



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME

PROGRAMA MONITORIZASAUN BA SISTEMA JUDISIÁRIU

Press Release

21 January 2014

JSMP expresses concern regarding the statement made by the Vice Minister of Education, Virgílio Smith

In relation to the case involving the founder of the *Colégio São Miguel* (CSM) School, which has been widely distributed through the social network of Facebook, on 9 January 2014 the Vice Minister of Education, Virgílio Smith, stated that he considers this case to be unexceptional. He said “Are you a woman or a man? Men are men. Only homosexuals don’t like such things ...” (*Timor Post, Edition: 09/01/2014*)

“JSMP is concerned with the statement of the Vice Minister of Education, which gives approval for a teacher, who is an educator, to commit sexual abuse against his student. As a person who holds an important post in the field of education he should have issued a strong admonishment to the teacher in question who committed the abuse against his student, rather than doing the opposite and issuing a statement that the case in question is unexceptional. In fact, as educators, teachers have an obligation to protect their students from any kind of abuse, not to violate their rights”, said the Executive Director of JSMP, Luis de Oliveira Sampaio.

JSMP court monitoring has identified that there are many cases of sexual abuse involving teachers and their young students. For example, on 3 July 2013 the Dili District Court sentenced a teacher to 16 years imprisonment for raping his student (JSMP Press Release, dated 4 July 2013, www.jsmp.tl/komunikadu-imprensa-2013/). In addition, on 25 July 2013 the Dili District Court sentenced a teacher to 9 years imprisonment for committing sexual abuse against his student.

JSMP notes that the sexual abuse of a minor is a serious crime because it violates the rights of the child and totally destroys his/her future. Crimes like this are very traumatic for the child because they are abused by people who they trust and who are supposed to protect them.

"We cannot forget that children are the future of the nation. Therefore, JSMP urges the State, namely the relevant institutions, and the education sector in particular, to protect children from any crime that will impact on their future."

The statement of the Vice Minister of Education is extremely counterproductive to the efforts and determination displayed by all of the components of the nation to invest in education and the future of the nation of Timor-Leste.

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