



**CiZC speaks on the 16 Days against gender-based violence**



**Society calls for stiffer penalty for rapists**



**Zimbabwe records shocking levels of rape against girls**

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Harare – THE Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) has added its voice to the condemnation of the high incidence of sexual abuse of women and girls, and general harassment of women, in the country as part of its message during the ongoing 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence.



*CiZC Vice Chairperson Grace Chirenje*

CiZC Vice Chairperson Grace Chirenje on Thursday, November 28 said it was worrying that sexual violence against women, especially against young girls was generally on the increase as has been revealed by the UN Women, as well as shown by local statistics.

Turning to this year's theme, From Peace in the Home to peace in the World: Let's end militarism against women,

Chirenje highlighted that Zimbabwe had a problem of institutionalized violence against women, especially women human rights defenders.

*"When we look at the issue of militarism, Zimbabwe is a very militarized state," Chirenje said.*

*"There is so much force being used by institutions such as the police or the uniformed forces in general.*

*"The police are supposed to protect women and female human rights defenders because we should work in partnership in defending the rights of women and all citizens.*

*"Now you find that they are harassing the same people that they are supposed to be protecting.*

*"This is unheard of and despicable."*

The Zimbabwean state has a bad record of violence and use of force, or coercion against women during elections, protest marches and crackdowns on human rights defenders, and human rights promoting institutions.

There have been a number of incidences where police broke up peaceful protests by women using brute force, while a number of human rights defenders and activists have been unfairly detained in recent years.

Commenting on the new Constitution and the role it could play in defending and furthering women's rights, Chirenje said:

*“Women have a very good chance with that constitution.*

*“It is clear in terms of gender equality and serving the women’s constituency, but I will go back and say we need implementation and the resource commitment because that is not there.*

*“You find that we were all excited about getting women’s issues into the constitution, but even if you look at the Presidential appointments of the different ministers, they don’t adhere to what the constitution demands.*

*“So if it is not happening at such a high level, what is going to happen at a lower level?”*

*“There is need for political will to be offered to get the reality of women transformed in this country.”*

The 16 Days of Activism started on the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, and will end on the International Human Rights Day on December 10.

## **Society calls for stiffer penalty for rapists**

Harare – Societal leaders have called for stiffer penalties for those who commit sexual offenses as the country marks the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence.

Speaking at an event organized by Msasa Project in collaboration with The Women’s Trust and supported by many other civil society organisations in Harare on Thursday, November 28, Gender, Women’s Affairs and Community Development Minister Oppah Muchinguri called for stiffer penalties for rapists.

*“Ladies and gentlemen, it is paramount to note that as government we are committed to addressing cultural and traditional challenges of impunity on issues of rape and violence against women and girls,”* Muchinguri said.

*“We need to engage with all stakeholders in particular parliament to reflect on the sentencing of rape perpetrators.*

*“The sentence should reflect our disgust towards rape and sexual violence; send a clear message that rape or any form of sexual violence will not be tolerated now or any time in Zimbabwe.”*

Muchinguri said she agreed with Parliamentarians who are calling for stiffer penalties against rapists.

Muchinguri condemned women who cover up rape on young girls in order to protect their spouses and added that families should be cautious enough not to expose girls to rape by leaving them in the custody of suspicious men.

Muchinguri said domestic violence and sexual harassment was driving some young girls from their homes into the streets.

Netty Musanhu, the director of Msasa Project spoke out against a culture of impunity among perpetrators of rape.

*“Ruzhinji madzimai anouya kuMusasa anotaura kuti mapurisa anotengwa. (Most of the women who come to Musasa say the police are being bribed),”* Musanhu said. *“Hanzi kumacourt vari kutengwa. Saka dhora rakakosha pahupenyu hwe mwanasikana? (They tell us that the courts are being bribed. So do we mean that money is more important that*

*the life of the girl child).*

*“Minister muna 2008 vakadzi vakarepwa zvikanzi ipolitics tikaramba takanyarara zvikapera zvakadaro. (In 2008, women were raped and we were told it was because of politics, and the perpetrators enjoyed impunity.)”*

It is alleged that many women were raped during the political violence that was perpetrated by the security forces in the period leading to the 2008 presidential election run off.

