



PRESS STATEMENT
For immediate release

18th July 2023

CONTINUED VIOLATION AND ABUSE OF GIRLS SADDENS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The women's movement in Zambia is appalled at the increased cases of sexual abuse against the girl child as evidenced by recent media reports and quarterly statistics by the Zambia Police Victim Support Unit (VSU). Just in the past week we read in the media the case of the 14-year-old girl of Mwanjuni in Chibombo District who was abused by an elder of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the case of the missing records of a defilement involving a 15-year-old girl at the Levy Mwanawasa Teaching Hospital.

The two incidences point to the fact that incidences of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are on the upswing in the country. As a country we need to find a lasting solution to address the run-away incidences of GBV. However, the case at Levy Mwanawasa has left the public speculating and wondering whether the institutions that are mandated to take care of the vulnerable are now conniving with criminals to subvert the law. We wonder where victims of abuse will now be running to if institutions mandated to help the abused will allow for such incidences where reports are lost to the advantage of the GBV perpetrators. Where has humanity gone? Do we no longer see the face of God in the suffering people in our midst? It is shameful that as service providers we see an opportunity to infringe on the rights of the poor when they are desperate. This is purely inhuman, unacceptable and a violation of people's rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Article 3, states that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration. Therefore, staff at Levy Mwanawasa Teaching Hospital did not take the best interest of the child into consideration when they allowed the file of the abused girl child to go missing. This is a total abrogation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Zambia is party to. It is also a breach of the provisions of the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022. We call upon the investigative wings to investigate the case of the missing records.

On the incident in Chibombo, we call upon the Zambia Police to immediately charge the SDA elder that is alleged to have abused the 14-year-old girl. To make the case even worse this man defiled the girl in front of her twin sister thereby traumatising both sisters. The SDA elder did not only take away the innocence and childhood of the 2 sisters, but also went ahead to forcibly lock them up in a house. For this may the law ensure that he is punished for forcible confinement against the will of the sisters. The fake man of God should also be punished for using his position to take advantage of children that looked upto him for security and protection.

It is unfortunate that a girl child is no longer safe in his own house and now even in the hands of so-called men of God. To the members of the public, please be warned that perpetrators are people that are not far away from us. They look like any other person and have no special marks to show who they are. It is people that we trust and have been good to us, people we eat and play with, people we joke and laugh with and people we pray and sing with. They are people we trust who take advantage of our trust and good will to harm us for their own gratification.

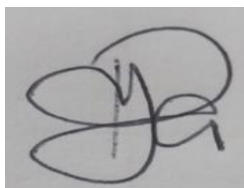
Lastly, we are calling upon all members of the community to guard against abuse of children's rights whether boys or girls. Our children are being exposed to all manner of violations and abuse while we just watch as bystanders. We all need to take full responsibility of raising children that are in our communities. Child neglect is a serious offense that needs to be seriously communicated to all those that have a responsibility to look after children. It is not the responsibility of government to look after our children, rather charity begins at home, so do your best to make your children aware of possible perpetrators of violence in society so that they can resist when they are about to be violated.

As the women's movement we will continue with the ongoing campaign against GBV. We urge all Zambians to join the campaign through the Thursday in Black other awareness activities that are currently ongoing.

We need to end these barbaric sexual crimes against women and stop GBV NOW!

ISSUED;

for/on behalf



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