



## Network of Key Population Service Organizations Ltd.

### STATEMENT ON THE URGENT NEED TO END SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE AGAINST SEX WORKERS IN UGANDA

As we commemorate the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers on this day 17th December, we the sex worker-led organizations under the Network of Key Population Service Organizations (UNESO), speak not from a place of remembrance, but from a reality of ongoing crisis. We state clearly that the violence is not a historical record, but a present and a daily emergency that sex workers face.

In Uganda, sex workers face systemic violence, criminalization, and marginalization. The criminalization of sex work does not protect sex workers but rather actively exposes sex workers to several forms of injustice. It creates a shadow where perpetrators act with impunity, and where societal stigma fuels discrimination. The recent rampant femicides targeting sex workers are a continuing wave of terror that needs to be stopped.

Today, we do not commemorate in silence. We stand in the shadow of a number of sex workers we have lost to preventable murders. In Uganda, sex workers are brutally murdered, and every other day, there is a record of a life lost due to a cycle of violence fueled by criminalization, societal and state-sanctioned stigma. Each sex worker murdered represents a future erased, a family shattered, and a system that has extremely failed to respect, promote, and protect the rights of sex workers.

The lack of social and legal protection always worsens the stigma and vulnerability of sex workers, making every day a potential threat to physical and sexual assault, extortion, and murder.

Therefore, in this present moment of acute danger, we issue the following urgent calls:

- We demand the urgent decriminalization.
- We call upon the Government of Uganda to immediately condemn the ongoing femicide of sex workers and to treat this violence as the national disaster it is.
- We call upon the Uganda Police Force to conduct thorough and independent investigations into all unresolved killings of sex workers and produce a valid report, and hold perpetrators of violence accountable.
- We call upon the Judiciary to fast-track cases of violence against sex workers and all women. Justice delayed is justice denied, and we demand swift and fair trials to end the current cycle of impunity.
- We call upon Civil Society Organizations and all human rights defenders to stand in active solidarity to condemn the human rights violations that are committed against sex workers.

**SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS.  
DECRIMINALIZE SEX WORKERS NOW.**



UNESO



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