



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
13-15 ST. CLAIR AVENUE, ST. CLAIR
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Attention: HEAD OF NEWS and EDITOR IN CHIEF

MEDIA RELEASE

Port of Spain

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROTECTING OUR CITIZENS FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at Monday's National Conversations with the Prime Minister, made several statements on domestic violence. These statements were misinterpreted by some groups which claim that the Prime Minister blamed the victim for the heinous incident that took place on Sunday 5th February, 2017. The Prime Minister was conversing with the people and his statement has been taken out of context. He categorically rejects this interpretation of his statement.

His comments at the National Conversation were made based on the statement from the audience which lamented that domestic violence was so pervasive and happening within private spaces; in their very homes. The Prime Minister, having already responded on the various strategies to deal with violence, further advised that while he could provide protection in the wider environment for women, he could not provide such protection in the private spaces and lives.

The Prime Minister, being a father and grandfather and understanding the importance of the association we keep and our personal wellbeing offered further empowering advice to our women, by advising women that '*you have the responsibility to determine who you associate with and know when to get out*'. Prime Minister wants women to be empowered to make smart choices. The Prime Minister does not blame the victims of domestic violence but rather sympathises with the victims and the families of both the victims and the perpetrators. The Prime Minister is aware that such acts of violence are a clear signal for help by both victim and perpetrator. The Prime Minister is treating with amendments to the legislation to offer greater protection to domestic violence.

The Prime Minister has been working to push women's issues from inception. It is because of the importance of women and child issue that he included this in his portfolio at the Office of the Prime Minister. He further assigned the responsibility to the Minister of State in his Office, to ensure that special attention is paid to resolving many specific issues affecting women gender and children.

The Office of the Prime Minister does not condone domestic violence and is doing everything possible to reduce this scourge. The Office of the Prime Minister has been working diligently to ensure that acts of domestic violence and all forms of gender based are reduced significantly or eliminated from our country by assiduously pursuing the following strategic objectives to:

- Improve the quality of life of men and women and boys and girls, at all levels of society through the promotion of gender equity and equality.
- Research and disseminate information on gender specific issues.
- Promote change in gender discriminatory social consciousness and traditions.
- Build consultative mechanisms within government, international and regional agencies, academia, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private sector partners in advancing gender equality.
- Develop gender policies to promote the equitable advancement of women and men, and boys and girls in all spheres of development.
- Prevent, punish and eradicate gender based violence by creating the institutions and administrative structures for victims and perpetrators of gender based violence.

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the Gender Affairs Division continues to developed projects and programmes to address gender based violence and build mutual respect between men and women. These include:

- The provision of specific programmes such as Defining Masculine Excellence and Home Management and Food Preparation for Men and Boys, Barbershop programmes;
- These programme are intended to promote gender equity by taking into account the needs of men, their perspective and expectations, as well as facilitating a level of awareness, which deconstructs the stereotyping, which take place in society;
- Support is also provided for NGOs that promote programmes with similar outcomes such as the 'Heforshe' campaigns;
- Continued Operation of the Domestic Hotline on a 24 hours bases; and
- The Central Registry on Domestic Violence was established in April 2016 and has been providing data to guide decision making.

The OPM is currently focusing on other plans and activities to build mutual respect among men and women and encourage behaviour modification. These include the following:

- **A Community Based Action Plan to end Gender Based Violence in Trinidad and Tobago.** This proposal focuses on reducing Gender Based Violence specifically violence against women and girls in communities and providing help to potential perpetrators;
- **Amendments to the Domestic Violence Act to provide** greater protection for victims of domestic violence;

- **Strengthening the law enforcement response** to violence against women through the implementation of sustained training programmes; and
- Creating safe places with the necessary services for victims of violence, both male and female.

We urge the public, victims or observers to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-SAVE (7283) to report incidence of domestic and gender violence. This 24-hour hotline provides counselling services, crisis intervention and referrals to appropriate agencies such as, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Victim and Support Unit of the TTPS, the National Family Services, the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Lifeline or the Rape Crisis Society. Referrals can also be made for directing the victim to a place of safety or a shelter. We grieve with the public as we see this social ill destroying families, because children and close relations are sometimes caught in the domestic war.

The Office of the Prime Minister will continue our drive to advocate against domestic violence for both men and women. We will continue to build awareness and promote strategies to prevent domestic violence. Eliminating domestic and protecting victims of such remains a core outcome.

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