

**Keynote address on the occasion of the  
Launch of the 16 Days of Activism against  
Gender Based Violence**

**Kevin Nkoane Complex, Barkly Road**

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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To the Acting Head of Department,

The Executive Management Team of the Department,

The guests present,

The Senior Management Team present,

Members of staff of the Department,

Good morning,

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day.

It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

This campaign seeks to call for activism in defence of our women and young girls. My understanding of activism is that, it is the action of using **vigorous campaigning** to bring about political or social change. This implies that each and every one of us, is required to give of themselves with vigour so that we may realise the absolute protection of women and children from this despicable acts of gender based violence.

It is my view that this campaigning cannot be just for 16 days, it is hardly enough to address the heightened and shocking levels of gender based violence. Part of the vigorous campaigning we are called to engage in, requires that we adopt a consciousness and campaign for this cause for 365 days.

Ladies and gentlemen, we note with disgust that the levels of gender based violence have gone to levels where no one can say they are safe from gender based violence. Each and every one of us, is affected by it, in one way or the other, thus making the call to activism more urgent and necessary.

We also reflect that according to the President's call, the levels of gender-based violence have escalated to uncontrollable levels since the emergence of CoVID-19. We express that CoVID-19 on its own requires levels of activism in terms of safety and health, but it becomes totally unacceptable that women and children have been at the receiving end of this brutality.

This implies, doubling our levels of activism, to meet this brutality with the resistance that it deserves. Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome and support the call by the president to remember the victims of gender-based violence and by the same token remember those who have succumbed to CoVID-19. May the souls of the dearly departed rest in peace!

Ladies and gentlemen, there are many ways in which we can increase our activism, but it starts with understanding and accepting that **we all have** a role to play be a part of the solution. It starts with accepting that in our parenting duty, we need to promote equality in how we raise our children.

The greatest threat to the safety of our women and children is us, men and boys. Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that it is not the first time you hear about this campaign and yet the cases of gender-based violence are ever increasing. We need to ask, how we arrived at this situation? We need to ask, what we could have done to improve the situation?

It is my view that, the situation keeps getting worse, because we look away. Even when we are shocked, we are only shocked at the point of hearing the news and do nothing. How shall it be that we will hear that an elderly woman has been raped and brutally killed and yet live with the killers in the same house, in the same community and claim to share the same values with them?

Here in our province, we have had some cases of girls in schools being victims of gender-based violence and remain, unmoved by that. Has our silence kept is in bondage to the extent that we sit and hope it does not happen to our children?

We have educators and supervisors practising this gender-based violence with impunity and I am ashamed to say that some of us are complicit in these acts as we bring our denialism forth, through statements such as ***so and so will never do something like that!*** Sometimes it is us, who even blame the victims by asking them what they did to deserve the abuse.

This year's campaign should be intolerant of such behaviour. We need to make bold declarations about how we are going to become part of the solution. We should show little patience for such sentiments and deal with such attitudes towards gender-based violence decisively. We need to reject gender-based violence and an example of a manner of activism is to challenge cultures and practices that perpetuate gender inequality and consequent abuse of women and children at personal and societal level.

We need to also understand that gender-based violence affects us on both sides of the problem. Both as perpetrators and as victims, these people are our neighbours, they are our children, they are our husbands, they are our brothers and sometimes our priests and leaders in our communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, our activism, requires us to reject and report abusers. We are called to act and not look away from their heinous acts. That is why I want to take this opportunity to urge you to not protect abusers, **REPORT THEM!** We also need to understand that, as parents, we have a duty protect children from exposure to violence and harmful content on internet and social media, including pornography.

In conclusion, we need to understand that the activism is a clarion call to all members of society to act, through serious campaigns, and it starts with shifting our social behaviour both within and outside the home. In other words, ladies and gentlemen, it starts with you.

I thank you,

