

GBV MENACE

State can't end scourge; it's up to citizens

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THE responsibility to fight gender-based violence and child abuse did not lie in the hands of the government, but those of every citizen who know wrong from right.

This sentiment was expressed by Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille and her counterpart in Social Development Lindiwe Zulu yesterday.

De Lille was handing over an unused government building to the Department of Social Development and the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, to be used as a shelter for abused women and children.

The Salvokop, Tshwane, building has had its fair share of controversy; homeless people try to forcefully occupy it earlier this year. Their view was that the building had remained empty since it was completed in 2015.

Emotions had the better of Zulu when the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure choirs sang *Senzeni na?* (what have we done?) while the names of women who had died at the hands of men were read.

The department was demonstrating its will to give out numerous of its underutilised buildings to be used to shelter women and children who had



MINISTER of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille and her Social Development counterpart Lindiwe Zulu unveiled a billboard denouncing gender-based violence near Kgosi Mampuru prison in Tshwane. | THOBILE MATHONSI African News Agency (ANA)

been subjected to this scourge.

De Lille and Zulu unveiled a plaque and lit up a torch indicating that the light was coming in the violence against women and children.

Joined by various MPs, they unfurled a billboard on the bridge near Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre to showcase the government's firm stand against gender-based violence.

De Lille told the community of Freedom Park how it was painful it was

to think about 1997 when her baby sister was raped and stabbed over 40 times. The perpetrator had since been released on parole, while her sister was gone forever, she said.

De Lille said it was about time society realised that everyone needed to take a firm stand against violence on women and children. "I've said before that as a country, we should hang our heads in shame for the utter disgrace that is gender-based violence.

It is a scourge and it is despicable how our women, our mothers, sisters and children are not only being harmed, but brutally killed by men who should be loving our women," said De Lille.

Zulu said South Africans needed to organise and mobilise like they did during apartheid and fight gender-based violence. "It's shameful that after so many years of oppressive years of apartheid, women and children still need to live in fear," she said.