



African Women Lawyers Association

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PRESS STATEMENT

AWLA GHANA CALLS FOR A NATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENDERS REGISTER TO PROTECT SCHOOLGIRLS

The Association of Women Lawyers, Ghana (AWLA Ghana), is deeply concerned by recent reports of alleged sexual abuse of female students by persons entrusted with their care and education. The recent JoyNews investigation, Threats, Victim Blaming & More: How Authorities Failed on Abuse Claims Against Obuasi SHTS Headmaster, raises serious concerns about the handling of complaints and the protection of schoolgirls from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Our schools must be places of learning and safety, not environments where children fear those entrusted with their protection.

AWLA Ghana recognises that allegations must be investigated fairly and that guilt must be established through due process. However, these reports underscore the urgent need to move beyond reactive responses and strengthen the systems designed to prevent sexual abuse, protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

We therefore call on the Government of Ghana, Parliament and the relevant ministries and institutions to take immediate steps towards establishing a National Sexual Offenders Register, supported by a clear legal framework and appropriate safeguards.

The proposed register should facilitate the identification of persons convicted of sexual offences, particularly offences against children, and inform lawful recruitment and vetting decisions in schools and other institutions serving children. It must be accompanied by robust background checks for school personnel, clear rules governing access to the register, data protection and safeguards against wrongful inclusion.

AWLA Ghana further calls for:

- * Independent and timely investigations into allegations of sexual abuse and the handling of complaints by school authorities.
- * Mandatory safeguarding and background checks for teachers, school heads and other personnel with access to children.
- * Confidential reporting mechanisms that enable students to report abuse without intimidation, victim-blaming or retaliation.
- * Accountability for institutional failures, including deliberate concealment of abuse or neglect of safeguarding responsibilities, where established.
- * Support for survivors, including psychosocial care, access to justice and protection of their right to education.

Sexual abuse in schools is not merely an individual failure. Where complaints are ignored, victims are silenced or institutions prioritise their reputations over children's safety, the conditions for continued abuse may be created.

AWLA Ghana stands in solidarity with all girls who have experienced sexual abuse and calls on the relevant authorities to ensure that every allegation is handled with urgency, sensitivity and impartiality.

Protect our girls. End institutional silence. Hold perpetrators accountable. Establish the register.

Issued by:

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