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JOINT STATEMENT ON THE BRUTAL MURDER OF SHEILA LUMUMBA

26th April, 2022

On 17th April 2022, Sheila Lumumba, a 25-year-old queer, non-binary person, was found dead in their apartment in Karatina, Nyeri County. The autopsy conducted by the Government Pathologist report released on 20th April 2022 shows, among other things, signs of rape, broken limbs and multiple stab wounds in the neck and chest area. As LGBTIQ+ persons, communities, organizations and allies are horrified and deeply saddened by the circumstances around their death. We come together to condemn these heinous acts in the strongest terms. We commiserate and grieve with the family of our departed sibling and active member of the Kenyan community and commit to standing by them in demand of justice for Sheila. In the same breath, we decry a visible pattern as indicated in various research studies and anecdotal information by the LGBTIQ community of targeted violence against sexual and gender minorities and the lack of prosecution and impunity for perpetrators of homophobic/transphobic violence. We urge the Directorate of Criminal Investigations to move with speed to arrest and the identified suspects prosecuted.

Article 27 The Constitution of Kenya (2010) guarantees equal protection and equal benefit of the law to all persons. Regardless, we have continuously seen a lack of commitment and will from duty bearers to prosecute and investigate issues that involve Sexual and Gender Minorities. This resistance to act has been particularly evident in the past year, where we have witnessed the murders of three members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Yet, very little has been done by way of documentation, prosecution and investigation. This reluctance highlights an unjust society where the protection of certain classes of marginalised groups lapses, and violence against them is not treated as an urgent and important issue. Yet, according to the study *Are we Doing Alright* (shorturl.at/quzBP) released in 2019, instances of sexual, verbal, and physical violence are higher among sexual and gender minorities than the National Average. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) also assures citizens The Right To Life. Murder is vile and is an infringement of that right. As the LGBTIQ+ community rallies to condemn Sheila's assault and murder, we note with sadness the silence from duty bearers and the political class. Their silence is particularly disturbing, considering April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Reports in recent years have shown that there has been an alarming increase in incidences of violence against female-bodied people, and Sheila's murder is a grim reminder of that statistic. Imani Kimiri, the Head of Legal Affairs at NGLHRC, said, "Sheila's murder has illuminated the consequences of normalising violence against LGBTIQ+ people and highlights that this kind of

narrative has been acquiesced by the political class as evidenced through statements that Magoha made."

As the investigations around the murder of Sheila Lumumba continue, we ask the DCI to act with swiftness and surety to bring the perpetrators to justice. Further, we demand duty bearers be vocal and condemn violence against LGBTIQ+ persons. We ask that the Kenyan society understand that violence against LGBTIQ+ people is unacceptable and is punishable by law.

Finally, we stand with the LGBTIQ+ community in this difficult time and ask that they familiarise themselves with the security and referral mechanisms in their areas. Do not be afraid to report injustices to security agencies and reach out to us for free legal representation.

This is a joint statement from The National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), Initiative for Equality and Non-Discrimination (INEND), National Advocacy Trans Network (NTAN), Voices of Women in Western Kenya (VOWWEK), Amnesty International and Change.org.

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If you would like more information you may reach out to

Annette Atieno, Communications Officer,

National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Cell- + 254 92 400528