



**STATEMENT BY SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN KENYA URGING FOR
PEACEFUL ELECTIONS**

AT THE KENYA COMFORT HOTEL, NAIROBI
Junction of Jakaya Kikwete and Ralph Bunche Roads Milimani

JUNE 27, 2017 FROM 7 A.M-9 A.M

1. We stand together as survivors of sexual violence in Kenya, having gone through violence in peace and in conflict times. Majority of us have suffered various forms of sexual violence that include rape; gang rapes; forcible circumcision of men; genital mutilation; sexual slavery and enslavement, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence.
2. Today, we dare to speak as survivors. For far too long survivors have been on the menu –being a subject of discussion at the table without them being accorded an opportunity to articulate their own issues. Civil Society Organisations have spoken on our behalf for far too long. However, today, we are saying that there is no better person who can speak for the survivor than the survivor himself or herself. There is a depth and integrity to the story when an empowered survivor narrates it. By so doing it can encourage other survivors out there to come out and speak, to prevent, support other survivors and communities realize the gravity of sexual violence.
3. Today, we are not merely part of statistics but we are here to tell Kenyans and the world that sexual violence has happened to us – in our homes, public spaces, on transit, camps for the displaced and in every space in Kenya. Those of us before you here today are a symbolic representation of thousands of other women, men and children who have borne the brunt of similar violations across the country during conflict or in peace times. Breaking the stigma on sexual violence starts by dismantling the silence that surrounds it. It should never be condoned, rationalized or justified. We are here to break the silence on sexual violence and to facilitate conversation on sex, sexuality and sexual violence as we work towards changing the narrative around it.
4. We are here today to put a face to sexual violence; to amplify the voice of survivors and their families of these heinous acts of crime; and give visibility to survivors who are always denoted in statistics. Today we speak on behalf of all those Kenyans - women, men or children who are stigmatized and discriminated due to sexual violence or too traumatized to speak out. We stand in solidarity with survivors whose pain has been punctuated by continued silence. We remember those amongst us who have been threatened and dissuaded in their quest for justice and reparations including those who have lost the will to live. We also remember survivors whose path to recovery is fraught with a myriad of difficulties including an unsympathetic society.
5. Sexual violence is undeniably a violation of human rights and has become the single most cruel, steadily growing crime in Kenya. It is not just a physical and violent act committed against one victim but it is a violation on a community and humanity. Victims and their families not only suffer from physical harm but the enduring and devastating effects of emotional and psychological trauma that destabilizes their lives forever. The magnitude of this crime is enormous with its socio-economic consequences threatening to tear families and communities apart.

6. The physical, psychological and socio-economic harm brought by sexual violence is overwhelming. The violation leaves a trail of physical injuries; gynecological complications such as ruptured uterus, fistula, incontinence, sexual dysfunction and infertility; sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infections; depression and trauma; spousal desertion; community isolation and stigmatization; inability to sustain livelihoods; unwanted pregnancies; and death.
7. The continued silence and inaction around sexual violence speaks to our collective acceptance that the vice has been normalized therefore treated with a lot of negligence and inconsideration. We have firsthand experiences of stigmatization. Our spouses, children, parents and society stigmatize us, causing us to hide and withdraw thus causing the vice to be perpetuated. We urge our fellow Kenyans to embrace us. Stop looking the other way by treating survivors as '*those people*'. We need your love and support in piecing up our lives together. It is not our fault that we have been sexually violated. Instead the shame and blame should go to where it belongs –to the perpetrator and not the victim.
8. The nature of the violation is such that few if any survivors have come out in public about their experiences, causing challenges in prevention, response and protection of survivors and their families. Survivors are shamed, judged and shunned. Worse still, survivors of conflict related sexual violence are not regarded as mainstream victims because their scars are not visible. We remember women, men and children who have died from sexual violence. We pay tribute to those who have shown resilience and tenacity in the face of adversity. We still have reasons to press on even when our resolve has been tested to the core.
9. Today, we call upon all Kenyans of goodwill to maintain PEACE before, during and after the August 8 elections. We urge for campaigns that are free from any form of violence. We send a strong message that any form of sexual violence shall not be tolerated or accepted in this year's elections or in the future. We explicitly say "**Never Again**" will anyone women, men and children's bodies as battlefields to wage political wars. We demand all Kenyans to be treated with DIGNITY and RESPECT as per the provisions of the Kenyan constitution. It is unsettling when someone knows that it is her/his vote that robbed her/his of her/his DIGNITY and IDENTITY. All political leaders must exercise restraint in their utterances to avoid a repeat of 2007-2008. We strongly advocate "**Zero Tolerance**" to sexual violence in the country.
10. We singularly call upon the state to publish and disseminate a clear code of conduct that will guide any security operations and deployments during the election period, and to publicly declare that state security agents will desist from violating the citizens that they are mandated to protect. In the sad event sexual violence does occur we urge the state to ensure that victims have timely access to emergency medical care and treatment, and legal services that will ensure that all perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
11. We urge the Kenyan government to declare sexual violence as a "**National Disaster**". One RAPE is one rape too many. Further, we call upon the government to take all measures necessary to ensure that all citizens -rich and poor, male and female, in all regions across the country- are protected from sexual violence that may be committed by civilians or state security agents under the guise of security operations during the especially during the electioneering period. The state must identify potential hotspots, provide additional safeguards including ample security, lighting and hotline numbers for reporting, and work with community leaders to mitigate potential violence.
12. We stand here to remind the government that justice for survivors of sexual violence is still an unfinished business and the longer it takes to address the issue of accountability; the more survivors continue to suffer. It is unfortunate that justice continues to elude survivors of sexual violence in Kenya. The courts continue to drag their feet in prosecuting and convicting sexual violence offenders even in cases where evidence is available. The president and his deputy promised that PEV victims will not be forgotten and that they "**will not rest**" until every victim is compensated. Where is the compensation for survivors of Sexual violence when IDPs are being compensated? The inordinate

delay in delivering reparations to this category of victims shows there is a policy of neglect from duty bearers. Time is running out for the most vulnerable.

13. We hereby call upon the government to operationalize the Ten Billion Restorative Justice Fund that will offer a measure of redress to victims and survivors of past human rights violations, including sexual violence. Further given the silence of this issue we urge government to ensure victims of sexual violence are not forgotten as they often are in many cases because of stigma, vulnerability and shame.

This is a clarion call to action to bring our issues up for discussion. We now ask all Kenyans of goodwill and citizens of the world elsewhere to join our voices in our demands for justice. Kenyans should **Stand up** and **Speak up** against the demeaning acts that silently impact on so many individuals, families and communities in our country.

We have established a National Survivors Movement that brings a unified voice to address sexual violence and to amplify survivors' voices around the country. The movement will ensure that all duty bearers are held accountable in the access to justice for all survivors.

With this press release, we hope it will generate conversations on sexual violence in Kenya.

Thank You