owners are honourable and unselfish people – they are willing to protect their loved ones and others they do not even know.

Minister Cele seems not to heed to advice, at least not that coming from ordinary citizens – he has often been told to address criminality at the roots, by ensuring efficient crime-intelligence gathering and effective law enforcement, including crime prevention.

Many more law-abiding citizens will support the minister's crime-fighting endeavours if he not make statements that anger them. And the statement that angers these citizens most is that they are not trusted and respected. A responsible and law-abiding citizen, Mr. Minister, is one you must respect and can trust; one who wishes to exercise her or his constitutional right of freedom of choice regarding organisations which to belong to, activities which to participate in, and whether or not to legally possess and carry firearms for personal protection - she or he is the one that you want on your side. You cannot afford, in your crime-fighting endeavours, to alienate these people.

This statement is issued in the interest of all law-abiding and responsible firearm owners' right to possess, carry and use firearms for lawful purposes.