

# Growing initiation death sparks outcry in S.Africa

## CAPE TOWN

THE death toll from botched circumcision operations rose to 31 in South Africa on Friday, sparking an outcry from the opposition.

The deaths were reported in about one month after the winter initiation season kicked off in June.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) accused the government of failing to deliver its promise to reduce initiation deaths.

"It is imperative that government acts decisively and swiftly in mitigating deaths that happen at initiation schools," said Nqaba Bhanga, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Last year, in the face of this crisis, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in the National Assembly proposed a debate of public importance on initiation deaths.

The debate which followed was a real step in identifying the reasons for the crisis and making it clear that there was to be decisive action by the government, said Bhanga.

One year later, these promises have not materialised into real action, he claimed.

The time for promises is over and the government must start to deliver on ensuring the safety of the children, Bhanga said.

"South Africa needs a full investigation into what is going wrong and what government needs to do to ensure the safety of all of our children," he said.

According to local custom, the initiations are normally viewed as a traditional passage for a young boy to enter manhood. June and July are usually the initiation season.

Year after year innocent boys lose

their lives as a result of circumcision that went horribly wrong due to the incompetency of unregistered surgeons.

The 2010 season on initiations was the worst with 419 initiates dying. In 2013, the number went down to over 100 and this is due to measures agreed with traditional leadership who through the House of Traditional Leadership agreed on.

Since this year's initiation season started, the government has launched a crackdown on botched initiations, closing down a number of illegal schools across the country.

Currently, many initiation schools in South Africa are illegal.

In Limpopo Province, for example, there are more than 300 initiation schools, but only 276 of them are legal. With a high enrolment of initiates, the province has a higher initiation death rate.