

The fight against Gender-based violence shouldn't be one-sided

On November 25, I was invited by the National Girls Summit to the official launch of the 16 Days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as we marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.

The global orange campaign was started 34 years ago by activists at the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Jersey, USA, with the core objective of syncing violence against girls and women with broader human rights observation.

During a networking session at the event, a very prominent chief executive shared her terrifying experience with me. She asked if I ever noticed that we run the 16 Days campaign when excluding boys and men.

"We give a lot of attention to women's experiences, but I am a living testimony of GBV. My biological father was killed in cold blood because of gender-based violence," she said. "In a society where women are the sole holders of the 'victim's card', to date, my father has never received justice, even after 15 years."

In the same week, a prominent journalist, through his official X handle, claimed he was a victim of gender-based violence.

"I am part of the unreported statistics of men who experience domestic violence from partners with uncontrolled anger issues, but because we are men in the corporate world, we stay silent, show up every day," he posted.

His claims were swiftly denied by his estranged wife, who herself posted that she

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was, in fact, the victim of gender-based violence. As to who is right or wrong in their marriage might never be known to the outside world.

And as to whether the journalist is only buying into public sympathy or not, one thing remains true; there are unreported statistics of men who experience domestic violence from their partners.

According to statistics from the Mankind Initiative Organisation in the UK, "One in 15 men (6.5 percent) said they were a victim of domestic abuse in 2024/2025 (1.5 million men). The figures for women were 9.1 percent and 2.2 million respectively. Men consist of 41 percent of all victims."

The systematic feminisation of GBV is becoming an entrenched culture in our public institutions, development agencies and multilateral bodies such as the European Union, the Commonwealth, the African Union and

the United Nations.

Society has successfully centred the GBV fight around the female gender alone, thus ignoring the male gender.

Society needs to understand that boys and men are human beings and potential victims of injustices, social stigma, inequities and inequalities.

Men equally feel pain, misery, despair and all emotional and physical agony that come with human nature. Unfortunately, on so many occasions, men have been portrayed as the most insensitive and evil.

While there are countless cases of boys and men violently mistreating girls and women, the reverse is also true; history has shown many convicted cases of prominent men killed by their wives.

I don't discredit or dismiss the efforts of society towards ending violence against girls and women, but the systematic practice of tailoring the GBV fight as a female issue is not sustainable in the broader human rights approach and observations.

It's time to demystify one gender sided efforts in the fight against gender-based violence with inter gender open dialogues, mindset change, empowerment of the boy child through financing, strategies and inclusive policies.

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