

**NAIROBI, June 16, 2009 ( CISA) -A statement issued today by Comboni missionary Fr. Renato Kizito Sesana in response to a news report Monday accusing him of sexual misconduct:**

I have been absent from Kenya since the beginning of January. I returned yesterday morning because I was informed about what was happening and I wanted to face the situation.

Let me state very clearly. I have not sodomized any child. I am ready to face anybody who can prove the opposite.

Yesterday as soon as I was back in the country I went to Kilimani CID office to record a statement, and to deposit an affidavit in which a young man has sworn that he was offered a very substantial amount of money to bring false accusations of sexual nature against me, and when he refused to take part in the scheme, he received threats.

I am aware that some criminals do use such allegations of sexual offences to instill fear in lay and religious people working with young people, usually with the intention of extorting money. I am not ready to fall into this trap.

This particular story started last October. An anonymous email was sent out, purportedly depicting me naked with a young adult – it is impossible to say if it was a man or a woman. Those pictures were clearly doctored using photo editing software, and so I did not accord them much importance.

Unfortunately the situation deteriorated when I left the country for some rest. Little by little, I discovered that the real issue was not a simple case of attempted defamation, but it was a much bigger plan to take over the properties that Koinonia has built over the years with the help of an Italian NGO called Amani. I had never considered the monetary value of the facilities and resources we have built for the direct and indirect benefit of the destitute children under our care, but now the properties are estimated at a commercial value of about three million euros, which is more than three billion Kenya shillings.

I believe that these properties are the real target of the people behind these accusations. These were people who enjoyed my confidence, and had access to all the documents of Koinonia, and were therefore aware of its commercial value. They came very close to transferring all the properties to their names, in fact the title deeds of our properties have been removed from my office, but we reacted in a legal manner and they are no longer among the Trustees of Kononia. In fact, we have secured the properties safely in the hands of the Koinonia Community Trust.

We have more people who are ready to testify that they were bribed, threatened or tortured in order to testify falsely against me. At the moment they are scared, but in due course they will file their personal affidavits. One of them was ready to be here today, but I do not act like the other party and I do not want him or them to be traumatized for the rest of their lives. They will be undergo proper interrogation by the police, and in case of anything they will appear in court.

I wonder whether those who are making allegations of sexual assault and indecent conduct have ever lodged a complaint with the police, accompanied with the relevant evidence.

I am surprised by the unprofessional way in which KTN journalists acted when they approached me yesterday. They only identified themselves verbally - without a press card - and their cameras and the car they were using were not marked. It was at six o'clock in the evening, and I had not rested after a long flight the previous night. When I told them I was tired and needed some rest, they switched on their cameras and started recording. I did not see the news report that was aired on KTN last night, but according to expert friends who watched it, it does not comply with minimal professional and ethical standards.

I have been in this country for more than 21 years, I have started media institutions like *New People* and *Radio Waumini*, and I have taken care of thousands of Kenyan children, yet I was not given a fair chance to clear myself from these terrible accusations. Moreover, Kenya has a police force. The policemen in Riruta would have been able to provide interesting records about the two characters who appeared in yesterday's news report. There is also a Children's Officer who regularly visits Koinonia's Kivuli Centre, and probably knows more about what is going on than I do. Why wasn't she interviewed?

Today we celebrate the Day of the African Child. Koinonia and its various institutions currently have about 250 former street children under their care, day and night, and there are hundreds more we assist while they remain living with their families. I do not ask for privileged treatment, but I believe I could have justice through the normal channels. I am afraid this sinister plot to take over the properties of Koinonia could hurt the children, and I appeal to the Kenya authorities and Kenyan citizens to continue to support the good work done by our social workers in all our children's home.

If the accusations against me are true I am willing to face the full face of the law, and if the accusations are found to be false, those who have originated and stage-managed them should equally be prepared to face the law. Towards this end, I have recorded a statement with the Kilimani Police.

**Signed**

**Fr. Renato Kizito Sesana, Nairobi, 16 June 2009**