

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

ON

### **MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT MOBILE MONEY AGENTS FROM ABDUCTION AND OTHER CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES**

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to issue a ministerial statement on the matter of urgent public importance raised by Mr Anthony C. Mumba, Hon. Member of Parliament for Kantanshi Constituency, on measures being taken to protect mobile money agents from abduction and other criminal activities.

Madam Speaker, the Government has noted, with great concern, isolated cases of attacks by criminals allegedly targeting persons operating in the mobile service sub-sector and stealing their property in various parts of the country.

Madam Speaker, since the first case of a suspected abduction was reported on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, the Zambia Police Service has recorded a total of six reports of suspected abductions. After investigations, four of the reports were identified as false alarms.

Madam Speaker, as I share the details of the specific reports recorded by the Zambia Police Service, I am optimistic that justice will prevail.

Madam Speaker, on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, the Zambia Police Service received a report of an alleged abduction involving a twenty-two year old female named Pamela Chisupa. The brief facts of the matter are that on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, Pamela Chisupa went missing and is believed to have left her mobile money booth near Shoprite Store on Cairo Road in the Lusaka Central Business District in the company of two men.

Madam Speaker, Ms Chisupa is alleged to have been abducted after her captors demanded money from her relatives for her release. A video went viral on social media showing a lady identified as Pamela Chisupa being hit with what appeared to be a metal rod in her face while she was pleading for her life.

Madam Speaker, this type of crime is alien to our country. The Zambia Police Service immediately instituted investigations and eight suspects were arrested. As investigations were going on, four of the suspects were released as they could not be linked to the alleged crime.

Madam Speaker, among the four suspects, one was charged for theft of the handset that was used to send the first video that went viral showing the victim on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2022. The other two were charged for theft in connection with one of the handsets belonging to Pamela Chisupa believed to have been in her possession at the time of her alleged abduction. The fourth suspect was charged for stealing the handset that was used to send the second video of the victim that went viral on social media. All the suspects are appearing in the courts of law.

Madam Speaker, in another incident on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, a twenty-two year old male victim by the name of Mr Emmanuel Nyirenda was found dead. Brief facts of the case are that the victim was allegedly enticed to conduct a transaction away from his booth where he was later killed. The victim's trading place was located in Dragon area in Chipata District of the Eastern Province. Investigations into the matter have been instituted and two suspects have since been arrested and charged for the offence of murder. The duo will appear in the court of law soon.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that some unscrupulous members of the public have taken advantage of the reported incidents of attacks allegedly targeted at mobile money operators by faking their own abductions.

Madam Speaker, on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, a male person of Lusaka reported that his thirty-four year old nephew was travelling from Kashikishi to Lusaka and along the way, near the Heroes Stadium, was abducted and that the alleged abductors were demanding K5,000 for his release. Upon investigations, it was discovered that the report was false. The Zambia Police Service has since charged the man for giving false information to a public officer.

Madam Speaker, on the same date, another report was lodged that a female student, aged twenty-three years, of Eden University was abducted near the university. It was, however, established

that the student was not abducted, but detained at the Lusaka Central Police Station for other offences. She has since been released on police bond.

Madam Speaker, further, a seventy-one year old female person of Lusaka reported on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, that her female employee was abducted and robbed of K6,500 by unknown people. Investigations, however, revealed that her employee faked the abduction and stole the money. She has since been charged with theft by servant.

Madam Speaker, on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2022, three women reported to have been robbed and raped while on a bus and later dumped in Chibolya Compound in Lusaka. Their video went viral on social media and was also broadcast on a named television channel. Investigations into the matter revealed that the three women had fabricated their own abduction. They have since been charged with the offence of giving false information to a public officer and are appearing before the courts of law in Lusaka.

Madam Speaker, I wish to warn all those spreading falsehoods that the law is very clear when it comes to giving false information to a public officer. Giving false information to a public officer is a criminal offence and is punishable by law. The Government will not tolerate people giving false information for the purposes of extortion or alarming the nation.

Madam Speaker, to curb these criminal acts and protect life and property of mobile money agents, the following are some of the measures being implemented by the Zambia Police Service:

- (a) sensitisation of mobile money operators on timely closure of their businesses;
- (b) sensitisation of mobile money operators on security alertness;
- (c) collaboration with the Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority (ZICTA) and mobile money service providers on awareness raising and tracking mechanisms; and

(d) enhanced intelligence information gathering.

Madam Speaker, the New Dawn Government is anchored on law and order to foster socio-economic development. Crime has devastating consequences and crime against life violates the sanctity of life and robs the nation of hard-working individuals.

Madam Speaker, let me urge the general citizenry to report any suspicious persons to law enforcement agencies. Together, we can make Zambia a crime free country.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.