Two new laws to speed up the process of justice

In a matter of days, legislation has been promulgated which experts and civil society are hoping will aid crime victims. Kashiefa Ajam reports

THE SEXUAL OFFENCES COURTS AMENDMENT BILL

This bill, which was passed by the Senate on Monday, aims to provide swift justice for victims of sexual crimes. In the beginning of 2013, there were 15,000 sexual assault cases reported in the country. Later that year the Justice Department called for a bill to be prepared. The new Criminal Law Amendment Act is an entire section on sexual assault.

Last year Justice Minister Jeff Radebe announced that 12 sexual offence courts would be introduced by the end of 2014. The 97 sexual offenders courts would be prioritised in the next three years.

The courts would address specific sexual-offence cases, with trained judges, notaries, advocates and police officers.

There would be a proper screening process to identify cases that fell within the sexual-offense category, a special venue where patients would be treated, a separate building for victims and witnesses, and even a separate entrance for children and other support services.

The courts would also have special equipment to make victims feel safer, like cameras at the entrance, sensitised staff and security, as well as a protocol that excluded in-court questioning of the victim's sexual activities.

Experts see dequalifications with the bill and are wary of the government’s promise that there will be no delay in the implementation of the new laws.

Dr Richard Nkosi, director of Maleha Boys Clinic for abused children, has reservations about the implementation of this decree.

“Reforming one court in Johannesburg and one in KwaZulu-Natal, as the document does not address the high number of sexual crimes per month, it may take a whole day to reach a verdict,” Nkosi says.

The bill has been given to the President to sign. While it has yet to be promulgated, it has already received the necessary majority in both Houses of Parliament. The law includes measures to protect victims in the justice system.

INNOCENT VICTIM

An 18-year-old was found dumped under a rubbish heap in Diepsloot. Picture: Argus

RATED AND HURDLED

An 18-year-old was found dumped under a rubbish heap in Diepsloot. Picture: Argus

SAAL MHU: Yoneli Mau, 2, and her 3-year-old cousin, Zandile Mau, were found dead in a public toilet in Diepsloot in October last year. It is believed that their mother might have killed them.

THE DNA ACT

This act will allow South Africa to create an electronic DNA database which will enhance offender identification. The law will also allow for the release of DNA samples collected from suspects. It is expected to provide officers and forensic scientists with a powerful tool to solve crimes.

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The legislation will also provide for the establishment of the South African Forensic Services. It will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database. The law will also establish the National DNA Database and the National DNA Database.