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### **CSVR warns against militarising Cape Flats intervention**

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), has warned that the deployment of the South African army for public security in the Cape Flats is not the solution to the soaring, violent gang crime and murders in the area.

CSVR said militarising the fight against crime is not the solution that is needed in desperately resource poor communities, riddled with violent crime, drug cartels and gang wars.

“We need to unpack why violent crime is chronic and find long term interventions. While we recognise and appreciate that the situation is an emergency, government needs to look at resolving the underlying causes of violent crime in this area. We need to answer questions on what is fueling the violence. Issues of high unemployment, extreme poverty, drug cartels, limited police resources should be dealt with,” said Nomfundo Mogapi, Executive Director of CSVR.

The South African government deployed soldiers to the Cape Flats on July 18 to deal with a surge in violent gang crime.

The police are currently performing crime fighting duties in the Cape Flats with the force taking up direct duties related to internal security. While the army is perceived as only providing temporary relief for the residents of the Cape Flats the gangs, CSVR believes, might see the army deployment as a temporary setback and return once the army leaves. CSVR believes that this militarised response is not sustainable and will not bring lasting solutions or peace in this area.

“This blurred line between the duties of the military and police is problematic. The military is not well trained in civilian, community policing. Deploying the army to curb violence in civilian settings has not always worked,” said Nomfundo Mogapi, Executive Director of CSVR.

In some instances, where the military has been deployed as a temporary measure, this has resulted in civilian deaths, human rights abuses and has not brought sustainable relief to the

affected communities. There are instances where the military has been accused of being complicit in the crimes during such deployments.

“The government also involved the army in operation Fiela in 2015. An operation that the government said was aimed at “eliminating criminality and general lawlessness,” How did that play out? We should also look at whether deploying the military has worked in other countries like Brazil, Mexico, Philippines where the military was deployed to fight drug crime or suppress violent protests. The closest example is Zimbabwe where civilians were killed earlier this year when the army was deployed to suppress violent street protests,” said Nomfundo Mogapi, Executive Director of CSV.

While the army might offer some temporary relief, more needs to be done to provide interventions that will give the communities back to the residents. The army can only break the cycle of violence temporarily. The gangs will simply see the deployment of the army as a temporary setback, they will wait it out and continue when the army leaves.

CSV understands government’s desire for a quick response to stop the situation escalating, but extra effort needs to be taken to come up with a rational analysis and options on sustainable interventions. These responses would include mobilising resources for these communities that will deal with underlying causes related to poverty, unemployment, inadequate policing and crime intelligence in the area. Recommendations on policing made by various commissions of inquiry for instance on Marikana and Khayelitsha have not been fully implemented.

CSV is also concerned about the impunity and consequences that have followed some military deployments of largely male forces in civilian settings elsewhere, such as risk of sexual assault, extra judicial killings, and other human rights violations.

The Cape Flats deployment comes at an estimated cost of R23 million. This should not divert attention and resources from solutions that are likely to bring long term relief to the affected communities.

CSV is also concerned that the use of the army trigger the violent memories of militarization during the apartheid period among South Africans who lived through that era. During that period, the army was used as a weapon of apartheid in African townships where it carried out acts of violence, instilled fear and was relied on heavily to defend apartheid.

#### About CSV

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) is an independent, non-governmental, organisation established in South Africa in 1989. It is multi-disciplinary institute that seeks to understand and prevent violence, heal its effects and build sustainable peace at community, national and regional levels. It does this through collaborating with, and learning from, the lived and diverse experiences of communities affected by violence and

conflict. CSVR works across the African continent through collaborations with community, civil society, state and international partners.

For more information and interviews, contact:

Tel: +263777135750

Michelle Hakata: [michellehakata@gmail.com](mailto:michellehakata@gmail.com)

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

33 Hoofd Street, Braampark Forum 5, 3rd Floor

Johannesburg, 2001, South Africa

P O Box 30778, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2017, South Africa