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# Human Rights Commission

## Head Office

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20<sup>th</sup> March, 2026

### **PRESS RELEASE** **For Immediate Release**

### **THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION CONDEMNS EMERGING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS**

The Human Rights Commission is deeply concerned about reports of some political party members allegedly demanding sexual favours from female political aspirants in exchange for adoption in the upcoming General Elections. The Commission is appalled by such despicable acts of sexual exploitation and harassment against women, which constitute gross violations of women's rights and have a profound and negative impact on women's participation in politics.

In the same vein, the Commission strongly condemns the use of misogynic language targeted at women on online media platforms by well-known and identifiable vloggers. The Commission is calling for immediate action to halt the spread of such sexist content on social media, as it perpetuates harmful stereotypes that undermine the integrity, participation and inclusion of women in politics. It should be noted that, in addition to undermining women's credibility and reputation, the continued dissemination of gender-based misinformation may constitute an offence of cyber harassment or humiliation under section 22 of the Cyber Crimes Act, No. 4 of 2025.

These concerning developments amount to a direct assault, not only on the rights and dignity of women but also on democracy itself. Further, such conduct is regressive to inclusive governance and increases the risk of sexual exploitation, harassment and violence against women seeking to participate in public affairs. Sexual and all forms of exploitation or verbal harassment deprive women of their rights to equality, non-discrimination and inherent dignity. The

sum total of these unacceptable acts is that women's full and effective participation in politics is significantly impeded. Because of their gravity, these acts demand immediate accountability from all responsible institutions.

The Commission is therefore urging all victims of such sexual, verbal and physical abuse, together with well-meaning members of the public and organisations, to act on behalf of victims and report such cases either to the Zambia Police Service or the Human Rights Commission for redress. This is important in order to carry out thorough investigations so that appropriate action is taken to end this emerging impunity.

It is the Commission's firm belief that political parties in particular have a duty to demonstrate exemplary leadership in advancing women's rights and are therefore expected to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any form of sexual and gender-based violence. The Commission expects that political parties will immediately implement measures that foster a safe and supportive environment for women's participation within their structures.

The Commission would like to send a warning that actions or statements aimed at humiliating, intimidating or discouraging women from participating in elections will not be tolerated. Women have equal rights and must be protected to participate freely and fully, without discrimination. Where sufficient evidence is available, the Commission will invoke its statutory powers, which include instituting strategic litigation against perpetrators of sextortion, sexism and cyberbullying, in order to effectively protect women's rights and end impunity.

Lastly, the Commission is urging all political parties to take concrete measures to address sextortion in candidate adoption processes by protecting women and holding perpetrators accountable. The Commission is also calling upon all members of the public to join hands and guard against any form of violence against women in elections. Women have an inalienable right to equal participation and opportunity in the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2026 General Elections and beyond.

(Original Signed)

Dr Pamela Towela Sambo

**CHAIRPERSON**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**