

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday 26th March 2025

A CALL TO END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE - THIS CAN NOT GO ON; WE NEED TO ACT NOW!

The escalating cases of defilement and sexual abuse against children in Zambia demand immediate, decisive action. Every delay risks the further devastation of innocent lives, permanently affecting their physical and psychological well-being. It is unacceptable and so disheartening to see how the lives of innocent souls are being destroyed by the same people that are supposed to provide protection and safety to them. Child sexual abuse has continued increasing as evidenced by the horrific defilement and murder of a schoolgirl in Kamwala South, the disturbing case of a young cancer patient who was defiled by her own father, and the recent case of a boy who was molested. Action from the government and all stakeholders involved is urgently needed.

These incidences of sexual abuse (defilement, rape, incest, sodomy) clearly shows that the wellbeing of children in Zambia is at high risk, which has continued compromising their health; - physical and psychological wellbeing with some survivors suffering permanent damage. This may continue impacting more children if stringent measures are not put in place to address the scourge. Hence the need to **ACT NOW!**

As Caritas Zambia, a faith-based organisation, guided by the **Catholic Social Teachings** we affirm that every child is a **SACRED GIFT FROM GOD**, deserving of love, utmost protection, and dignity. Our faith reminds us through Scripture: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). The Church teaches us to protect the vulnerable, champion justice, and uphold human dignity, principles echoed strongly in our plea for urgent action against child abuse. We stand firmly against any form of child defilement, exploitation, or abuse, recognizing that such acts are profound violations of human rights and dignity of children. We acknowledge the moral and spiritual obligation to safeguard the most vulnerable among us, particularly children, who are often unable to protect or defend themselves.

Therefore, we urgently call upon the government to immediately establish **Fast-Track Courts** dedicated specifically to swiftly dealing with cases of child sexual abuse. These courts must operate without delay, providing justice and serving as a powerful deterrent against future abuses. Additionally, the enforcement of stringent penalties, including life imprisonment with hard labour for perpetrators, **without the option of bail or bond**, must become an immediate reality. Parents



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and caregivers who conceal such atrocities must also face severe consequences. we also Call Civil Society Organisations and government to Strengthen Awareness Campaigns: The government must take the lead and this must be done using various platforms; the media , online and social media, more public meetings - through the church, schools, health centres/ hospitals among others, to create more awareness about the impacts of child sexual abuse on boys and girls. In addition, there is need to strengthen the mental and wellbeing of survivors through offering Support and Healing: We urge government to establish more safe spaces for survivors of child sexual abuse/exploitation and provide them with; counselling, alternative care support systems and healing for them to reclaim their lives.

The time for contemplation has passed. Action is needed NOW! We must collectively work to create an environment that ensures every child's right to grow and thrive safely, protected by the full force of our laws and moral duty. **We invite you ALL to play a role in ending defilement against children.** We would like to remind the nation at large about the teachings of Jesus Christ which calls and reminds us to be shepherds of the innocent, to nurture and care for children with compassion and vigilance. Let us not forsake our moral obligation to protect God's beloved children.

Issued by:

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