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## **PRESS RELEASE BY FAWE GHANA CHAPTER ON SCHOOL-BASED SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

**23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021**

FAWE Ghana Chapter is proud to have been a leader in the civil society space pushing advocacy and policy interventions to make school a safe and nurturing learning environment for girls across the African continent. We have noticed, with dismay, a backsliding from the days of increasing diligence to more and more normalisation of an unhealthy attitude towards sexual harassment in schools. This situation has been most unfortunately exemplified by a video circulating on social media, where an Anglican Priest at the St. Monica's College of Education, Asante Mampong, is seen kissing three female students in a most inappropriate manner to the loud mixture of approval and surprise of the church congregation. This is very unfortunate, coming at a time when Ghana is deemed to have made gains in its pursuit of girl child education and empowerment. It is appalling, that an institution of that nature finds itself in this quagmire of School-based Sexual Harassment in such a brazen manner.

The circumstances surrounding the incident in context make it more of a matter of grave concern, considering that the individual at the center of events is a Priest, and not just that, but a person of high authority in an academic institution. This brings up the question of power relations in academic institutions.

It is high time we rallied together for zero-tolerance of School-Based Sexual Harassment. The Ghana Education Service, in its Code of Conduct for teachers, specifies very clearly what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour regarding sexual harassment and the consequences for it.

It would appear that the school environment is being turned into an unsafe one for girls; creating anxiety amongst parents and negative or at best, mixed messages to girls who are forming their value systems while in school. The risk of contracting COVID-19, Sexually Transmitted Infections, the resulting insecurity for the girls and its impact on their mental and emotional health are a stain on the primary role of the school as a safe nurturing environment, that works to develop the potential of these girls.

While appreciating the initial steps taken by the college and the Anglican Church towards investigating the matter and sanctioning the perpetrator, we call on the Ghana Education Service to implement the letter and spirit of all regulations formulated for institutions in the sector, especially as relates with School-Based Sexual Harassment. We also demand, from church and religious organizations, to pursue all efforts that are being made to make the churches and affiliate institutions a safe haven for girls.

We call on them to muster the courage to desist from protecting perpetrators by suppressing processes towards the elimination of sexual harassment. We further call on stakeholders and well-meaning individuals, to work together towards ensuring that the girl child learns in a safe environment.

A key aspect of our work at FAWE, has been to empower girls to be assertive and to stand up for their rights in matters such as these. We will intensify these efforts with immediate effect and call for collaboration from partners and relevant stakeholders in this vision of girl child education.

We would like to take this opportunity to assure the young women involved, of our continued support towards their protection. Together, let us eliminate School-Based Sexual Harassment.

Signed: Esi Sutherland-Addy, Chairperson FAWE Ghana Chapter. Issued 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021