



## Press Statement: International Safe Abortion Day 2024

### **#AbortionSolidarity: Illegal abortions pose a danger to women and girls seeking safe abortions in South Africa**

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*Jobannesburg, 23 September 2024* - [Ibis Reproductive Health](#), with support from [Ipas Africa Southern Region](#), [Amaze.org](#), [Accountability International](#), [Sonke Gender Justice](#), the [Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition \(SRJC\)](#), the *mmoho* campaign, [SECTION27](#), together with other feminist movements, social justice organisations working on health rights and allies, will commemorate International Safe Abortion Day (ISAD) on the 28th September 2024 with a march. The march is set to provide the public with information on safe and legal abortion facilities, by placing QR coded stickers of this information on top of placards advertising illegal abortion services.

This year's theme - #AbortionSolidarity in our communities - speaks to letting communities lead, with literacy and support from technical partners in advancing access to safe and legal abortions timeously.

The march will demand safe, high quality abortion care and reproductive justice for all. A petition will be launched on the 28th of September, demanding that our public representatives develop stronger regulations against the advertisement of illegal and unsafe abortion. Data shows that despite South Africa having key legislation such as the [Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act](#), between [12 and 26 percent](#) of abortions are administered by illegal (and often unsafe) providers in the country.

Media is invited to attend the march as follows:

**Where:** Old Fort Parade Ground, Constitution Hill, Braamfontein

**Date:** 28 September 2024

**Time:** 10h00 to 14h00

The march will move through Braamfontein and surrounding areas, taking down illegal abortion advertisements and replacing them with information on where to access safe, high quality abortions throughout the city. While we recognise that we have a role to play in dissemination of this information, we call on the government to strengthen their efforts in providing this vital information to the public.

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The march will end with a briefing at Constitution Hill's Grand Parade Ground, by SRHR activists and representatives from partner organisations who will be on hand to engage the media.

## ***South African context***

While South Africa's legal framework has ensured the fundamental right to abortion care, we recognise that the reality in our communities is not always reflective of that. We recognise the major impediments that are currently facing women who want to access safe abortion services, including stigma, play a key role in the proliferation of illegal abortions outside of formal health settings. Furthermore, according to a 2023 report by SECTION27 titled "*Abortion Services in the Eastern Cape*", there were several other barriers to accessing safe abortions. These included "the inaccurate designation of second trimester abortion facilities, [an] insufficient number of abortion providers to meet the demand for the service, inadequately trained abortion providers, lack of equipment for timely provision of the service, and shortages in abortion medicines." These are echoed in a 2024 study by the [Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition](#) (SRJC), which also found legal complexities and administrative practices related to "refusal to care" were barriers. Worryingly, mifepristone, which is critical for partially self-managed abortions (together with misoprostol) has had significant stockouts. The SECTION27 report also found that **10 of the 13** facilities monitored in the province had only one abortion provider, despite them collectively being approached by an average of **1,200** women seeking abortions every month for first trimester abortions. In addition, only **two out of the five facilities** designated to offer abortion services beyond 13 weeks gestation across the province were able to do so.

In 2023, Ibis conducted a mixed method study with adolescent girls aged **12 to 17** in Gauteng to determine their knowledge and experiences with Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, which governs abortion. This study showed that **22% of participants** had experienced an unplanned pregnancy, and were more aware of ways to end a pregnancy using unsafe abortion methods, as opposed to safe abortion methods. Furthermore, stigma from healthcare workers (HCW) was identified as a recurring issue contributing to both unplanned adolescent pregnancy and unsafe abortion, and participants explained they avoid accessing care at clinics largely to avoid the treatment they receive from nurses when seeking contraceptives or abortion services. Ibis plans to release these findings in the near future.

## ***African context***

We stand in solidarity with other women across the continent, calling for access to safe abortion services.

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According to [Haile, Abraha et al](#), there was a 16% prevalence of induced abortion across the African continent (or 160 out of 1000), which is higher than study results across the globe. Despite the Maputo Protocol affording women access to abortion services in albeit limited circumstances across all 55 countries in the African Union since 2005, societal stigma remains rife across the continent. [Data collected](#) between 2010 and 2014 showed that Africa accounted for 29 percent of all unsafe abortions worldwide, and 62 percent of all related deaths.

