

SPEECH PRESENTED BY MEC MJ ZWANE AT THE EVENT OF THE CLOSING OF THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN ON 10 DECEMBER 2010

Igama lamakhosikazi, malibongwe
Abantwana, ulutsha, ikusasa lethu
Bomme le bontate
Baahi ba Warden, Vrede le Memel
Marena le dikgosi
Mayors and Councillors
Officials, the servants of the public
Baeti ba rona kaofela
Dumelang, sanibonani, good afternoon.

Our gathering here today signifies unity of purpose, the purpose being our stance against violence of any nature against anyone. We also stand firmly against violence against our children and women, for these are the core of our society and future. Today, everywhere in the country, there are gatherings that stand together to speak against violence against women and children. We raise our voices in unison: ***don't look away, act against abuse.***

We are meeting here today after 11 years of hard work against the gender based violence in our society. The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children is a United Nations campaign. It takes place annually from the 25th November (International Day of No Violence against Women) to the 10th December (International Human Rights Day). This campaign focuses primarily on generating an increased awareness of the negative impact of violence on women and children as well as society as a whole.

We are excited about the fact that there has been a serious level of growth in support for the victims of abuse. This support is both in terms of resources allocation, and education and awareness. Women face the yoke of brutality wherein they are physically and emotionally abused by their male counterpart. We not the only ones

that are seriously concerned about this problem, but the international and domestic attention to this matter bears testimony to fact that gender based violence against women and children represents serious threat to humanity and its values.

There have also been more and more people who have come forward as activist against this curse; men and women. We are much aware though that despite this increased awareness and activism, women continue to experience violations in alarming numbers and new forms of violence are emerging. We, as defenders of women's human rights, have a responsibility to look more closely at the structures that permit gender-based violence to exist and persist.

It has become very much apparent that the majority of the crimes in relation to the violence against women and children are very much hidden from the public eye. One of those incidents of violence is mostly found in marital affairs where at most women continue to be subjected to vulnerability. Our battle cry this year is to make sure that the victims of abuse must be able to find better ways of speaking out about their offenders, that they 'Don't Look Away'.

All of us must fight against this problem as we fought in unison against apartheid. The fact that we have won against apartheid must continue to inspire us to win the battle that threatens peace and stability of our people. We must consider everyone here as a soldier on war against gender based violence and therefore expose the hypocrites who, like vampires, stick their protracted tooth to and then suck the blood of our women and children. Those who rape and tear our people apart only do so for fun and to humiliate women and their communities. Victims get caught up in that trauma, affecting their lives for a long time. Prevention is better than cure. We must work hard to ensure that it does not happen, rather than battling with counseling of those who might have been victimized.

Records show that there are cases that depict a serious insanity among our people such as the cases of elderly and aged women suffering from rape by criminals. There are also cases that depict children as old as three months being raped by men and boys between the ages as young as 9, 10 etc to 18 and even 45 years. Reports shows that men account for majority of domestic violence incidents that we have in

our province, however it is interesting to note that there are cases reported where women have also stood violently in defense against men. This teaches us that we need to communicate with all men to show them that it is 'enough'.

Our task as government is to look into better ways way of speeding up the empowerment of women and to enforce gender equality. Our understanding is that it is not only in our homes and through criminal activities that we experience the gender based violence, but even in our workplaces where we must always be to earn a living. If we root out of our workplaces the tendencies of ill-treatment advocated to women on the basis of their gender, we would have addressed one of the key performance areas of our democratic government to fight patriarchal domination in our society. So women must be encouraged to take steps in defense of their rights and this is in line with the national framework for women empowerment and gender equality.

We must also ensure that we organise our programmes in a manner that does not seek to demonise every man because of the acts of few who have turned themselves into vampires, because this might only serve to heighten to problem. We must ensure that men and young boys from rural areas and in the townships do participate in the campaign to change the mindset about violence. Last year, the 16 Days of Activism Campaign was officially ended when the Torch of Peace, which was lit at the Union Buildings at the start of the 16 day period, was handed over by Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga to the Free State Department of Police, Roads and Transport MEC, Thabo Manyoni for the duration of the festive season.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism event, earlier in the morning Premier Ace Magashule and his executive committee along with Social Development Minister Edna Molewa unveiled two tombstones of two children who were buried alive by a woman's boyfriend in the area of QwaQwa. We are aware that there are still some serious cases of this nature that has been reported there onus remains with us to do more.

The rights of women and children are fundamental human rights entrenched in and protected by the Constitution. They are thus inalienable from, integral to and

indivisible from the human rights framework. Gender based violence in all its different guises is incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated.

I therefore wish all of you to join us in these three days of action for NO violence against women and child abuse.

Thank you.

Re thuntsha lerole, mesebetsi e ya qala, maphelo a rona a ya fetoha!

“Don’t Look Away – Act Against Abuse”