

# Pastoral Statement

## Ending Gender Based Violence in Zimbabwe

*Romans 12:9-10-Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*

The 10th of December 2023 marked the end of the 2023 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV) campaign, and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches has been accompanying the nation in raising awareness among the general citizenry, faith leaders, government and non-governmental stakeholders on the harmful practice of GBV. The Church notes that GBV knows no boundaries and affects individuals irrespective of their age, gender or social status, thus, the Church firmly believes that it has a moral duty to address the scourge of GBV in a holistic manner.

The Church commends the government of Zimbabwe, United Nations Agencies, other development partners, private companies and all those who have been investing financial and technical support to fight the scourge of GBV in the country. The Church also commends the government of Zimbabwe, private individuals and development partners for working relentlessly to address gender inequality in the country.

The Church is concerned that despite the efforts having been in place for over 2 decades, the country has not registered remarkable success in combating GBV. The Church notes with consternation that 1 in 3 women aged 15-49 years has experienced physical violence and 1 in 4 have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15[1].

The ZCC received with dismay and agitation of the soul the alarming cases of intimate partner violence which were reported in Mufakose and Marondera during the 16 days of activism campaign. The Church is deeply concerned by the blatant disregard for life and acts of violence that has become a hallmark of our society. The Church calls upon the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the judiciary to investigate and adjudicate all matters of GBV in a manner that promotes life and security of persons.

Another area of particular concern to the Church is the wanton abuse of women in politics and leadership positions. The Church notes that women in politics and leadership positions have endured all forms of violence such as physical, psychological and emotional abuse in their quest for equal political participation. In the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign the Church unequivocally condemned any form of violence against women in politics and affirm the need for their protection and respect of their political and human rights.

The Church is also deeply concerned with the alarming violence against women and girls with disabilities. The Church calls upon stakeholders to invest in prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

[1] <https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-0#:~:text=In%20Zimbabwe%2C%20about%201%20in,since%20the%20age%20of%2015.>

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches recognises the crucial role the Church plays in combating GBV therefore we call upon all our member Churches to guide communities towards behaviour change through preaching mutual respect, raising awareness, educating congregations and engaging in open dialogues that will address the destructive societal norms that perpetuate GBV.

Let us stand together as a united front against GBV. Let us hold hands, join hearts, and commit to creating a society where every individual, regardless of gender, can live in safety, peace, and with dignity. With the grace of God and our collective efforts, we can end GBV in Zimbabwe, and create a future marked by equality and justice for all.

In line with the 2023 theme for the 16 Days of activism against GBV, the Church calls on all stakeholders to UNITE and INVEST to prevent and combat GBV.

**END!**

