

PRESS RELEASE

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

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Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution – the Path to DESTRUCTION

Stand Against Legal Exploitation South Africa (“SALE!SA”) gives an unequivocal NO to the Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution in South Africa and raises several worrying issues that are ignored, deceptively portrayed, and obfuscated.

Pretoria, South Africa – SALE!SA is a collective, dedicated to eradicating Sexual Exploitation in South Africa (including Prostitution) and strongly opposes the South African Government’s efforts to Fully Decriminalise not only Prostitution, but a far wider ecosystem of abuse and violence (**SEE ATTACHED SALE!SA MANIFESTO**).

SALE!SA opposes the Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution, based on the lived experiences of Prostituted women, Prostituted Persons, Survivors of the System of Prostitution, and so-called ‘workers’ in the System of Prostitution, as confirmed by independent research evidence (**SEE ATTACHED BRIEF ANALYSIS & SUGGESTED READING**).

We declare that Prostitution is violence against women and Prostituted Persons. We have united with various stakeholders - individuals, organisations and cultures - as well as poor and disadvantaged individuals who live in South Africa. We recognise that the faces of those bought, sold and exploited in the System of Prostitution, are predominantly women, as well as those of marginalised and vulnerable communities.

We take a stand against the following serious issues:

1. Decriminalising (or Legalising) “sex buyers” and therefore fuelling the Demand for Prostitution – “Sex buyers” are at the root of the System of Prostitution. Sex buying is equivalent to treating people as products for consumption. This is not just.
2. Decriminalising (or Legalising) pimps, brothels, brothel-keepers, buyers and others who profit financially from the sexual abuse and exploitation of Prostituted Persons.
3. Violations against human dignity – Prostitution is, in itself, a gross violation of human dignity and is inherently exploitative. Through power imbalance it exploits the vulnerability of those who are desperate to survive and/or provide for their family, and turns especially women into products of Servitude to a system built on Gender Inequality.
4. The culture that promotes commodification and de-valuation of people, to meet the demand for Commercial Sex.
5. Incorrect terminology and use of wording in the media and public spheres, such as “Sex work”. Sex is not “work” and nor should it be labelled as “work”. Our reasoning and view on this, is in line with International Labour Standards. Furthermore, no International Convention uses the term “Sex work”. Victims are not “Prostitutes” nor “Sex workers”. They are Prostituted Persons. We find these terms problematic and deeply

offensive. Sex Trafficking is also not “migration for sex work.” Sex Trafficking includes the abuse of vulnerability, and forcing or coercing a person for the use and exploitation of their body.

6. Law Enforcement Officials and the South African Police Service employees who harass, exploit, arrest and deport migrant Prostituted Persons, instead of offering support and protection.
7. The SA Government moving towards FULLY legalising Prostitution – as the next step for the Government following Full Decriminalisation will then be to regulate the system.

Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution is being promoted, without any robust research on the Prostitution sector – no one has any idea of how many Prostituted Persons are in the sector through so-called “free will” versus those who have been forced, coerced and ultimately Trafficked.

We call on the South African Government and the Media to provide a platform for us to raise these concerns that, if ignored, may translate into the effective muting of a collective voice and will result in the most negative consequential policy decision of the post-1994 era.

“For every woman and girl violently attacked, we reduce our humanity. For every woman forced into unprotected sex because men demand this, we destroy dignity and pride. Every woman who has to sell her life for sex we condemn to a lifetime in prison. For every moment we remain silent, we conspire against our women”.

– Nelson Mandela

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