



NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

(Mobilizing for Women's Rights in Ghana)

Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) calls for the Prosecution of the Obuasi Senior High Technical School Headmaster and Reversal of NDC's Decision

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NETRIGHT Calls for Prosecution of Obuasi Senior High Technical School Headmaster and Urges NDC to Reverse Decision Clearing Him for Party Office

The Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) watched with profound shock the Hotline documentary by Manasseh Azure Awuni, "Inside the Dreaded Headmaster's Bungalow," which contains serious allegations of rape and sexual assault against Mr. Zakaria Abdulai, Headmaster of Obuasi Senior High Technical School (SHTS).

The documentary details an alarming pattern of alleged predatory behaviour. It alleges that Mr. Abdulai lured female students to his bungalow, raped them, forced them to perform sexual acts, and threatened to kill or silence them if they reported him. Interviews with several sources also show that school authorities, the police and certain political actors, some of whom the victims had approached or who were otherwise aware of the alleged conduct, failed to act to protect the girls or to help them seek justice through the legal process.

Rape and sexual assault are serious crimes under Ghanaian law. School authorities, and anyone else who learns of such allegations, have an obligation to report them to the police for investigation. In the case of Obuasi SHTS, this did not happen, and the system failed the girls and their parents.

This case reflects a grave and pervasive national problem. More than 1,000 girls were officially recorded as defiled in 2020 alone, and experts say the true figure is far higher because fear and a culture of silence keep victims from reporting. This silence breeds impunity, especially where perpetrators hold positions of authority and are seen as powerful and well connected, as appears to be the case here.

The NDC's Decision

NETRIGHT is appalled that the Functional Executive Committee (FEC) of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) has cleared Mr. Abdulai to contest the Chairmanship of the Juaben

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Constituency, despite acknowledging that it had viewed the documentary. The party cannot claim “zero tolerance for sexual abuse and harassment” while hiding behind the presumption of innocence and ignoring the disturbing evidence presented.

Mr. Abdulai is entitled to his day in court. But a political party must also be guided by moral and ethical standards that make clear which conduct it will and will not tolerate, whatever the legal threshold. By clearing him for high office, the NDC has signalled that the perceived rights of a powerful member matter more than the protection of vulnerable schoolchildren in its own constituencies. As the documentary made clear, those seeking justice are poor, ordinary people up against a politically connected man.

Our demands

1. **The NDC** must rescind its decision to allow Mr. Abdulai to stand for office, so as not to embolden him or others like him to act with impunity.
2. **The Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES)** must immediately refer the matter to the law enforcement authorities for prosecution. Interdiction is not enough for allegations of this gravity. They must also:
 1. adopt an explicit policy that any adult who has sexual contact with a student will be prosecuted;
 2. end the practice of shielding heads and teachers accused or found guilty of sexual misconduct by transferring them to other schools;
 3. ensure that allegations of sexual misconduct are properly investigated and that those found guilty are barred permanently from working in the education sector;
 4. issue clear guidance prohibiting school authorities from using students as domestic help in their homes; and
 5. publish a report on incidents of sexual misconduct in schools and the actions taken on each.
3. **State bodies mandated to tackle gender-based violence**, namely the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) and the Ghana Police Service, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Domestic Violence Secretariat, and the Legal Aid Commission, must take all necessary action immediately to secure justice for the girls of Obuasi Senior High Technical School and ensure their protection and support.

NETRIGHT will continue to monitor this case and to stand with the students of Obuasi Senior High Technical School and all survivors of sexual violence until justice is done.

On behalf of the Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)



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