

# COMM

After the "Liberation."

## Comparisons show SA has problems

**T**ODAY we publish some comparative statistics of the crime rates in six countries and look at how rates for particular crimes compare in five cities. The comparison is not an exact or scientific assessment but the approximation is nonetheless instructive.

It is clear from a casual perusal of the figures that there are problems in other parts of the world.

But what is really startling is just how much greater our problem is.

In the United States with its population of 293 million people, 16 137 people were murdered in 2004. In South Africa with a population of just 46 million, we had 18 793 murders in 2005. This equates to a rate of 40 murders per 100 000 of the population compared with just 5 per 100 000 in the US.

In London where the population is 7.5 million, they had 178 murders. In New York with 8.1 million people they had 540 murders. Compare this with Cape Town whose population of 3 million saw 1 757, and Johannesburg with a similar population where 2 191 people were murdered.

Statistics for burglaries and drug-related crimes reveal that other countries have a significant problem. What distinguishes South Africa from the rest is the number of crimes with violence involved.

The doomsayers who have been publishing anecdotal accounts of South African crime on their websites in a bid to put tourists off coming to this country have been criticised for their crude efforts to force government to take action on crime. And, rightly, they have been criticised for the harm they are doing to the economy.

However, there is something to be said for drawing attention to the issue and it is one we need to engage with actively.

This week Cape Town saw a range of horrifying violent crimes. On Monday night five pupils were shot in their sleep as they hid together after trouble with a gang at their school. On Wednesday a young woman was shot dead in the cellphone shop where she worked.

On Thursday a gang of robbers killed a man when he pulled up at a shop as they were fleeing the crime scene.

Overnight yesterday a woman and her two daughters were shot by a man who fired into their home.

This is an anecdotal list and it is an inexact reflection of what happened in the city this week. There is a great deal more we have not reported.

It is all too depressing to consider that next week we'll be able to draw up a similar list.