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PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN HAITI - Videotaped Gang Rape sparks debate on sexual violence in Petionville, Haiti.

Women and children are falling to sexual predators worldwide, especially in the Caribbean Islands. On January 4th, 2017, an outrage in Haiti, as the latest tragedy of a 16-year-old female was raped and the video of the heinous act was spread worldwide via Internet. Dozen of male-suspects aged 16 to 44 were arrested on Thursday January 26, 2017. However, the five men who actually raped the young girl still remain at large. According to several Haitian news outlets, two senators and the Port-au-Prince prosecutor's office have offered a reward equivalent to \$7,500.00 USD for information leading to the arrest of the alleged rapists.

The Overseas Security Advisory Council reported that sexual crimes in Haiti have become a phenomenon and crime statistics are woefully under documented by the Haitian National Police. Like many Caribbean countries, in Haiti sexual violence is often stigmatized and being raped is considered shameful. These aforementioned factors cause many victims to find themselves abandoned by family members and overlooked by law enforcement. In addition, reporting rape to the police in Haiti remains a very difficult and convoluted process. Thus, it contributes to countless cases being underreported.

In 2012, the human rights section of the United Nations peacekeeping mission reported that violence against women including rape is a systemic problem in Haiti.

While Haiti is still recovering from the deadly impact of the 2016 Hurricane Matthew, many reports suggested an increase of risk factors related to sexual abuse in the affected regions.

The epidemic of child sexual abuse has sparked the attention of Word and Action, Inc. (W&A) to lead the conversation engaging local/state-wide government agencies and stakeholders to create preventive laws and measures in order to protect Haiti's vulnerable children.

W&A board members have already reached out to several Haitian lawmakers and will continue to push for concrete actions regarding this important issue. We are also working on a legislature with our legal advisors while continuing to advocate for children. With the support of concerned lawmakers, W&A hopes to submit its proposal to both Haitian legislative chambers.

Today, we are urging our local/state-wide community members to reach out to Haitian government officials and ask them to take concrete action. This disconcerting problem is about saving children's lives, hence, should not be taken lightly. It is time for their voice to be heard and to have preventive measures to protect the future generation against sexual predators.

Our prayers and hearts go out to the victim and her family. W&A encourages the Haitian justice department to diligently take legal steps toward neutralizing those criminal while protecting that 16-year-old victim and her family. We hope that justice will be served swiftly.

Should you like to support Word and Action, Inc. in bringing awareness to sexual violence on children please visit [www.WordAndAction.org](http://www.WordAndAction.org)

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