

NGO COORDINATING COUNCIL

for gender and development

Plot No. 5168
Nchoncho Road
P. O.Box 37879
Lusaka, Zambia.

Tel: +260 211 224727/227529
Cell: +260 966 640 760
Fax: +260 211 227 514
E-mail: info@ngocc.org.zm
Website: www.ngocc.org.zm



PRESS STATEMENT
For Immediate Release
1st February 2019

NGOCC WELCOMES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REPORT ON VESPERS

The Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) commends the Human Rights Commission for undertaking an independent investigation into the University of Zambia, 4th-5th October 2018 happenings which saw the eventual saddening death of a female student Ms Vespers Shimuzhila.

NGOCC welcomes the recommendations by the Human Rights Commission in its Investigation Report that all the Police officers, including senior officers that were in charge of the operation at the University of Zambia (UNZA), on the material day, be criminally charged for causing the death of Vespers.

As an organisation we also support the recommendation that the Shimuzhila family should immediately institute legal proceedings against the State and its agents for the arbitrary loss of Vespers' constitutionally guaranteed and birth right to life, so that they can be adequately compensated. We look forward to the legal fraternity to step in and assist the Shimuzhila's family in their quest to seek justice.

As established in the report, it is clear that Vespers died as a result of suffocation caused by the Police who were firing teargas canisters and hand-held grenades into student hostels. The investigation by the Commission has vindicated the long held view, by most citizens, that the Zambia Police was unprofessional in the handling of the unrest at the University of Zambia. This further brings to the fore the fact that women and girls in many instances are rendered unnecessarily vulnerable and end up facing the brunt of such brutality and indeed violent acts.

We demand that the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Kakoma Kanganja, in his capacity as the in-charge of the Zambia Police, should take full responsibility of the death of Vespers. It is our call on the Police Command to ensure that this predicament works to change the growing unprofessional tendencies within the Police Service and that immediate pragmatic action is taken to refocus the Police to its noble duty of "protecting life and property" and not perpetrators of brutality and human rights violations.

On behalf of the women's movement, NGOCC will monitor and advocate to ensure that recommendations in the report are implemented and the culprits brought to book for justice to prevail.

IN DEFENCE OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS
for/NGOCC

Mary S. Mulenga
BOARD CHAIRPERSON