



Statement by the Solidarity of African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition Condemning the Recent Stripping of Women in Malawi

The 39 members of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition based in 18 African countries vehemently condemn the stripping of women wearing trousers and short skirts by male vendors in three major cities in Malawi namely Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Blantyre.

Women's rights in Malawi are guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1982, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that entered into force on 22 December 2000, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003 and the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, especially Chapter 4, sections 20 and 24 which focuses on the rights of women.

The above instruments have been ratified by the Government of Malawi in their bid to promote and protect women's rights. For this reason, the SOAWR coalition finds it appalling that men in Malawi are publicly stripping women. This is a violation of women's bodily integrity, dignity and freedom to self-expression. In addition, these acts intimidate women and therefore limit their freedom of movement.

We are reassured that the Office of the President of Malawi, the Minister of Gender and the Minister of Communication have publicly condemned the violations and the law enforcement agencies have arrested suspects.

We urge the Government of Malawi and security agencies to be vigilant and protect women in Malawi. We further call upon the Government of Malawi to prosecute the accused within due process and to exercise zero tolerance to violations of women's rights. In order to prevent a reoccurrence of these and other violations of women's rights, the Government must announce a programme of long-term sensitisation campaigns to change negative attitudes and behaviours.

We stand in solidarity with the women of Africa and the women of Malawi in particular to ensure their rights are respected and protected.

Done on 25 January 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

NOTE:


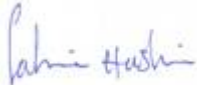
The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition is a pan-African regional network comprised of 39 national, regional and international civil society organisations based in 18 countries, working towards the promotion and protection of women's human rights in Africa. Since its inauguration in 2004 SOAWR's main area of focus has been to compel African states to urgently ratify, domesticate and implement the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Protocol has thus far been ratified by 31 of the 54 African Union member states, the latest of which are Gabon and Equatorial Guinea who ratified the Protocol in February and June 2011 respectively. The Coalition has committed itself to utilising the platform of the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) to intensify efforts to compel African states to deliver on their commitments to women's human rights, through ratification of the Protocol, accelerating implementation through a multi-sectoral approach, and prioritising the promotion and protection of women's bodily integrity and dignity, as well as their participation in governance, peace and security processes and structures.

Endorsed By:

1. Here's joining the rest of the world in condemning the shameful act in the strongest terms possible. That act is archaic, barbaric and should not be allowed in the present times.
-**Phil, MEGEN**, Kenya
2. **Okumba Miruka**, Nairobi, Kenya
3. **Karima Bennoune**
4. **Iyik**, ASEAN Progressive Muslim Movement (APMM)
5. **Mme Bachir Hawa Himidou**, APAC, Niger
6. This we must voice, I am on board.
-**Jacob Otachi**, Kenya
7. Please include my name and my outrage at the violent and misogynistic practice of stripping girls who chose, which is in their right, to wear non-traditional dress.
-**Prof. Colleen Wagner**, York University, Toronto, Canada
8. **Rebecca Kukundakwe**, Uganda
9. En Solidarité (In Solidarity)
-**Actions des Femmes pour les Droits et Développement (AFD)**
10. **Rose Kabongo Mbuyi Kanku**, COPPRODDHO (Communicateurs pour la Promotion, Protection et Défense des Droits de l'homme), DRC
11. **Joachim Bongeye W'Esongola Matondo**
12. **Tafadzwa Muropa**, Zimbabwe
13. **Priscilla Usiobaifo**, BraveHeart Initiative, Nigeria
14. **Chibota Edozie**, National Light Newspaper, Anambra State, Nigeria
15. Stop these barbaric acts against women
-**Rose Muyumba Ochieng**, Institute of Health Policy Managementt & Research, Nairobi, Kenya
16. En soutien de ces femmes (In support of these women)
-**Bodian Ndèye Marème**, Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance Senegal
17. **Ayodele Akele**, Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre, Lagos, Nigeria
18. **Lateef Kayode Akinborode**, Community Women's Rights Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria
19. It must stop. Women should wear exactly what pleases them and men should be held accountable for crimes they commit against women because they *choose* not to control themselves.
-**June Lewis**, USA
20. We must not allow this patriarchal principle of control over women's bodies to continue.
-**Isatou Touray**, GAMCOTRAP, Gambia

