

PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND UNITED STATES CITIZENS PETITION THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA GOVERNMENT OVER ITS LACK OF ACTION IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea citizens in the United States, United States citizens, and friends of Papua New Guinea have become increasingly concerned and incensed over the lack of serious attention and action by the Papua New Guinea Government to address violence against women over the last decade. Mothers, daughters, sisters, girlfriends, and wives are continuously suffering from gender-based violence and the current and previous Papua New Guinea governments have done absolutely nothing to address the issue meaningfully.

In the last decade we have observed and experienced an insurmountable rise in physical, sexual, psychological abuse, torture and deaths amongst our women-folk to a point where it has become ordinary norm. According to the World Health Organization, more than 50 percent of women and girls in some countries experience domestic violence; however, latest World Bank statistics indicate that Papua New Guinea in particular, is over 70 percent higher. That figure does not take into account what is unreported in local and international media on a daily basis. These are not idle statistics. If we juxtapose the World Bank figure against the rest of the world, that is two out of three Papua New Guinean women that have been abused throughout the course of their lifetime. Despite the glaring statistics, there is little or no interest in addressing gender-based violence by the Papua New Guinea Government.

The Peter O'Neil Government and State institutions such as Police, Justice and Social Welfare Services have the obligation to prevent, protect against, and punish perpetrators of violence against women. The Government has the legal and moral responsibility to uphold, sustain and advocate basic human rights standards and enforce laws that punish abusers. Violence against women has extensive socioeconomic consequences for individuals, families and communities. If the O'Neil Government does not address violence against our women-folk now, the scourge will continue to undermine and reduce any meaningful effort and contribution by women to the overall development of Papua New Guinea.

It is in this regard that we strongly urge the O'Neil government to consider implementing the following:

1. Appoint, mandate, and fund an independent commission to undertake comprehensive review of existing laws and legislation pertaining to human rights abuses, particularly violence against women, in the effort to strengthen and/or introduce new robust legislation with tougher penalties for perpetrators of such crimes.

2. Set up and fund quasi-government outreach centers that will serve as a safe-house and rehabilitation midpoint for abused women to be staffed by professional Social workers and Health officers. It is time the Government take direct responsibility for women rights issues, especially its obligation to protect and care for abused women. It is not the responsibility of churches and other independent third party organizations to assume the role of government on such matters. Violence against women are perpetrated by sociopaths and psychopaths, hence government intervention through outreach centers would provide the most basic psychological assistance needed to rehabilitate victims.
3. Create a direct hotline with numbers or phone bank within the police network dedicated to reporting women rights abuses and violence rather than through the general reporting system. Current police reporting system in most instances don't treat reports of abuse and violence seriously to the detriment of victims. The hotline must allow anonymous submissions of sexual victims.
4. Adopt gender equality as the heart of government planning and implementation. The government should take a holistic approach to addressing women rights and family needs; not simply demarcating emphasis on male stakeholders that matter to the development needs of the country. Setting the tone of "we are all in it" for the betterment of the country is a vital ingredient of a successful vibrant economy.
5. Grant access to public and the aforementioned commission to implement and utilize database that contains the DNA of convicted sex-offenders. The commission should make it a legislative requirement and that the Police be tasked and mandated with disseminating information purporting to sexual offenses and crimes against women.

There must be a requirement to have within the database the DNA of every incarcerated felon or criminal in Papua New Guinea. Whenever a sexual crime is committed, the DNA produced in the crime must be compared with the DNA database to determine identities of sexual offenders. Legislative measures pertaining to DNA use for crime prevention and/or prosecution must be complemented with latest technology. In that respect and as part or partial of our petition to the government, it should consider the following measures:

- If an offender is labeled as a sexual predator or as a repeat offender, the community must be alerted of the sexual predator within the community's jurisdiction. This will function as a deterrent for future sexual crimes.
 - Governors of each province must be responsible for crimes that are committed within every province. This requires that governors of each province to report crimes against women directly to the central DNA database.
6. Introduce legislation to declare Monday (day after Mother's Day) each year as prayer vigil day in Papua New Guinea for abused women. The annual prayer vigil will serve as reminder that we, as a community and country, has the inherent obligation to observe, respect and preserve the most fundamental sanctity of human dignity that our fellow mothers, sisters, daughters, girlfriends and wives deserve.

The list of considerations above are mere tokens of what the Government can do to address violence against women in Papua New Guinea, if it really cares. Simply making a series of statement in the media to the effect that it will do so without any firm conviction is simply unacceptable. We request the O'Neil Government to do the right and responsible thing now to stop violence against women in Papua New Guinea.

Signed, May 14, 2013, in the United States on behalf of all Papua New Guinea Citizens, concerned United States citizens, and friends of Papua New Guinea.

Signed and Received by:

Dated

Mr. Elias Wohengu

Charge de Affairs

Embassy of Papua New Guinea

Washington, DC