



July 29, 2018

PRESS STATEMENT

Hargeisa, 29 July 2018: It encouraging to be invited and witness what seems to be the final legislative step to finally approve the sexual offences bill by the lower House of Parliament (House of Representatives). The passage of the sexual offences bill with majority of 41 against 1 rejected (on this Sunday, 29/07/2018) is another progress in the right direction. It has been 8 April when the House of Guurti have passed with some 15 modifications after it has been initially passed on 06 January 2018 by the House of Representatives with fast majority of 46 out of 56 who attended the voting day.

Today's approval doesn't just mark a land slide for the final legislative process of the bill, but also reaffirmed some core provisions in the bill which has been initially modified by the Guurti.

"The bill could have been meaningless without the provisions on the strict punishment for the convicted offenders of the sexual offences and the rights to the report without any expiry timeframes. These are what has been confirmed today by the representatives" said Chairperson of Nagaad.

The agenda of sexual offences has been widely addressed in the form of raising public awareness, outsourcing capacity development on its activism, victim's service provision, monitoring and documentation of the nature and characteristics of sexual offences, and finally researches on the legal gaps as well as enforcement issues. The information generated from these works has finally resulted in engaging active and evidence based advocacy to reform criminal justice system.

Currently, the outdated Penal Code adopted following after the independence in 1962 describes offences and penalties involving sexual violence under three articles only. However, it has not been able to reflect upon the contemporary values in relations to protections from the increasingly reported rape incidents including gang rapes which, in 2016, the office of the prosecutor indicated more than 100 of such case prosecuted in Somaliland courts.

As part of the activism in relations to the violence against women, girls and children, Nagaad Network has been waging a campaign of zero violence against women. This has been made in cooperation with CSOs and in collaboration with respective state authorities in Somaliland. Violence against women, and specifically sexual offences, has been less considered issue for some time. The experiences of armed conflicts, its consequences of post conflict poverty, cultural change and substance abuses are factors considered exacerbating the increase of sexual violence. On the other hand, the relationship between conflict and sexual violence and how each one could trigger the other one has been witnessed. In the Somali society, because of clan

identity, women issues had been always considered as critical and source of never ending confrontations.

This bill provides both procedural provisions to support managing sexual offences and substantive provisions on the punishments of the offences proofed beyond doubt. If the president approve it into law, the next milestone should be programing it into the criminal justice system by equipping the law enforcements and judges about the new approaches to address reported cases.

On behalf of the task force for the approval of the bill, Nagaad Network would like to thank all the partners and stakeholders of both state actors and non-state actors of both local and international agencies and programs who supported this important achievement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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