

# MALAWI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



## **A CALL CONDEMNING ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POST-ELECTION ACTIVITIES**

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (the Commission) has learnt and observed with deep concern the post-election violence against women in Malawi. The Commission is extremely concerned with the undressing of a female police officer during post-election demonstrations on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2019. These acts of violence are contrary to the Constitutional rights to life and dignity of every person. Women must be safeguarded at all costs and the principle of non-discrimination upheld. The Commission condemns violence against women in the strongest sense possible and takes this opportunity to condole the female police officer and all women for such undignified acts.

In a similar vein, the Commission is also concerned with a recent Facebook post posted on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2019 by the 'Malawi Daily Agenda', an online news agency calling upon the public to rape the wife of a human rights defender, Mr. Timothy Mtambo. It must be noted that any form of violence or threat to life or safety on any person, including women and human rights defenders, is an attack on civil liberties and democracy the people of Malawi fought for in early 1990's. These threats are against the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi in which the Bill of Rights sits. The Commission, therefore, condemns these acts of violence against women and human rights defenders. It must be noted that the Gender Equality Act, 2013, whose implementation the Commission oversees, calls for non-discrimination, as such, women and girls should be able to freely exercise their right to participate in political and public life.

Furthermore, the Commission has observed that violence is continuing during demonstrations which are otherwise expected to be peaceful as provided for under the Constitution. For instance, the demonstrations on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2019, have accrued significant damage to property and stalled economic activities, possibly resulting in enormous financial losses. Irrespective of the fact that every person has a right to assemble and demonstrate peacefully and unarmed, such acts of vandalism are taking the nation backwards in terms of development.

In view of the foregoing, the Commission calls upon the Police to act swiftly by investigating such matters and bring to book the source of these acts of violence. The Commission also urges the police to protect the safety of all women and girls in line with their mandate provided in section 153 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi. Further, the Commission appeals to members of the general public to religiously report to the Police or the Commission and/or whistle blow any source of threat to any women and girls in Malawi. Let us safeguard the tenets of human rights by respecting human rights and practicing tolerance.

Finally, the Commission reminds the public that every individual has a duty to respect other people's rights and therefore calls for peace. Meanwhile, the Commission wishes to commend the Human Rights Defenders Coalition for temporarily suspending the post-election demonstrations in order to allow for pursuit of electoral justice through the court process currently underway. The Commission appeals to other stakeholders to take advantage of this break to consolidate peace. On its part, the Commission is taking progressive steps to have dialogue on peace and respect for human rights with various stakeholders and would be soon be convening a national stakeholders conference on peace at which Malawians will be expected to constructively deliberate on issues that affect them.



**David V.K Nungu**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**8<sup>TH</sup> August, 2019**