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Editorial

Transitions and new beginnings

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This year, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) resumed the editorship of South African Crime Quarterly (SACQ). *From 2016 to 2024, the journal was hosted by the Centre of Criminology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which continued the* SACQ *tradition of publishing high-quality, policy-relevant research and analysis on crime, safety and justice in South Africa. We are grateful to our UCT colleagues for their stewardship during this period.*

The journal is currently housed within the ISS's Justice and Violence Prevention Programme. Anine Kriegler and Jody van der Heyde have taken on interim editorial responsibilities for 2025, supported by the broader *SACQ* editorial team. Anine will be stepping down from this role due to other commitments, and the journal's editorial arrangements will evolve accordingly.

As always, *SACQ* aims to promote thoughtful discourse and publish accessible, policy-relevant research on safety, crime prevention and criminal justice, primarily in South Africa but also in the wider African context. The journal's purpose is not only to contribute to academic debate, but to inform and influence policy and practice. This edition reflects that mission.

The first publication of 2025 is an open focus edition. It includes five thought-provoking articles on a variety of socio-political issues currently at play in South Africa and beyond.

The edition begins with Lebogang Mpuru's analysis of the South African Black Twitter community. She traces how the platform has shaped contemporary political and social discourse, but warns that it also facilitates cyber vigilantism, including practices such as doxing and online shaming. Focusing on

hashtag movements such as #AmINext and #OperationDudula, Mpuru argues for greater awareness of the risks associated with this kind of digital activism and proposes measures to mitigate harm.

Jacques Louis Matthee examines how South Africa's largely retributive criminal justice system fails to accommodate culturally motivated crimes. He explores the constitutional space for integrating restorative justice approaches that are more culturally responsive and better suited to certain forms of culturally rooted offending, such as victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing.

SJ Cooper-Knock and Kamau Wairuri draw on Sara Ahmed's theory of 'complaint biographies' to explore why complaints against police in South Africa and Kenya so often fail to deliver accountability. They examine how political, emotional and institutional forces constrain complainants – especially those from marginalised groups – and how this shapes the broader landscape of police reform.

Alex Legodi and Moaka Dikotla report on a study of police stations in Limpopo, assessing the security of SAPS's electronic docket system. They find that weak access controls and inadequate backup systems leave digital records vulnerable to data loss and manipulation, with serious implications for justice and the protection of rights.

Willie Clack investigates perceptions, patterns and economic costs of livestock theft in the Free State between 2019 and 2024. While SAPS data shows a reported decline in cases, survey results indicate high levels of distrust in the police, leading to the conclusion that many incidents are not reported. Seasonal patterns persist, and the overall economic losses remain significant for affected farmers.

This edition also features two commentary pieces. In an extract from his keynote address to the Annual Council of Europe Conference of the Directors of Prison and Probation Services, Dirk van Zyl Smit reflects on how human rights, democracy and the rule of law can coexist with the inherently coercive nature of prisons and probation. He concludes that these values are not inevitably in conflict, and offers guidance on managing the tensions.

Barbara Holtmann critiques South Africa's prevailing reliance on private security and technology-based interventions in crime prevention. She argues that despite years of investment, this approach has not improved actual or perceived safety. Instead, she calls for a more balanced and developmental model that addresses the root causes of violence and builds community wellbeing.

We hope you enjoy the read.

Jody van der Heyde

Notes

1 Jody van der Heyde is a research consultant and Global INSPIRE Working Group Coordinator in the Justice and Violence Prevention Programme at the Institute for Security Studies.