MEDIA STATEMENT

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EMBARGO: NONE

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM THE ENFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION

South Africa was one of the countries which signed International Labour Organisation Treaty No 190 into legislation. This was the first international treaty which recognised the right of every person to a world of work free from violence and harassment including gender-based violence (November 2022).

It should therefor be unnecessary to commemorate an additional event: 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence against women and children, from the 25th of November. These rights should already be protected through legislation.

The year 2026 will be remembered for various events, but it will be marred by the death of 13 women in the Ekurhuleni area. We will remember the children who were killed in this period, women and children who were physically assaulted and who faded into the background of ongoing gang violence and other unresolved crimes in the country.

The SAOU will especially remember those teachers who were killed in the line of duty, some of which were shot in schools or on their way to schools. The SAOU will also light a candle for those teachers whose working conditions were so unbearable that their wellness collapsed under the strain of unfair working conditions and harassment. We will commemorate those who were assaulted by learners, defamed, harassed and who disappeared unseen in other headlines

The SAOU reinforces the plea that proper implementation of legislation should form the basis of safe and fair working conditions in the country. The lack of structures where individuals: women and children can report any gender-based violence is still not a priority. The implementation of austerity budgets in provinces, prohibits the establishment of support structures at district and provincial departments. This leaves the victims unprotected and unsafe.

Although various initiatives have been lanuched to vet teachers and education staff to ensure that abuse against learners is restricted, a lack of capacity and financial support, ensures that the Department of Basic Education cannot complete their legal obligations, leaving perpetrators free to continue harassment.

The World Health Organisation pleads for change to eradicate gender-based violence, but until this is accepted as a non-negotiable priority, we as South Africans will continue lip service to a

cause that should be our country's key focus.

The SAOU supports the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence which can only succeed through communities working together, implementing legislation, focussing on providing adequate reporting structures and continued support for victims and rehabilitation for perpetrators will this perpetual cycle of abuse and violence be broken.