In a speech read on his behalf by his son, Zion Christian Church (ZCC) Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi said rape was “satanic” and any church leaders who perpetrated rape were “wolves in sheep skin”.

Chief Chinhamora, a member of the Chief’s Council, who represented the Council’s President Chief Charumbira, said even



married men should not force their wives into sexual intercourse as that constituted a violation.

British Ambassador to Zimbabwe Deborah Bronnert said there was significant under reporting of rape cases and the crime has been “tolerated far too long, in far too many countries” describing it as “a global pandemic”.

Ambassador Bronnert said violence against girls and women was a global pandemic, which has resulted in one in every 3 women, being beaten or sexual-

ly abused in her lifetime. The Ambassador said women, men and children have a right to live in a world free from fear of rape and sexual violence adding,

*“Today we come together to declare that rape and sexual violence needs to stops”.*

## Zimbabwe records shocking levels of rape against girls

Harare – ZIMBABWE has a shockingly high incidence of rape against young girls, the Prosecutor General’s Office revealed on Thursday, November 28.

A senior public prosecutor in the National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe who was identified as S. Fero revealed the shocking statistics at a public event organized by Msasa Project in collaboration with The Women’s Trust, The Children’s Trust and other organisations to mark the 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence.

“The figures that were received between July and September 2013 through the victim friendly system reflect that on average we have five children who are subjected to sexual abuse,” Fero said, “and 91% of these cases of sexual abuse are perpetrated on the girl child.

*“The offences were mostly perpetrated on girls between the ages of five to 16 years.*

*“The perpetrators of rape are men, who are usually familiar with the victims.”*

Fero said that although the court system had recorded a huge number of cases, many cases were strangely not being brought for prosecution even after being reported to the police.

*"It is pertinent to note that many reports of rape and sexual violence are reported to the police stations but some of them do not find their way into the court system for varying reasons," Fero said.*



*Netty Musanhu– Director of Msasa Project*

Msasa Project Director Netty Musanhu blamed the corruption in the police and the courts where officials were allegedly being bribed to suppress the cases.

Fero said Zimbabwe has 17 functional victims' friendly courts, which specifically deal with rape and sexual violence spread out across the country, and through which the statistics that reveal a bad culture of rape against minors, including boys were gathered.

Although the court system has been trying to deal with the problem, it appears the system is overwhelmed by the sheer number of the cases, resulting in backlogs that are also exacerbated by the continuous reports of many new cases.

*"In January 2013, the victim friendly court had a backlog of 340 cases involving rape and sexual violence," Fero said. "The backlog was reduced by mid-year to 200 cases. Between July 2013 and September 2013, the backlog was reduced from 209 to 183 cases.*

*"In between January 2013 to June 2013, the courts received new cases of rape and sexual violence which totaled to 541, of which 21 were perpetrated on the*

*boy child and 520 on the girl child."*

Fero said, between July 2013 and September 2013, they received a total of 515 cases and 14 of the cases involved boys while 417 were perpetrated on girls, although three victim friendly courts in Gweru, Gwanda and Hwange had fewer cases of sexual abuse by September this year.

Fero said the depth of the problem of rape was clear for all to see and presented a stern challenge for various stakeholders.

*"If a total of 1059 new cases on rape and sexual violence were received between January and September of this year and of these 937 were perpetrated against girls, it should remain as a cause for concern for all involved that there is still need to fight against rape and sexual violence."*

Fero said there was a multi-sectoral approach already in place through a protocol, which was mooted in 1999 to provide holistic support to survivors through the efforts of government and non-governmental agencies.

*"What is being done is that we have a victims friendly system, which involves the police, the department of social welfare, the national prosecuting authority, the judiciary, the ministry of health and child welfare, non-governmental organisations who provide shelter, support, and counseling for the victims of sexual abuse.*

*"Through this agency of the multi-sectoral system, they have endeavored to work together and come up with what they call the protocol.*

*"As the National prosecuting Authority, we are in the process of training our prosecutors on how to effectively and efficiently handle cases of rape and also to know where to refer a survivor in case she needs any assistance from the other agencies of the protocol."*