

PRESS RELEASE

“Stop Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence (SARV) in Enga”

The gruesome torture of nine women following the death of prominent businessman and owner of Mapai Transport Ltd in Enga, the late Mr. Jacob Luke, is one of the worst human rights violations on record in Papua New Guinea.

The horrific attack resulted in four women losing their lives and five sustaining serious injuries. The survivors have been in the care of our staff and volunteers under the administration of the Catholic Diocese of Wabag. We will continue to offer them vital care until their imminent reintegration when considered safe to do so.

Caritas PNG’s mission is to serve and defend the poor, vulnerable and marginalized; and to promote a commitment to compassion and justice. We, therefore, strongly condemn this heinous act of a few human beings who continue to disturb the peace and harmony of our societies by inflicting unimaginable pain on the vulnerable womenfolk in Enga Province.

SARV is an opportunistic behavior that is largely driven by suspicion, fear, retaliation or pay-back, dishonesty and economic desires, and sadly is typically encouraged by friends and relatives. Though sorcery beliefs and practices are still prevalent in some parts of the country, there has never been any reference to such barbaric act as this recent SARV incident.

The precedent has been set by the police, Catholic Church, and individuals in Wabag with the successful rescue of the five surviving women. We highly commend them for the important work they do despite the logistical challenges and security risks to their own lives. This should serve as an encouragement for the rest of us to nurture such collaboration at all levels and across all sectors.

We also draw attention to recent statements made by the Enga Provincial Police Commander and the Police Commissioner, particularly on their assurance to pursue the perpetrators and have them arrested and prosecuted. We hold them to their word and extend the same call to the courts in Wabag to act promptly in expediting all registered SARV cases so that perpetrators are punished. **The impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of such grievous acts is simply unconscionable!**

Furthermore, we call on the elected Members of Parliament (MPs) of Enga Province and the newly formed government to prioritize the eradication of SARV in Enga Province and Papua New Guinea as a whole. To the MPs of Enga, we encourage you to demonstrate serious leadership in combatting SARV in the province by boldly speaking out against it and adequately resourcing the service delivery mechanism to effectively address the issue. To the government of the day, we challenge you to be more proactive to the eradication of SARV in Enga Province and other and other parts of PNG. To remain silent on the issue of SARV is to implicitly endorse this evil to gradually destroy our families, our homes, our societies and country as a whole.

End//