

Outrage and alarm at revelations of sexual, physical and emotional abuse

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The South African Secular Society (SASS) expresses its outrage and alarm at revelations of sexual, physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by members of yet another religious organisation.

A recent online article has brought to light the abuse of an appalling number of members of a secretive Christian “church” named the Two-by-Twos. Most of the victims are children, and the abuse has been going on in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and elsewhere for decades.

SASS calls on the Commission for the Promotion & Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious & Linguistic Communities (the CRL Rights Commission) to hold an enquiry into the activities of this church, amid the allegations of harm perpetrated on young South African victims.

SASS points out that the South African Bill of Rights protects all citizens who wish to join religious organisations to practice their religion.

However, the Constitution also protects the human dignity and security of the person of all who live in South Africa. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights specifically states that children must be protected from maltreatment and abuse.

Furthermore, the Children's Act, 2005, states: Every child has the right not to be subjected to social, cultural and religious practices which are detrimental to his or her well-being.

The Commission was established to protect and promote the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities. However, the Commission also acknowledges its responsibilities in protecting the rights of members of cultural and religious communities.

Commissioners work with key stakeholders as well as affected families to address the various religious and cultural issues, for example, the well-being of young initiates in initiation practices and the management of the practice of ukuhlolwa / virginity testing.

It was also the body that addressed the needs of the victims of Kwa Sizabantu Mission, and has expressed support for victims of abuse in high-profile cases such as that of Pastor Timothy Omotoso.

Indeed, the Commission is working to establish and approve a Peer Review Council intended to address the conduct of some religious leaders who continue to abuse their followers.

The SA Secular Society believes that an inquiry into the affairs and activities of this secretive and abusive sect falls directly under the remit of the Commission, and it urges the Commission to investigate the Two by Two Church as soon as possible.

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