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66TH Ordinary Session of the African Commission of Human And People's Rights 13 July – 7 August 2020 Virtual Session via Webinar

Agenda Item 8 – Activity Reports of the Members of the Commission and Special Mechanisms- Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa

Gender-based violence, rape and femicide of women, girls and infants has remained disproportionately and alarmingly high in Southern Africa and other part of the world, despite the lockdown regulations to prevent the spread of COVID19-pandemic. COVID 19 has revealed the persistence of the scourge and reality of the unknown cause of this impunity befallen the women, girls and infants in Southern Africa. The unfavourable economic situations exacerbate most women and children to stay trapped with their perpetrators, who are the people they have intimate relationship with. These are mainly matrimonial partners, fathers, boyfriends and neighbours that take advantage of their vulnerable situations making it hard for them to escape emotionally and physically violent relationships. Women use range of means guaranteed in the constitution and civic platforms to express their frustration in protests, assemblies, advocacy in parliament, before the President, against law enforcement. Attempts have also been made to advocate for implementation of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa for ending gender based violence, freedom of association, assembly, expression, right to peace and association. But their situation has not changed and continue to live in fear and risk of impunity of gender-based violence and femicide.

We documented traumatising cases which need tackling comprehensively to determine the root course of the brutal gender-based violence in Southern Africa.

- The gruesome killing of Tshegofatso Pule, 28 years old and 8 months' pregnant woman residing in Meadowlands, Johannesburg. Her body was found murdered with multiple stab wounds on her chest and hanged on a tree at field in Roodepoort, West Rand of Johannesburg.
- Amahle Quku, a 17-year-old girl residing in Philippi, Cape Town her body was found lying in Albert Luthuli Street in Brown Farm, Cape Town. Her clothes were ripped off and stones laid next to her half naked body. The family only found out about her death on social media.

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Images of her body were circulated on Facebook. Leonard Mzingeli has been charged with her murder and was expected to be back in court on July 7, 2020.

- We were also shocked at a report of a newly admitted undergraduate at the University of Benin, Vera Uwaila Omozuwa was at Redeemed Christian Church reading her books when she was raped and killed, she was smashed in the head with a fire extinguisher.

Women continue playing remarkable monitoring roles as individuals, organizations, groups and networks in assisting the government to prevent the spread of COVID19. Their work has expanded over four months of curbing coronavirus to include in their strategy plans, psychosocial programs, call centers, health shelters, humanitarian aid, working from distance and pro-activeness in using online platforms for wide reach-outs. The intimidation and harassment have continued constraining them from rendering effective services during this challenging period, especially by cybercrime suspects, home break-ins and robberies. There's also a great need for innovative strategies to assist them in mobilizing resources to enable them to perform their work under the new norm. They are also frustrated in the reluctance of states to recognize them as essential service providers and providing them with appropriate budgets for their work.

We call upon the African Commission to urge Member States to do the following

- Take gender-based violence, rape, sexual violence, femicide very seriously.
- Allocate adequate resources for effective implementation of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa
- Implement National Strategic Plan to combat domestic violence in the context of and post COVID-19 in South Africa.
- Ensure a well-trained police service, skilled medical professionals, dedicated frontline workers and judiciary that has zero tolerance for gender-based violence
- Ensure increased efforts for awareness-raising in the society and forging of partnerships with private sector to combat GBV/Femicide, including investing more in setting up facilities to support GBV survivors.
- Recognise civil society rendering protective services for women and girls as "essential" service providers during any disaster.
- Continue working with CSOs dealing with gender-based violence and provide them with appropriate tools and enough finance to sustain their work to restore human dignity of women, mothers, the elderly, sisters, girls and infants facing violence. during this unprecedented crisis.
- Create a just and safe society based on human rights, human dignity, equality and accountability.
- Find innovative ways of creating job opportunities for women to improve their socio-economic situation. This will work towards ending the dependence most have on their male partners.

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