

Media Statement

Attention Journalists and News Editors

Pretoria, 21 January 2019

## **OUTRAGE AT TREATMENT OF CONGREGANTS AT ENDUMISWENI FAITH MISSION**

The Department of Women is shocked and disgusted at the treatment of faithful congregants at Endumisweni Faith Mission as portrayed in videos making rounds on social media platforms.

Empirical evidence reveals a church leader senselessly striking a congregant (in church uniform) while the congregant apologises to her attacker. A second video has surfaced of a congregant being made to lay on the ground while turning pages of the Bible with her mouth. There are also claims by ex-congregants of forced marriages taking place between young women and much older men.

Once again, we see Pastors and Church Leaders taking advantage of their positions of leadership to inflict abuses onto innocent church members. These videos, together with further testimonies reveal a cult-like following of this church where congregants are made to relinquish their human rights and serve as submissive beings.

Even more concerning is a response by a church leader, as quoted in a newspaper, in which the young woman accused of consuming alcohol is said to be behaving irresponsibly as she is more susceptible to being raped while drunk. "This type of victim-blaming is not only present in churches but is indicative of beliefs across society," said Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women Bathabile Dlamini.

The department condemns victim-blaming in all its forms. Victim-blaming has seen women being taunted and physically assaulted for the places they choose to frequent, times during which they are outside their homes, what women wear, what women consume, or how they behave in social settings.

If South Africa is to build safer communities for women (as outlined in Chapter 12 of the National Development Plan) it is essential that all organs of state pull together to condemn and take action against people who abuse their positions of power to justify human rights violations.

Furthermore, Chapter 7 of the National Development Plan speaks to South Africa's Position to the World, referring to its international commitments. As a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) it is critical that the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African Council of Churches (SACC), as well as the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Commission) weigh in on this matter to protect the human rights of church goers.

***ENDS***

**Important numbers to note:**

Police: 10111

Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150

Gender Based Violence Command Centre: 0800 428 428

Childline: 0800 055 555

**ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN**

**Media enquiries may be forwarded to Mr Shalen Gajadhar on 0723592470 or [shalen.gajadhar@women.gov.za](mailto:shalen.gajadhar@women.gov.za)**

Twitter: @DepartmentWomen

Instagram: departmentofwomen

Website: [www.women.gov.za](http://www.women.gov.za)