### *Global context*

We decry the abortion bans that have been instituted in about half the states in the United States since the overturning of *Roe v Wade* in 2022. These bans have put millions of peoples' lives at risk. In the last month alone, two Black women in Georgia—Amber Thurman and Candi Miller—died as a result of the state's six-week abortion ban and systemic medical neglect. These stories are unfortunately not uncommon as access to safe abortion care becomes harder and harder to reach in many states across the United States. At the same time, we praise abortion funds, clinics, advocates, doulas, providers, and logistical support organisations, whose material, technical and financial support has allowed people who would otherwise not be able to access this fundamental right do so. Their efforts have resulted in safe abortions increasing by 26% in states without total bans.

As we commemorate this year, we are cognisant of the growing negative context most women face when accessing this right with the rise of the anti-progressive forces globally. According to the WHO, [almost 50 percent of abortions globally](#) are unsafe, as a result of legal, societal and clinical barriers to access to safe abortion services. We believe that much stronger local and international solidarity is needed to repel anti-progressive forces and ensure legal and local contexts that allow for women to exercise their agency.

### *For media enquiries, please contact:*

Ngqabutho Nceku Mpofo on [ngqabutho.mpofo@gmail.com](mailto:ngqabutho.mpofo@gmail.com) or +27618076443.

Jewelle Methazia, Ibis Reproductive Health on [jmethazia@ibisreproductivehealth.org](mailto:jmethazia@ibisreproductivehealth.org)

Pearl Nicodemus, Communications Officer - Media Liaison, SECTION27 on [nicodemus@section27.org.za](mailto:nicodemus@section27.org.za) or +27822982636

Dr Jess Rucell, Secretary, Sexual Reproductive Justice Coalition (SRJC) on [jess.rucell@gmail.com](mailto:jess.rucell@gmail.com) or +27609600555

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Duduetsang Mmeti, Senior Communications Manager, Ibis Reproductive Health on [dmmeti@ibisreproductivehealth.org](mailto:dmmeti@ibisreproductivehealth.org) or +27780889294

## Notes to editors:

Ibis Reproductive Health launched the *mmobo* Sexual and Reproductive Health toll-free Helpline on 1 December 2023, on World Aids Day. The Helpline is particularly useful as it is one of the few toll-free Helplines that provides safe abortion referral services. The Helpline also provides the following SRH information and referral services to young people:

- Pregnancy & contraceptive services;
- Menstrual health care;
- HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and testing services;
- GBV, sexual abuse helpdesks, and trauma support services;
- Male sexual and reproductive health services, including circumcision
- Mental health and well-being support services.

You can contact the Helpline on **080 001 4597**.

You can also join the conversation on International Safe Abortion Day using the hashtags **#ISAD2024** and **#AbortionSolidarity**. You can also tag partner organisations on X: [@IbisRH](#), [@IpasOrg](#), [@add\\_your\\_voice](#), [@SRJC](#), [@SonkeTogether](#), [@SECTION27news](#), [@WLCCapeTown](#)

This statement has been endorsed by:

SECTION27

Accountability International

Ipas ASR

Y+SA

Sonke Gender Justice

Abortion Network South Africa

Sexual Reproductive Justice Coalition

Women's Legal Centre

[END]



**PROGRAMME:**

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**INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY MARCH**

**28 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**10:00 - 14:00**

**OLD FORT PARADE GROUND, CONSTITUTION HILL, BRAAMFONTEIN**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Time</b>
Opening remarks	Victoria Satchwell	10 minutes
Messages of support	Coalition members	30 minutes
Petition reading	Sesona Buyeye	10 minutes
Proceed to march	Attendees of ISAD march	90 minutes
Media Q&A	IPAS, Section 27, Ibis Reproductive Health, SRJC, Abortion Support (if possible)	30 minutes
Vote of Thanks	Jewelle Methazia	10 minutes
Closing		