



CALL FOR ACTION TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED DEFILEMENT, RAPE AND TORTURE REPORTS AGAINST INNOCENT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN LILONGWE

The NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGO-GCN) is deeply disheartened by allegations of rape, defilement and torture of innocent women and girls in and around Msundwe, M'bwatalika and Mpingu Trading Centres.

Following the illegal mounting of roadblocks by some demonstrating residents of Mpingu and Msundwe on October 8, 2019, and the eventual deployment of police officers to quell the situation, the nation learnt with sadness, the killing of one police officer, Superintendent Usumani Imedi, *May His Soul Rest in Peace*.

While NGO-GCN is ever cognisant of the noble mandate that the police have and also supports the rational premise that justice has to be rightly satisfied through tracing, apprehending and prosecuting all those that participated in the killing the police officer, the Network is disturbed with reports that some of the police officers as dispatched to the areas on Wednesday, October 9, 2019, raped women, defiled self-boarding girl students, tortured people, and looted private property.

Below are some of the triangulated first-hand accounts of victims/survivors and bystanders (witnesses), as these acts were being committed by the law enforcers:

1. The first interviewee (name withheld), explained that five police officers invaded her house about 300 metres away from Mpingu Trading Centre. The officers kicked the door of the house open and threw teargas in the house where she was then hiding with her children. They ordered her to go and confine herself into her bedroom. While the family members choked, the officers forced her daughter (name withheld), to take off her clothes at the sitting room.

"I took off my clothes in front of the officer, leaving out an underwear only. He then started beating me for refusing to take off my underwear. I have been bedridden for five days nursing the pain and I don't even know whether I am okay internally as I have not gone for medical check-up," she stated.

2. From there, these officers invaded a neighbouring house, where three female self-boarders from Mpingu Community Day Secondary School stay, and had been noticed to have ran into the house to hide. Three of the officers went into the house while the fourth one walked around the door, warning all neighbours to stay in their houses. The fifth police officer, who was female, at this time retreated to a stationary police vehicle. The three officers who had entered the house ordered all the three girls to take off all their clothes, including underwear. The girls complied and two of the girls were told to leave the house upon noticing that they were having their menstruation period. The third girl, (name withheld) was ordered to follow the officers to the bedroom. One of the officers forced himself onto the girl. At this point, the 16-year-old was crying incessantly attracting the attention of the neighbors who were able to hear the girl say "mundipweteka, mundipweteka chonde." Upon their leaving, the girl run out of the house and went missing for two days. Her parents narrated that the girl has yet to return to her normal mind, since the incident.

3. Another team of police officers invaded Mvuu Village in Traditional Authority M'bwatalika where they stripped a newly-wedded woman, (name withheld) naked. They fondled her private parts. And from her submissions, it was evident that she was raped. Even her mood during the interview could tell a story of a traumatised woman. She struggled to finish her sentences during the interview. ***"Anandivula mwankhanza ndi kuchita zawozo. Ine ndinangoti basi nanga n'kutani poti ifeyo tilibe mphamvu,"*** she said.
4. The officers are alleged to have thrown teargas in every direction, including shops and residential compounds and houses. It is also alleged that they raided and looted shops (Farmers World is a classic example) and bottle stores.

The foregoing, stands at odds with the noble mandate and values, associated with the character of a police service. The Malawi Police Service and all other state institutions and actors, are by principle, the principal duty bearer. While we still have so much hope that there may be far more noble police officers nationwide, the incidents at Nsudwe and surrounding areas further erode trust and respect which we believe the police service deserves.

With the aforementioned, we hereby demand the following:

1. From President Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika

As State President of Malawi and Commander-in-Chief of the Malawi Police Service, we demand that you ensure the Police initiates thorough investigations and punish all culprits. No one is above the law and the rule of law must be respected.

2. From the Inspector General of Police

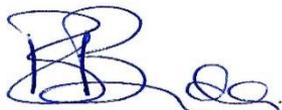
- a. We demand that thorough and unimpeded investigations are instituted forthwith to ensure no-one is shielded, and they (investigations) reach a logical conclusion. We want to see the perpetrators behind bars upon satisfying all legal channels and proceedings
- b. We demand protection of all citizens of Malawi in accordance with the rule of law.

3. Malawi Human Rights Commission

As a human rights body mandated by the Republican Constitution, we urge you to conduct your independent investigations into the allegations forthwith, and take further necessary steps based on your findings in line with your mandate.

For more information, contact the chairperson of NGO-GCN on 0995 752813 or 0884 81468.

NO TO VIOLENCE, NO MORE IMPUNITY



Ms Barbara Banda

NGOGCN Chairperson



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