

Eastern Cape Women Sleep at Legislature

By Anelisa Bentele

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The Eastern Cape Women's Association (ECWA) and the Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) gathered outside the legislature between 13 and 14 February 2025 to hand in a petition.

The march was attended by women from all over the Eastern Cape, including Mthatha, East London, King Williams Town, and Makhanda.

The two organisations leading the march had a night vigil program on 13 February during which women were telling their stories. Some of the testimonies were stories of gender-based violence related by survivors.

Nomonde Phindani, the founder of the ECWA said, "Our main aim of creating an action on this day is because the majority of cases that are reported of Gender-based Violence perpetrators are [by] intimate partners. We saw 14 February [as the day] to have our march to voice out [our grievances]."

The group of women say they are tired and wanted to tell the Premier their demands.

The demands from the ECWA and the RWA were that apart from the National Strategic Plan on GBV and femicide, they wanted to know what the plan to curb the scourge of violence against women and children, and the killings in the province is.

They demanded to know how secondary victimisation of GBV survivors would be prevented when reporting at police stations. They also said they needed to know what had happened to the GBV response fund – to the tune of R150m, alleging that R69m had been disbursed already, demanding transparency about who the beneficiaries of this fund were, so far.

Finally, the demands note a shortage of social workers, advising that "funding must be outsourced to hire social worker auxiliaries to assist the social workers as for victims wait in long lists for counselling."

They also complained about a shortage of vans saying it presented a challenge.

The women protesters thanked the Trust Community Outreach Education for making the march possible.

GBV activist, Phumla Qangule said, "It's time that women unite to fight for their safety, the pain of other women might be mine tomorrow or a close family member. This pandemic eats us all, the Premier must hear our cry."

The Premier delegated the Eastern Cape MEC of Social Development Bukiwe Fanta to accept the memorandum. The MEC promised to respond to the women of Eastern Cape on their grievances within 14 days.

A week after the Eastern Cape women sent the petition to the Premier, during the State of Province Address on 21 February 2025, Mr Mabuyane stated that they had allocated R22m aside for GBV programmes.

Karibu wanted to find out how GBV activists felt about the budgeting.

“The people in these cabinets are very good at reading out nicely prepared speeches. The challenge shows when it comes to the implementation of the ideas and the Premier should have shown how they have plans to help fight GBV. It’s high time they work hand-in-hand with all non-government organisations that have the same vision of fighting GBV,” said Siphokazi Yaku.

This fight against GBV is going to last until everyone advocates for change in policy. Some of what must change is the justice system to better help us in our fight as GBV activists. Otherwise, it is beyond us and needs all organisations fighting against GBV nationally to gathered outside parliament to voice out our grievances, it shall be.

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