Crime, criminality and victims of crime in South Africa: Issues arising

Murder, burglary, theft and many other criminal activities are some of the vices that every country on the planet has had to grapple and contend with. The question is how has any country deal with this dark side of humanity? A country may imprison convicted offenders, deal with the offenders through rehabilitation or exceedingly harsh punishments, yet countries have had to develop strategies to help prevent, control and reduce to its barest minimum such criminal activities from occurring.

In respect of crime, South Africa has never had what would be regarded as the cleanest image. Crime situation in SA is exceptionally bad, with an average of nearly 50 murders per day, child kidnappings at a rate of around one every five hours, and a record of rape that is noted to have affected nearly one in three women. One of the most notorious crimes that remain quite stable is murder, homicide and carjacking. Carjacking is so rife in SA to the point that certain vehicles are no longer insurable by some insurance companies of the country as the rate of theft is simply too high. Sadly, policies are not swiftly implemented in SA and the police in SA have maintained a reputation for being too slow to respond to crime, and often without enough power to properly enforce law. As a result of what has been said, South African citizens who can afford it have carried on the tradition of private armed security to ensure their own safety.

Crime is a prominent issue in South Africa. It has a very high rate of murders, assaults, rapes of adult, child, elderly and infants compared to most countries of the world. Some emigrants from South Africa are forced to relocate somewhere else as a result of crime. The South African Police Service is saddled with the responsibility of crime control and protection of South Africans and foreigners alike. The SAPS is the national police force of the Republic of South Africa, its 1,138 police stations in South Africa are divided according to the provincial borders, and a Provincial Commissioner is appointed in each of the nine provinces who report directly to the National Commissioner.

As far back as 1990s, South Africa is named as the crime capital of the world, and it is believed, that crime levels are high, but usually higher, than those with which the rest of humanity can contend. For over three years running, the South African murder rate has increased from 30 murders per 100,000 to 33; this amounts to five times higher than the global average of 6.2 per 100,000. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) placed SA at the eight positions out of 218 countries with data available for 2014.

In South Africa, between April 2014 and March 2015, about forty nine people were murdered each day on the average; in other words, two were killed per day in the period mentioned above than in the previous year of 2012/2013, that is a staggering six more deaths a day than in 2011/12. The 2013/14 SAPS yearly report indicated that 5% of murder victims were children and 14% were women, whom were killed by their intimate partners and most of the victims (81%) were male.
Scholars and concerned South African citizens have been advocating for the reintroduction of the death sentence, which was abolished in 1994 when the late President Nelson Mandela won the election, after the apartheid era. The arguments in some quarters are that the removal of the death sentence has been responsible for the high rate of crime and criminality in South Africa. The South African authority is known to have neglected victims of crime to their own fate.

The political class in South Africa is backing non reintroduction of the death sentence because some of them are indicted in some criminal activities.

The paper intends to examine the issue of crime, causes, consequences, criminality and victims of crime in South Africa. The paper will also proffer some workable solutions on crime prevention, control and risk management strategies that consider the dynamics of crime in South Africa.