

CARITAS ZAMBIA STATEMENT ON THE DETENTION OF THE 8- YEAR - OLD BOY.

PRESS RELEASE

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Caritas Zambia has learnt about the arrest of the 8-year-old boy of Matero East Township in Lusaka with dismay. It is so disheartening to see such things happening in this age and time when the country has so many laws that have been enacted to support the protection, promotion and fulfilment of children's rights and wellbeing. Among these laws include; the Penal Code (Amendment) of 2022, the Children's Code Act of 2022.

The newly enacted children's Code Act. 12 of 2022, clearly prohibits the torture and or cruel treatment of a minor and prohibits the arrest of a child. A person under the age of fourteen (14) is not criminally responsible for an act or omission. Therefore the 8-year-old boy's arrest was unwarranted and a serious breach of his rights as a child.

We strongly condemn the actions of the Zambia police officer(s) who initiated an arrest of a minor and demand thorough investigation into the matter and ensure that all erring officers face disciplinary action in order to deter other officers from taking similar actions in the future.

Secondly, despite the fact that we appreciate the actions taken by the Honorable Miles Sampa in an effort to shed light on the situation, we are also outraged by the fact that the child was exposed to the media. This action alone has caused psychological trauma to the boy and his family.

Disconcertingly, we have found that many key actors have a lack of knowledge regarding issues pertaining to the protection of children and the interpretation of the law. It is a shame that a "law enforcement agent," whose job it is to assist in the interpretation and application of laws, is the person who committed this act.

This act has also further exposed the levels of corruption that are present in the systems, as the involved police officer was reportedly demanding some form of payment in order to release the child. If this is true, it is uncalled for and ought to be strongly condemned by every Zambian with any sense of decency. We therefore urge the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to seriously take interest in this matter.

On the other hand, this act has also shown the lack of coordination among key actors - for instance the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) is very clear and keen on such issues and have strong systems to prevent such acts from occurring, and we have a sister Ministry doing exactly the opposite. The question is where is the collaboration? We therefore, demand for strong coordination and clear mechanisms among key actors of handling such cases involving children, if such occurrences are to be fully addressed.

We would also like to urge the media and the General public to STOP circulating the images of the boy and his family for the safety of the child and his entire family.

Finally, we would like to call upon the MCDSS and Victim Support Unit (VSU) to work together and provide the psychosocial support needed to the victim and his family to help them come out of the traumatic distress they have been exposed to in the past few days. We would also like to further urge the MCDSS and VSU to provide this support to the boy and family off the cameras or the media.

Issued by

Matanga Munkonze



Programmes Specialist – Child Protection and Peace Building.