

Addressing South Africa's Epidemic of Firearm Violence:

Local Realities, Global Perspectives and Public Health Solutions



WHEN

Tuesday, 1 September 2026
14:00–16:00

WHERE

Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH)
Room 13, about 15 min by road
from CTICC.

ATTENDANCE

RSVP · all welcome
info@whoaction.org

South Africa is experiencing one of the world's most severe firearm-violence epidemics. With a homicide rate of around 45 per 100,000 — roughly seven times the global average — more than 26,000 people are murdered each year, and firearms are now the leading weapon used in these killings.

Cape Town exemplifies the concentration of the challenge: around 80% of Western Cape murders occur in the city. Yet South Africa is also a source of hope — firearm deaths fell by more than 50% between 2000 and 2011 following stronger firearm controls. This event brings together researchers, health leaders, civil society and policy-makers to identify practical, evidence-informed solutions.

ON THE AGENDA

- Injury surveillance
- Hospital violence intervention programmes
- Preventing firearm diversion
- Community and gang violence
- Firearms, violence against women and femicide
- Children and young people
- Trauma-informed responses
- The health sector as a prevention partner

CO-HOSTED BY



School of Public Health
Departement Openbare Gesondheid
Isikolo Sempilo Yoluntu
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Lancet Commission on
Global Gun Violence and Health



Global Coalition
for WHO Action on
Firearm Violence

14:00

Welcome

Prof Lucia Knight (UCT)

Dr Nwabisa Jama Shai (SAMRC)

Assoc Prof Lorena Barberia (Lancet Commission)

14:10

Panel 1 — Understanding South Africa's Firearm Violence Epidemic: What Are the Realities, Drivers and Consequences?

Chair: Prof Leslie London

Panellist: Prof Pradeep Navsaria

Panellist: Prof Naeemah Abrahams

Panellist: Dr Sisanda Mguzulwa

14:40

Panel and audience discussion

14:55

Panel 2 — From Evidence to Action: International Best Practices and Public Health Solutions

Chair: Prof Stephen Hargarten

Panellist: Assoc Prof Lorena Barberia

Panellist: Prof Andrés Villaveces

Panellist: Prof Samar Al-Hajj

Respondent: Prof Tanya L. Sharpe

15:25

Panel and audience discussion

15:40

From Discussion to Action: Priorities for South Africa

Moderator: Adèle Kirsten

Thanks and closing: Dean Peacock

Professor Naeemah Abrahams

Chief Specialist Scientist, Gender and Health Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council; Honorary Professor, University of Cape Town

Has worked in gender-based violence research for nearly three decades, focusing on the intersections of violence and health and on measurement of violence against women and children. She has led South Africa's national femicide studies for over twenty years and advised numerous WHO working groups.

Associate Professor Lorena G. Barberia

Department of Political Science, University of São Paulo; Co-Chair, Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health

Scientific coordinator of the Solidarity Research Network on Public Policy and Society, which works to improve federal, state and municipal health policy in Brazil. Her work appears in Science, The Lancet and Nature Medicine; she was awarded USP's Mulheres na Ciência prize in 2020.

Dr Nwabisa Jama Shai

Unit Director, Gender and Health Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council

Technical Advisor to the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls global initiative and Honorary Senior Lecturer in the School of Public Health at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research focuses on preventing gender-based violence and HIV through quantitative and qualitative research, implementing evidence-based behavioural prevention curricula, and evaluating GBV prevention interventions in low- and middle-income countries.

Professor Lucia Knight

Head, Division of Social and Behavioural Science, School of Public Health, University of Cape Town

Trained in social anthropology, family demography and population studies, with a PhD from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Her current research develops social and behavioural interventions to improve access to HIV treatment and care and ART adherence; she also researches the quality of maternal health care and is exploring new areas in sexual and reproductive health.

Professor Samar Al-Hajj

Assistant Research Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut; Founding Director, Middle East and North Africa Program for Advanced Injury Research (MENA PAIR)

Leads epidemiological studies on road traffic injuries, burns and falls across the MENA region, and has worked extensively with refugee communities on the burden of injury in humanitarian settings. Following the 2024 war on Lebanon she assessed its impacts on population health and the health system.

Professor Stephen Hargarten

Professor of Emergency Medicine and Director, Comprehensive Injury Center, Medical College of Wisconsin; Founding Dean of Global Health; Commissioner, Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health

A founding member of the Global Firearm Collaborative, his research sits at the intersection of injury and violence prevention and health policy. His work helped inform the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System, and he leads research linking ballistics to civilian deaths and injuries.

Adèle Kirsten

Commissioner, Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health

Adèle Kirsten has been a non-violent, social justice activist for over forty years, and the founder Director of Gun Free South Africa. She is a Commissioner in the Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health. She was a founding member of Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) which played a critical role in securing the Firearms Control Act of 2000. Adèle was named the South African Woman of the Year in 2000 under the media and communications category. From 2008 to 2010 she was Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Adele was awarded the order of Luthuli in Bronze in 2026 for her contributions to democracy, peacebuilding and human rights.

Professor Leslie London

Emeritus Professor of Public Health and former Head of the Division of Public Health Medicine, University of Cape Town

A public health specialist with interests in human rights, public health ethics, farm worker health, alcohol-related harms and pesticide hazards. Until his retirement in 2025 he led UCT's Health and Human Rights programme and researched in the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health Research.

Professor Pradeep Navsaria

Professor of Surgery, University of Cape Town; Head of the Trauma Centre, Groote Schuur Hospital

Works at one of Africa's leading trauma units on penetrating trauma, vascular injury and damage-control surgery, and has published extensively in international journals. An ATLS and DSTC instructor, he is recognised for strengthening trauma systems and education across Africa.

Professor Tanya L. Sharpe

Founder and Director, Centre for Research and Innovation for Black Survivors of Homicide Victims (The CRIB), Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

The CRIB is an interdisciplinary community-based research centre dedicated to reducing service inequities for Black survivors of homicide victims through culturally responsive research, restorative policy and evidence-based practice. She joined Toronto in 2018 after eleven years at the University of Maryland.

Professor Andrés Villaveces

Childlight, University of Edinburgh; formerly Senior Scientist, Division of Violence Prevention, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A physician and epidemiologist with over 35 years in global public health and injury prevention. He has supported the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys in many countries, and previously worked at the World Bank, RAND, the University of North Carolina and WHO Geneva.

Dr Sisanda Mguzulwa

Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre of Criminology, University of Cape Town

Researches legacies of violence, trauma and healing, youth violence and crime, with an emphasis on equality, social inclusion and socio-economic development. Her work with students and young people is grounded in a conviction that only equality and fairness can heal society.

Dean Peacock

Honorary Senior Lecturer, UCT School of Public Health; Commissioner, Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health; Co-Director, Global Coalition for WHO Action on Firearm Violence

Has worked on violence prevention and health equity for three decades. He is affiliated with the Gender Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute and the Violence, Inequality and Power Lab at the University of San Diego, and co-founded Sonke Gender Justice.