



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

**PRESS STATEMENT**

*For immediate release*

The United Methodist Church in Southern Africa (UMCSA) believes that both Church and Society ought to be just and equitable, a space in which both women and men can flourish. Acts of injustice such as gender-based violence and femicide are condemned in the strongest terms. They do not reflect the values of the nations in which we are present, nor do they reflect the worldview of the God we worship and serve. Gender justice includes just and right relationships, mutual respect and accountability, respect for creation and the rights of all people to live life in all its fullness. Gender justice is not just a woman's concern or a concern about women only, but instead, is an issue for everyone, seeking to ensure that both men and women co-exist without any discrimination, undermining or prejudice.

It is against this background that we received the devastating news of the rape and murder of one of our Church Elders, Mrs. Nontsethe, in Mount Ayliff, Eastern Cape. Her Church and community considered her a woman of great virtue, a comforter of the bereaved, a mobiliser for community health, a partner to traditional leadership, and a mother to many. She was a woman of peace and strength. Sadly, she is not the first to die as a result of violence, but one person among many whose life has been unnecessarily cut short, and in such a brutal way.

We call upon the South African Police Service to bring the perpetrators to justice. We look for swift justice in our courts. We call for the community's involvement in tracking down the guilty. We commit ourselves to work with the SAPS, the Courts, and the ecumenical Church to work for a Society in which women and girls can feel safe and flourish.

The Rt Rev Lydia Ntshangwe  
Moderator

The Rev Dr George Machinikowski  
General Secretary

The United Methodist Church is a transnational denomination, present in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.