



Statement on the rise of Child Defilement in Zambia

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SADC Youth Network has noted with sadness the recent rise in defilement cases which has reached alarming levels. This cruel and barbaric act destroys the lives of children, girls and women who fall victim to it. Condemning and facing up to the embedded social norms and prejudices, linked to practices that stretch across the country's histories that are giving rise to sexual and gender-based violence, is a necessary step in building societies where women and girls are able to participate as full human beings. A child who experiences such violence is left with scars that never truly heal, their entire being shattered.

Sexual violence, in any form, is inhumane and should have no place in our society. The abuse of our little children and women must come to an end. The silence is unacceptable and must be challenged. We must decide what kind of society we want to be. Do we allow sexual violence to continue unchecked, or do we stand together and declare that enough is enough.

The rape and murder of Blessing from Kamwala South, and discovery of an orphanage in Lusaka's Chudleigh area, following allegations of sexual abuse and defilement involving a named church who are running the facility, is a wake-up call. When society chooses to ignore an injustice simply because it appears isolated, it becomes complicit in that crime. The consequence is that this evil spreads like a virus, growing unchecked. We cannot afford to let that happen. The prevalence of SGBV across the continent cannot be isolated as belonging only to modern society and conflicts; it is empirically linked to practices that stretch across the continent's histories. We need to confront the embedded social norms and prejudices that enable violence against women and girls in Africa.

As SADC Youth network, we are serious about ending this violence, we are calling for decisive actions against and towards perpetrators. We demand that this vice should be met with the full

force of the law and dragged to the courts of law. We would like policymakers, and the justice system those in power to address this crisis with the seriousness it deserves.

SADC Youth Network states that, It is time for society to rise, engage and show the government key institutions such as the church, civil society organizations, and community leaders, that we refuse to tolerate these crimes. The people must also take the lead by demanding action from law enforcement. Let's refuse to be a nation that normalizes violence against its own. Let's rise, speak out, and fight for justice.

STOP CHILD DEFILEMENT

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