

**JUSTICE** | 11 girls sue government

# Rape victims demand cases probed afresh

Lawyers and NGO cry foul over police response to sexual assault on minors and legal process

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**E**leven victims of sexual violence have sued the government over violation of their constitutional rights.

A team of lawyers, led by Mr Muthani Thiakolu, lodged the accusations on behalf of the girls and Ripples International, a rights organisation, at the High Court in Meru yesterday, as the world marked the International Day of the Girl Child.

The government has 14 days to respond before the case is heard.

The girls have chosen not to ask for monetary compensation but are demanding that the police be ordered to investigate their complaints and bring the culprits to book.

They are also asking for a public declaration that the police mishandled their cases, violating their constitutional right to equality, security, dignity, access to justice and children's rights.

Ms Mercy Chidi, founder and director of Ripples International said in many sexual violence cases, the police did not take the girls seriously.

"Many of them (police) say the girls consented to the sex-

ual act. Or maybe they asked for it. They ask for evidence or a witness to confirm the offence," Ms Chidi said.

Even when a case is opened, she added, the entire legal process is often mishandled.

"The police hardly visit the scene of crime. Most of the time they take the exhibit but never bring it in court. So it almost becomes impossible for justice to be done," she explained.

Speaking after matching to the Meru Law Courts grounds, Mr Thiakolu also agreed that many reported cases were not properly investigated.

"In such cases, the police did not carry out proper investigations. Thus the petitioners, who are minors, have their rights violated," said Mr Thiakolu.

He raised concern that failure by the police to investigate the cases would likely result into the creation of a climate of tolerance for defilement.

## CASE EXAMPLE

### Girl's trauma

One of the girls recounted how her uncle and father defiled her on three separate occasions when she was 8 years old.

A few days later her teacher noticed that something was wrong and the child was taken to hospital and police station before seeking refuge at a shelter.

But two years later, her defilers are still free and her case has stalled

**Judge cheats death after**