

Thousands of South Africans Add their Voices to the Firearms Control Amendment Bill

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The Police Ministry is encouraged by the thousands of submissions already made by members of the public, to the Firearms Control Amendment Bill, 2021.

Since the Bill was published in the Gazette for comments on Friday 21 May 2021, over 17 thousand written submissions have been received and this number is growing by the day.

The Firearms Control Amendment Bill, 2021 replaces the Firearms Control Amendment Bill, 2015 that was submitted to Cabinet in February 2015.

Minister of Police General, Bheki Cele has encouraged all citizens to make use of the legislative process that seeks to mold the Firearms Control Bill.

"The interest and vast number of comments received so far indicates that South Africans are making their voices heard in this matter, we urge the public to continue with this momentum. All comments will be scrutinized and those considered useful will be incorporated to strengthen the provisions of the Bill."

The Police Ministry wishes to remind South Africans of the rationale behind the proposed changes.

The Firearms Control Amendment Bill, 2021 seeks to amend and strengthen the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (Act No. 60 of 2000). The proposed amendments respond to the overarching policy principles of non-proliferation of firearms in South Africa and the strengthening of the processes relating to the applications for firearm and ammunition licenses and the management of firearms and ammunition.

South Africans should take comfort in the fact that the proposed amendments were not taken lightly, extensive research, consultations with various stakeholders preceded the proposed amendments.

Minister Cele says the amendments should not be interpreted as though government is looking into disarming citizens.

"There is no right to bear arms in our Constitution and the Firearm Control Act in its current form grants no such right to citizens either, owning a gun in this country remains a privilege made possible through the Firearms Controls Act"

Cele adds that arming citizens wont solve the country's high crime rate.

"The mere possession of a firearm can lead to increased rates of victimization—both for the gun owner and those living in the household, simply put, this proposed change in law also has the potential to mean the difference between life and death for hundreds of women who are in the clutches of their abusers, inside their own homes." Cele concluded.

Cabinet also approved the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Amendment Bill, 2021. The proposed amendments seek to ensure alignment of South African legislation with international requirements, in order to effectively combat terrorist and related activities, including international terrorism.

The Police Ministry is convinced both the Firearms Control Amendment Bill, 2021 and the POCDATARA Amendment Bill, 2021 are key to a safer South Africa and the world.

Both Bills can be accessed on the Civilian Secretariat for the Police's website www.policesecretariat.gov.za and are open for public comment until the 4th of July 2021.

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