

## PRESS RELEASE

### *Eviction of a transgender woman from a Johannesburg shelter*

South Africa, 23 February 2017

It has come to the attention of Irantí-Org that a victim of sexual violence was allegedly evicted from a women's shelter in Braamfontein, due to her identity as a transgender woman.

The victim reached out to Irantí-Org after overhearing a discussion by staff members at the shelter about whether or not to allow her to remain at the shelter as a transgender woman. Having laid a formal grievance with the organisation relating to the discussion around her identity and invasion of privacy, the victim was given a meeting time which was subsequently cancelled and thereafter was faced with accusations of inappropriate behaviour within the shelter space.

On 7 February 2016, she reached out to Irantí-Org, having been instructed to leave the shelter. The woman was provided with no safe alternative accommodation within the Johannesburg area. It has been alleged through correspondence from the Department of Community Safety that on the advice of the Commission for Gender Equality, they evicted the victim, “based on gender as our shelter is for women.”

We are troubled by such an allegation as the CGE publicly states that their “concern is to ensure that difference is not used to discriminate against any group or individual” ([Commission for Gender Equality FAQs](#)). We will continue to work toward finding safe and secure accommodation for the victim in question, who has been destitute for 16 days and counting.

We note with sadness the constant and consistent misgendering of this woman by members of the shelter, the Victim Empowerment Programme and the Department of Social Development in our Email correspondence with these parties dating back to our first interaction with the victim, which typifies a lack of respect for, and understanding of, the issues facing transgender and gender-diverse South Africans and highlights the need for sensitivity training and education on these matters within the civil service.

We as Irantí-Org call for accommodation and shelter which respects the identity of transgender and gender diverse victims to be provided, as well as a revision of South Africa's policy on shelters, noting that the “Minimum standards on shelters for abused women” document ([South African government](#)) makes no mention or concession toward transgender or gender-diverse persons.

We demand a formal apology from the parties involved for the repeated misgendering of and distress caused to this woman, and will consider seeking damages for her mistreatment, apparent discrimination and psychological trauma from the Department of Social Development.

Iranti-Org will continue to fight for the constitutional rights to dignity and protection from discrimination based on gender and sexuality, as ought to be afforded to all South Africans and as entrenched in our Constitution.

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