

Centre for Child Law supports investigations by Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities on deaths of child initiates

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 13 March 2017

The Centre for Child Law (“the Centre”) notes the investigations currently be carried out by the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) on the deaths of initiates, particularly in unlicensed initiation schools. The Centre is encouraged by the CRL’s commitment to ensuring the protection of the lives and best interests of children affected.

The Centre has, for a number of years, been concerned about the deaths of initiates that occur every year and the less than satisfactory legal repercussions for those responsible. The Centre is also concerned about other negative effects of unmonitored and unlawful initiation schools, such as botched circumcisions; assaults on children in initiation schools and alleged kidnapping of children to initiation schools.

The Centre is of the view that in order to ensure that appropriate action is taken, thorough investigations need to be carried out. The CRL’s investigation is the step in the right direction that is urgently needed.

The Centre’s Deputy Director, Karabo Ozah notes the following:

“It should be remembered that the majority of the victims of these unlawful practices are first and foremost children. The Constitution requires us to always have the child’s best interests of paramount importance in matters concerning them. In addition a regional human rights body that holds South Africa to account, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child, has called on the South African government to address the issue of death and mutilation



of boys as a result of botched circumcision. We need to do more to protect children as they go through cultural rites of passage.”

The Centre supports the initiative being taken by the CRL and hopes that it will result in recommendations that will ensure that initiation schools are operated in a manner that respects the Constitutional rights of children and the protective measures set out in the Children’s Act 38 of 2005.

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