

"Statutory rape is a crime – NOT a custom"

SA – The Public Servants Association (PSA) is calling on government to urgently investigate and prosecute all cases of statutory rape in a bid to address the rising crisis of teenage pregnancy in South Africa.

This call follows alarming statistics showing that over 122,000 teenagers gave birth in the past financial year. Shockingly, this includes 2,716 girls aged 10 to 14 and 119,587 girls aged 15 to 19 – children still in their own formative years now faced with raising children themselves. On 1 January 2025 alone, 80 teenagers gave birth across the country. Although this number reflects a drop from the 190 recorded in 2024, the PSA insists that even one child giving birth due to statutory rape is too many.

"These girls are often forced to drop out of school, condemning them to a future of limited opportunities. But what is worse – there is no clear correlation between these births and criminal cases. That means perpetrators walk free," said the PSA.

Statutory rape laws exist to protect minors who are legally too young to give consent. Yet, the PSA points out that the absence of prosecutions suggests a failure in enforcing these protections. The association is urging a collaborative response from the Departments of Education, Health, Home Affairs, Social Development, Justice, and the South African Police Service. While laws and policies are in place, implementation and accountability remain lacking.

The PSA also condemned the tradition of resolving such matters quietly through family negotiations, stressing that this practice is not only outdated but illegal. "No matter the perpetrator's social standing, statutory rape must be treated as a crime – not a custom to be settled behind closed doors."

With this urgent call to action, the PSA hopes to shift the focus from reactive care to proactive justice. "To reduce teenage pregnancies, we must begin by protecting children from abuse and prosecuting those who rob them of their childhood."