

Seventh Church Calling for Justice to Prevail

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Churches have been part of the struggle in South Africa but many today do not play that role anymore. Refreshingly, the local Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) church of Bathurst, Eastern Cape, recently hosted a march calling for justice. The march showed solidarity with the victims of sexual abuse across South Africa.

The SDA has involved itself in the fight against sexual abuse and other forms of abuse happening in each community the church is located in. The church leads the fight against drug abuse, helping to raise awareness, and stands against crime. The SDA has been preaching about peace and equality using social media platforms and traditional media like radio, hosting players in public.

One of these sessions has been aired on Umhlobo Wenene. Pastors M. Ntshona and J. Nono who have been campaigning for justice for rape victims supported by different communities in around the province, led the prayers which were also distributed on social media.

On 2 April 2025 in Makana, the SDA and the community led a March around the community themed 'Justice for Cwecwe' after gathering the community in a public field known as Soccer City, next to East Cape Midlands College. From the field, the group marched around the community calling for justice joining countrywide protests around the Cwecwe tragedy.

The Justice for Cwecwe movement took on a national character as different organisations stood and demanded justice to take place and protect children who have become victims of this animosity all over the country. The protest has spanned days by now.

Linda Ndiyana, a member of the SDA and a resident of Bathurst, who was also a part of the march spoke of how impactful the march was. Ndiyana raved about the way the community and the churches came together to support the protest and take a stand against injustice.

The marchers wore black to symbolise grief as Makanda has had many GBV cases. A lot of women have been assaulted, not only Cwecwe, but many others have also died in the hands of men.

Ndiyana concluded that on the day it was evident that as organisations churches and the community at large brought hope in an otherwise hopeless community. One highlight was a man who screamed "Not in my name!", while some swore, they would fight to protect children and women across South Africa.

Bathurst Seventh-Day church's Elder Vivian Mapapu commented that what happened to Cwecwe reminded her of other sexual abuse victims. She said that "If those were marches of the olden days, they would've demonstrated [exactly] how people felt."

The church feels that the changes in the laws of South Africa today favour the perpetrators more than the victims, “we will march till forever, the more we march, the more cases we will receive such as Cwecwe’s,” said Mapapu concluded, adding that South Africa fails both women and children. Mapapu feels that women and children are not free, saying that if the government was firm in defending women and children there would be few killings.

Vuyisanani Kahlana an activist from Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, said that the “justice [system] is failing women and children, and also, there is not much freedom in this country because of the justice system as women are being assaulted and killed.”

Kahlana who is from the Children’s Resource Centre added, “We are marching because we are practicing solidarity and unity. We are stronger when we are together than [when we are] apart, to fight for ourselves as women.” The activist concluded that the outcome of the marches is very positive, saying that women would show their strength.

Women in South Africa continue to face different forms of abuse, more especially sexual abuse and are raped even in their homes. Others are violated in churches and others still in schools. Many women who have experienced abuse are silent as they believe that nothing will be done and do not trust the justice system enough.

In the Eastern Cape, there is a rise in sexual violence, especially in small communities such as Bathurst. Victims of rape keep silent as nothing is done about rapists and other sex offenders who roam the streets freely. The communities pledged to help all the victims going through any form of abuse, to stand by them and fight until justice is served.

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