

**STATEMENT ON 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
25 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER 2022**

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission joins the nation in commemorating 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence running under the national theme ***All Lives Matter: End Gender based Violence Now!*** This is a period to highlight, appreciate and honour efforts and sacrifices, by individuals and institutions, towards prevention and elimination of all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in general and violence against women and girls in particular.

As a Commission we are concerned that despite enactment of the Domestic Violence Act and despite having Sections 51, 52 and 53 of the Constitution explicitly providing for the right to dignity, personal security and freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, cases of gender-based violence continue to escalate.

GBV remains both prevalent and vastly under-reported, as many survivors decide to suffer in silence rather than risk stigmatisation or due to lack of punitive and deterrent sentences. What is particularly saddening is the increase in rape cases of minors as well as increase in child marriages. We need to be cognisant of the fact that violence against women and girls is one of the most rampant human rights violations. In addition to devastating impacts on the dignity, security and wellbeing of survivors, violence against women also has broad social and economic costs, including costs on public services, lost income and productivity. It is also a barrier to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Commission is also concerned with inadequate service provision for survivors of GBV which include access to justice, health and psycho-social support. We urge the Government to compliment the work that Non-Governmental Organisations are doing by establishing more Government run shelters throughout the country. The Commission will continue to engage Government and other stakeholders to enact a legal framework which provides for stiffer and deterrent penalties which include mandatory sentencing for rape and other related sexual offences.

The Commission therefore continues to call for:

- The Judiciary to give punitive and deterrent jail sentences to perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence.
- Strengthened laws, policies and national action plans to address violence against women and girls.
- Training of teachers in child rights and psychosocial support so they can recognise and respond to GBV-related issues in school and indicators of GBV at home.
- Setting up of interventions at grassroots levels to address the root causes of GBV and harmful cultural practices
- A strong referral support system and safe shelters for victims/ survivors.
- Survivors and the community at large to report all forms of GBV for justice and redress.
- Continued designing and implementation of programs to promote economic opportunities, social protection, and education of girls.

For more information, contact ZGC Chairperson, Margaret Mukahanana-Sangarwe 0712214203/0772869214, and Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543

Zimbabwe Gender Commission - For Gender Equality