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OPINION | CHALLENGING GFSA's SUPPORT for the PSiRA Draft Amendments

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AN UNAPOLOGETIC REBUTTAL TO GUN FREE SOUTH AFRICA'S SUPPORT FOR THE DISARMING OF PRIVATE SECURITY OFFICERS

Gun Free South Africa (GFSA), once again, proves its ideological commitment to disarmament is dangerously out of step with South Africa's lived reality. In their support for the proposed amendments that would disarm security officers in public spaces, GFSA not only exposes its detachment from the violence ordinary citizens face every day, but also reveals a blatant disregard for the very real consequences of a disempowered security industry in a failing state.

Dismantling GFSA's positions (reported in Daily Maverick, 12 April 2025):

1. *"We support the prohibition on security officers possessing firearms in spaces like shopping malls, taxi ranks and schools..." – Claire Taylor, GFSA*

This is ideological extremism masquerading as public safety. South Africans are not living in Sweden or Japan – we are in a country where violent crime is endemic, police are overburdened, and communities rely heavily on private security. Disarming guards in malls, taxi ranks, and other high-risk zones is not a "safety measure," it is an open invitation to criminals to operate with impunity.

Security personnel do not carry firearms to intimidate – they carry them to respond to deadly threats that the police cannot, or don't have capacity, to deal with. The July 2021 riots, which GFSA conveniently ignores, are proof enough of how crucial private armed response was in preventing further loss of life and property.

2. *"These proposals address poor oversight."*

GFSA implies that oversight issues in the private security industry justify disarmament. That is like saying potholes justify banning cars, or drownings justify a ban on swimming. Improving oversight and accountability is not achieved through disempowerment, but through technology, training, and effective regulation.

GFSA's vision is one where bad actors get to define the entire industry. They peddle collective punishment instead of individual accountability. South Africa has 580,000 active registered private security officers – most of whom risk their lives to protect people. This proposal punishes them all for the misdeeds of a few.

3. “Guns should be concealed in public. Security guards are not exempt.”

This is pure legal pedantry divorced from operational reality. Visible deterrence is a fundamental element of effective security. The sight of an armed guard deters criminals. Concealing weapons in volatile, high-risk environments is not just impractical – it is dangerous.

The section on concealment in the Firearms Control Act was not designed to undermine tactical readiness. GFSA’s interpretation would turn security guards into sitting ducks, delaying their ability to respond to threats and putting both themselves and their clients at greater risk.

4. “We’ve received public complaints about guards carrying high-calibre weapons.”

Complaints from the public? Is that the bar GFSA is setting? What about the voices of those who were protected? The families who did not lose loved ones because a security guard intervened. Or the communities that did not burn down during riots because security stepped in where SAPS failed?

GFSA selects discomfort while ignoring devastation. Their stance prioritises hypothetical offense over actual defence – a luxury only those who do not face real threats can afford.

5. “Tracking devices in firearms are a positive step.”

Tracking technology sounds great in theory – but it is a logistical and economic fantasy in a country where even police stations are severely under-resourced. GFSA’s uncritical cheerleading ignores the real costs and feasibility of such measures. Security companies already use stringent controls – inventories, sign-in logs, bodycams, and geofencing tech. Suggesting that only a state-authorised tracking device legitimises oversight is state-control fanaticism disguised as reform.

THE REALITY GFSA REFUSES TO FACE

South Africa has approximately 2.8 million (580 000 active) registered security officers – outnumbering our under-resourced police force. The private security industry is not a rogue militia; it is a vital professional lifeline in a country where the State has repeatedly failed to guarantee public safety.

GFSA’s dangerous disarmament campaign would leave malls unguarded, businesses vulnerable, and civilians exposed to violent criminals. Instead of supporting well-regulated, professional security services, they seek to undermine the very people who stand between society and chaos.

GFSA ignores the Legal Foundation: FCA Section 20 plus Regulation 21 & 22

Section 20 ^{footnote 1} plus Regulation 21 (security companies) and 22 (s20 businesses & security companies) ^{footnote 2} of the Firearms Control Act provisions and regulations, explicitly and in detail, provide for the lawful arming of private security personnel.

These provisions already have checks and balances in place and ensure that private security are able to perform their essential, legitimate role in maintaining public safety – especially in a country with South Africa’s crime levels. These existing provisions are not the problem, rather it is effective policing or the lack thereof which is the problem.

Crucially, the Regulations of the FCA do not impose impractical limitations on how or where security officers may carry their firearms and nor do they prohibit visible, operational readiness in areas like malls, transport hubs, or during cash-in-transit duties.

GFSA's calls for blanket disarmament of security personnel in public spaces blatantly ignore these regulatory frameworks. Firearms, when licensed, trained for, and deployed under Section 20 and Regulations 21–22 of the FCA, are lawful and necessary tools of the professional security sector – not a public menace.

In short, Regulations 21 & 22 ^{footnotes} of the Firearms Control Act empower the very practice GFSA seeks to dismantle. GFSA activism yet again not only contradicts the legal framework – it would leave law-abiding citizens and businesses dangerously unprotected.

FINAL WORD

GFSA's worldview belongs in an academic thesis, not on the frontlines of one of the most violent societies on earth. Their ideological obsession with gun-free zones is an insult to every South African who has had to watch a loved one die while waiting for the police to arrive – or never arrive at all.

In a broken system, where SAPS lacks capacity, the private security industry is NOT the problem – it is the patch holding the safety net together. Disarming it would not be progress. It would be madness, an approach GFSA insists on following.



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Footnotes – Firearm Control Act Provisions

1. Section 20(2)(a)
2. Regulation 21(2)(a) to (s)(i) to (xiii)
3. Regulation 22(1) and (2) plus Regulation 22(3) and 22 (3A)

Acknowledgements:

- Alarm and applause after Police Minister Mchunu takes aim at private security guns – C Dolley, Daily Maverick 12 Apr 2025
 - Research via Co-pilot