

# How the media can help to stop rape

By [Mara Glennie](#)

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Nicholas Dawes former editor-in-chief of the Mail and Guardian, currently editor of Indian newspaper Hindustan Times, says "*What's happened here is that that reporting on rape has been drawn into the heart of civic issues generally.*" (ENCA, 2014).

I think it's time we talk about not just what went wrong, but what needs to happen differently from now on. What needs to happen not only to help survivors, but prevent rape in the short-term. Starting from yesterday.



Mara Glennie

Perpetrators of rape and sexual violence are criminals who must be brought to justice. Every man, woman and child should be free to enjoy their right to safety and security, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing sexual predators will be punished.

Would it not make more sense for the media-and society-to worry less about the sensational details and perhaps more about what we can all do to help the survivor move forward and ensure that this never happens again to another person?

Media could start with the facts. They could describe the terrible consequences for the survivors of rape as well as offering concrete numbers on how prevalent rape is in Africa-not to mention who is doing the raping, what kind of men they are, and why they carried out such a violent act.

We can and must do more, to assist rape survivors, to get the help they need and the education about the scourge of rape in our country.

We need to break the chains of silence surrounding rape and sexual violence and expose perpetrators that get given impunity. Let's transform South Africa from the "rape capital of the world" to a safe and secure South Africa with zero tolerance to gender-based violence. Each one of us can do something to stop perpetrators of rape and sexual violence.

I think the media stops itself from getting into the details of the victim's suffering or the numbers. Research shows that the overwhelming majority of rapes are never reported. Many survivors don't share their story with people they know or love. They become part of a silent mass of traumatised survivors who are all around us, but who keep quiet about their suffering for fear of not being believed, or worse: shamed, bullied, and blamed for their own rape. Society, teaches survivors to be ashamed; the media reflects society-it becomes part of the norm.

And now here's where I think the media gets it really wrong. While potentially well-intentioned, they assume that the best we can do to stop rape from happening is to teach children to respect women and stay the away from rape.

I actually think that this is not the best the media, or South Africa, can do.

In the long-term, yes, educating boys early to respect women and our country that rape and abuse is detrimental to the end, we have developed the (life board game) a critical element in stopping rape. However, the numbers tell us that rape has reached a pandemic state here in SA so we need to do more in the short-term as well. Raising children to not rape isn't going to help people who face the threat of sexualised violence right now. By not offering much in the way of immediate solutions, by not putting actual experts on the air or offering in-depth stories about what's going on, journalists give us the message that they assume society can't do more than hope the future is brighter, rather than focus on the decay in front of us right now.

I urge all journalist to not see rape and abuse as a social issue but understand the importance of reporting rape and abuse, not the details but the facts and how we can overcome this epidemic affecting our country.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mara Glennie is the founder of TEARS foundation an NGO that assists and supports victims of rape and abuse.

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