

# 'GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ALSO RIFE IN CHURCHES'

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Mbabane

**THE shocking increase in the number of gender based violence (GBV) cases reported in local media has propelled the Anglican Church to call for immediate and decisive action against perpetrators of violence.**

Anglican Bishop, Reverend Ellinah Wamukoya has urged all church leaders to be bold and discipline perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence.

She said among those involved, were lay and ordained ministers.

Wamukoya, who is the Anglican Bishop in Eswatini made the disclosure at All Saints Cathedral in Mbabane during the pledge of the Anglican Church to support the 16 days of activism campaign against gender based violence in the country yesterday.

Gender based violence campaigns run every year from November 25.

She warned that those aware of such abuse and remain silent were accomplices.

She said churches have often been part of the problem.

"Ordained ministers and bishops have been perpetrators of abuse in their homes and in



**SPEAK OUT: Anglican Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya lights a candle assisted by Thembayena Dlamini during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence awareness at the church yesterday. (Pics: Simon Shabangu)**

their respective churches," she said further requesting church and family members to worry about such things.

*"Asekume lokubita kukhohlakala ngetibi telisontfo nobe tibi tendlu,"* she said.

However, she did not go into detail on specific incidents of abuse involving church leaders that had been uncovered, but bemoaned the fact that the church had remained silent about gender based violence.

Wamukoya said despite the Kingdom of Eswatini having an excellent Constitution, its people continued to live in one of the most unjust and violent countries in the world.

"Similarly, we (the church)

have a set of pastoral standards to which every licenced cleric and lay minister subscribes," she added.

The Anglican Church, she said, would explore ways in which it could work against gender-based violence and become a more "loving community."

She said the church during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence would be looking at opportunities for training the gatherings and exploring on how churches could become "safe places", especially during preparations for this year's 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence.