

# Why is Govt 'silent' on SA holiday road deaths?

By [Sergio Davids, Wheels24](#)

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JOHANNESBURG: Earlier in December 2015, Wheels24 reported that the number of fatalities on South African roads during the 2015/16 holiday season surpassed 500 by December 21. Despite the horrendous death toll, government assures that it will continue to clamp down on traffic offenders, even threatening drivers with arrest and/or jail for violations such as failure to wear a seatbelt.



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The Justice Project South Africa (JPSA) has questioned the media strategy by the Road Traffic Management Corporation and the Department of Transport, claiming both organisations stopped 'reporting the ongoing death toll' on SA's roads.

## Media silence?

JPSA said: "When the current festive season death toll showed signs of having dramatically grown over 2014's horrific carnage, the RTMC and Department of Transport suddenly stopped reporting the ongoing death toll, stating that they would do so 'once it had been verified'. On 30 December 2015, it sent out a media release stating that it would only do so in January, after the festive season comes to an official end."

'Whilst we readily acknowledge that road death tolls need to be verified and the United Nations best practices for reporting thereof need to be adhered to so as to accommodate those who pass away up to 30 days after a road crash, just because the preliminary death toll in 2015 is apparently higher than last, and arguably the highest ever is no reason to employ an effective media blackout thereon.'

## Full report due in 2016

RTMC spokesperson Simon Zwane said a consolidated report of all crashes and fatalities would be released at the end of the festive season in January 2016.

Zwane said: "It is critical that South Africans are provided with accurate and verified information about the state of safety on the roads because roads are a shared space and users are important stakeholders.

## Where are the road traffic reports?

JPSA said: "The RTMC has not released a single comprehensive 'Road Traffic Report' wherein road fatality statistics are reported, since 2011.

"It would appear that neither the RTMC, nor the Minister and Department of Transport take road safety seriously since they are doing everything other than adopting internationally proven best practices. This is very sad for South Africa and for those have been and will be injured or killed in road crashes.

"We would, therefore, have to agree with the Minister of Transport and the RTMC that 'road safety is the responsibility of every road user'... mainly because the authorities are simply not doing what they should be doing."

## **Threatening drivers**

Earlier in December 2015, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) warned road users they could be arrested for traffic offences during the holiday season.

News24 published a list of nine traffic offences, that could, the RTMC says, land you in jail. JPSA said: "Instead of communicating facts, the RTMC has chosen to engage in threats against motorists, some of which have been invalid since they would constitute unlawful arrest.

"It should be clear that this strategy is not having the desired effect, judging by some of the horrific crashes which have occurred this festive season and the lawlessness which prevails on our roads, not only over the festive season, but at any given time of the year. Consistent, ethical and ongoing traffic law enforcement, free of corruption and throughout the year is the only thing which will alter the way in which road users, not just motorists behave on our roads and a few shows of force at peak periods continues to have little effect."

*Wheels24*

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