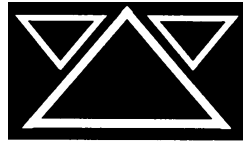


P O Box 604
4 Marien Ngouabi Street
Windhoek
Namibia



Toni Hancox (Director)

Corinna van Wyk
Sharen Zenda
Bernadine Mynhardt

Tel: Int +264 61 223356
Fax: Int +264 61 234953
E-mail: info@lac.org.na
Web: <http://www.lac.org.na>

LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE

Recipient of the UNICEF Maurice Pate Human Rights Award – 1997
JP Karuaihe: Human Rights Award – 2008, 2010 and 2014 and Social Responsibility Award 2013

29 February 2016

PRESS RELEASE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

The Legal Assistance Centre extends its sincerest condolences to the family of Leticia du Plessis. The tragic killing of yet another victim of domestic violence in Namibia is unacceptable and should never be overlooked by society. The scourge of domestic violence in Namibia has reached epidemic proportions and reports suggest that there are too many cases where there has been little or no protection or assistance from the police.

According to the media reports, the victim, prior to the gruesome attack that ended her life and orphaned her children, made numerous complaints against the perpetrator to the police, including a complaint of kidnapping and assault during December 2015. The Legal Assistance Centre is horrified by these reports and condemns any form of procrastination by Nampol. The lack of police protection and support in cases like these contributes to the cause of our communities being torn apart and our children being orphaned.

Nampol's vision verbatim states: "To protect and serve all people in Namibia". Furthermore, their mission statement promises: "To render the necessary quality service, as laid down in the Police Act, with due consideration for the fundamental human rights and freedoms, without compromising in upholding the tenets of law and order, safety and security of all persons." Lastly, they emphasize that their values include: "To be accountable to the nation and the community we are serving."

The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia provides for the protection of all persons' life and liberty and respect for human dignity. The Namibian Police, not only promises to do so in their vision and mission statements, but has a duty to do so in terms of the law. How did the police offer the victim enough protection? How did they uphold her rights? Who can we call on if we cannot call upon the police to protect us?

The Legal Assistance Centre calls on the Ministry of Safety and Security to live true to their values and take responsibility for their failure to protect vulnerable persons in society. Not only do they have a duty to protect persons who suffer from violence at the hands of their partners but they must do better in training their officers to ensure that complaints of domestic violence are promptly and adequately investigated and acted upon.

The police of Rehoboth specifically had an obligation to investigate the complaints laid by the victim and to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the perpetrator was brought to justice. Anything less constitutes gross negligence on their part in fulfilling and carrying out their duties and powers to protect the safety of all.

But the blame does not lie with the Police alone. We as members of society have a duty to protect our families and our neighbours, to keep them safe from harm. Preventing such horrible murders is a responsibility for us all.

For more information please contact
Bernadine Mynhardt-Jansen
Legal Practitioner
Tel: (061)223356; bmynhardt@lac.org.na

Trustees of the Legal Assistance Trust:

Clement Daniels (Chairperson) Elize Angula Esi Schimming-Chase Nico Kaiyamo Bisey Uirab
Tangeni Amupadhi Norman Tjombe Toni Hancox (ex officio)

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