21. **Iheoma Obibi**, Alliances for Africa (AfA), Nigeria
22. Every woman and girl in Malawi, Africa and the rest of the world commands the right to have control over her body.
-**Edward A. J. Akapire**, ActionAid, Ghana
23. In solidarity with the women and girls in Malawi
-**Florence Annan**, Girl Child Network, Nairobi, Kenya
24. Nous condamnons fermement ces actes ignobles, abaissant la femme au Malawi, portant atteinte à sa dignité, sa fierté, sa liberté d'expression et de port de tenues qui lui conviennent. Malheureusement des mouvements fanatiques font tout pour casser le progrès que la femme en Afrique se bat pour réaliser. Nous sommes de tout cœur avec la femme au Malawi qui est exposée à ce genre d'acte barbare, très décevant et qui ne compliquera que d'avantage la situation de la femme au sein de la société Africaine.
-**Imane Belghiti**, Association Nationale Al Hidn, Morocco
25. **Mary Asuquo**, Zone F, Nigeria
26. **Stephany Kersten**, Cameroon
27. **Ratna Osman**, Sisters In Islam, Malaysia
28. **Grace Maingi-Kimani**, Federation for Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kenya
29. **Hina Noureen**
30. **Wanjala Wafula**, Coexist Initiative
31. **Mme Traore Oumou Toure**, Coordination des Associations et ONG Féminines du Mali (CAFOB)
Mali
32. **Khadijatou Cisse**, Association pour la solidarité, la formation et l'encadrement des femmes (Asafef), Dakar, Sénégal
33. **Kemonou Richard S. Segun**, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, India
34. **Mme Lidjetou Diarra Oumou**, Association Bien Etre Familial & Développement Durable (ABEFDD), Mauritania
35. **Sylvie Ndongmo**, Cameroon
36. **Diakhoumba Gassama**
37. Nous leur devons tout notre soutien (We owe them all our support)
-**Souad Belaazi**, Tunisia
38. **Astou Sillah**, Senegal
39. **Fandy Victorine**, Paris, France
40. Nous soutenons le combat de nos soeurs du Malawi contre les intolérances sur l'habillement des femmes (We support the struggle of our Malawian sisters against the intolerances of the dress of women)

-**Mme Awa Fall-Diop**, l'Observatoire des Relations de Genre au Sénégal

41. We condemn all attempts to control women's dress
-**Fauzia Viqar**, Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, Pakistan
42. **Sunila Abeysekera**, Sri Lanka
43. Women's rights should not be violated
-**Jane Holler**, Connecticut, USA
44. **Fatimata Sy Gueye**, USA
45. **Thiaba Camara Sy**, Senegal
46. **Fatou Sow**, International Solidarity Network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, London, UK
47. **Ducos Lalia**, Women's Initiative for Citizens Rights (WICUR), France
48. **Professor Pamela Abbott**, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, Rwanda
49. **Mediatrice Mukeshimana**, National Commission for Children, Rwanda
50. **Ayesha Imam**, Women's Human Rights Activist, Nigeria/Senegal
51. **Marie Odette Kansanga Ndahiro**, Kigali Institute of Education, Rwanda
52. **Ansila Tembo**, Catholic Diocese of Mbulu, Development Office (DMDO), Tanzania
53. Courage nos sœurs de Malawi nous sommes avec vous. (Be brave, our Malawian sisters, we are with you)
-**Ndayishimiye Anatolie**, Collectif des Associations et ONG Féminines du Burundi (CAFOD)
Bujumbura, Burundi
54. **Hina Noureen**, Baidarie, Pakistan

55. **Patricie M. Uwase**, Rwanda Association of University Women/KIST, Rwanda
56. **Donatha Gihana**, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Rwanda
57. **Fahima Hashim**, Salmah Women's Resource Center, Khartoum, Sudan

58. **Sosthenes Maganja**, ActionAid International, Tanzania
59. **Samia Allalou**, Mediterranean Women's Fund
60. **Emang Basadi**, Gaborone, Botswana
61. Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SuWEP), Khartoum, Sudan
62. Action for Development (ACFODE), Uganda

63. African Centre for Democracy And Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), The Gambia
64. Alliance for Africa , Nigeria
65. Akina Mama wa Afrika, Uganda
66. African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Ghana
67. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Kenya
68. Association des Juristes Maliennes, Mali
69. Baobab for Women's Human Rights, Nigeria
70. Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants (CPTAFE), Guinea
71. Centre for Justice Studies and Innovations (CJSI), Uganda
72. Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Kenya
73. Collectif des Associations et ONGS Féminines de Burundi (CAFOB), Burundi
74. Equality Now (SOAWR Secretariat), Kenya
75. East Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative (EASSI), Uganda
76. FAHAMU for Social Justice, Kenya
77. Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya), Kenya
78. Forum Mulher, Mozambique
79. Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), Nigeria
80. Inter-African Network For Women Media, Gender and Development (FAMEDEV), Senegal
81. Girl Child Network (GCN), Zimbabwe
82. Inter-African Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (IAC) , Ethiopia
83. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Tanzania
84. NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGOGCN), Malawi
85. Oxfam GB, Kenya
86. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), South Africa
87. Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (RHRA), Kenya
88. Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa Women (SIHA), Sudan
89. Sister Namibia, Namibia
90. Tomorrow's Child Initiative (TCI), Kenya
91. Ugandan Women Network (UWONET), Uganda
92. Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti (UNFD), Djibouti
93. University of Pretoria Center for Human Rights, South Africa
94. Voix de Femmes, Burkina Faso
95. Women Direct, Kenya
96. Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA), Nigeria
97. Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Zambia
98. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), Zambia
99. Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET), Liberia
100. Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), Liberia