

Statement by the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus Condemning the Brutal Teen Gang-Rape of a Girl Child in Thanamalwila and the Subsequent alleged Harassment by a Judicial Medical Officer in Hambantota

The Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Women
The National Child Protection Authority
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
District General Hospital Hambantota

We, the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus, condemn the inhumane series of gang-rapes a 16 year old girl child of Thanamalwila has endured since 2023. Further the Victim's mother stated that the insensitivity of the Medical Officer who is reported to have verbally and emotionally harassed the victim also.

Sri Lanka has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by which mandated us to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against girls and ensure their full development and participation in society. We also wish to highlight that General Recommendation 19 of CEDAW specifically addresses issues of violence against women and girls, emphasizing the need for comprehensive measures to combat such violence.

This brutal violation of the affected girl shows how all responsible authorities of Sri Lanka, have failed in their duties. At the very least, in the aftermath of this profound injustice, let us act in a conscientious, responsible and accountable manner.

We call on the Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Women and the National Child Protection Authority to oversee all involved parties and ensure that the child is treated with dignity, free from further harassment, and that her recovery and redress processes are managed with the utmost care.

We also urge the Ministry of Education to implement measures to train teachers nationwide on how to effectively and sensitively handle such cases when they arise, emphasizing that the dignity of the child is paramount and must take precedence over the image of the schools.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health should prioritize promoting moral values, respect for others, and safeguarding schoolchildren from exposure to pornography, drugs, alcohol, and other addictions. These measures are essential in reducing the risk of children engaging in harmful and abusive activities.

Similarly, we urge the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice to collectively ensure the Medical Officers and other officials involved in examining children who are harassed are trained and sensitized to handle them with compassion and care to avoid any further harassment faced by

such children. Additionally, we urge the authorities at the District General Hospital of Hambantota and the school in question to facilitate the investigation into this injustice affecting the survivor with full cooperation and without defensiveness.

All in all, such gross violations of women's and children's rights are unacceptable and must not be tolerated. It is imperative that the country takes all necessary measures to prevent such incidents and safeguard the rights and dignity of every girl child in Sri Lanka.

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