



LESBIANS, GAYS AND BISEXUALS OF BOTSWANA

P O BOX 550430 Mogoditshane, Botswana

Tel: +267 316 7425 Fax: +267 316 7465

Email: legabibo@legabibo.org

MEDIA RELEASE: A CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR THAPELO

To: All Media, Public, Human Rights Organisations

From: Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuas of Botswana – LEGABIBO

Date: 11 July 2019

This past Saturday 6th July 2019, Thapelo Matshameko, a transgender woman was assaulted simply because she identifies as a woman. Thapelo was harassed then beaten by three men at Chicken Twist restaurant in Broadhurst. While assaulting her, the three men told her to “stop pretending to be a woman and be a real man” specifically blaming the recent decriminalization case as motivation for their violence.

We are heart-broken to learn of this brutal attack on Thapelo Matshameko because she is living her true self. This is not the first time Thapelo gets gruesomely violated and humiliated in public spaces. Last year at Trekkers Night Club, she was stripped off her privacy and dignity because she identifies as a Trans Woman. We are devastated by the continued intentional targeting of a member of our community. This is not just an attack on Thapelo alone, it is an attack on members of the LGBTI community, the violence intended to undermine our freedoms and rights, an attack on women’s freedom of movement and choice.

LEGABIBO would like to remind the police that justice delayed is justice denied. Thapelo has not received redress from the previous violent assault, yet again the police fail to avail effective, prompt and appropriate remedies. Instead the known assailants are beaten and set free, only to later confront Thapelo with an apology, unaccompanied by the police, further traumatizing her and forcing her to face the assailants. We are disappointed by the half-hearted effort to accord Ms. Matshameko justice.

We would like to warn the police that not taking action sets precedence that it is ok to beat trans-women, that they support and condone these acts of retaliation against the recent court ruling where consensual adult same-sex-sexual activities was legalized. We call upon Botswana police to accord Ms. Matshameko the justice and respect she deserves by taking appropriate action against these men with immediate effect.

Failing to do so means they are denying Ms. Matshameko her Constitutional rights that safeguard her privacy, dignity and freedom from discrimination affirmed by the 3 esteemed judges on the 11th June 2019. In the words of Judge Michael Leburu, we remind the police that "Human dignity is harmed when minority groups are marginalized. Sexual orientation is not a fashion statement, but an important attribute in one's personality."

PROTECT. PROMOTE. DEFEND.



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We call on Parliament to act swiftly in making laws and policies that address hate crimes and non-discrimination. We call on women's groups and gender activists to stand against this heinous crimes based on Sexual Orientation Gender Identity, expression and sex characteristics. We call on members of the public to report violence carried out in public spaces to protect women and fellow citizens to ensure safety in public spaces.

LEGABIBO will continue to conscientiously seek justice for Ms. Matshameko and defend the human rights of members of our community.

For more information:

Anna Mmolai-Chalmers, LEGABIBO CEO: Tel: +267 316 74 25/ +267 71 340 794 E-mail anna@legabibo.org

Bradley Fortuin, LEGABIBO Community Movement Strengthening Manager: Tel: +267 316 74 25/ +267 71 814 906, Email: bradley@legabibo.org

Matlhogonolo Samsam, LEGABIBO Media Advocacy & Communications Officer: Tel: +267 316 74 25/ +267 71 814 906, Email: matlhogonolo@legabibo.org

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