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Open letter to the Honourable Minister Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

Honourable Minister,

Tackling Elder Abuse during and beyond confinement

First of all, we congratulate you for the measures your Ministry has been undertaking to assist the needy and particularly older persons at a time when we are going through difficult and very trying challenges under COVID 19 attack.

The 7 of April is World Health Day to be marked under a Damocles sword as close to 1 billion people are in obligatory or self-imposed or solitary confinement. In Mauritius the whole population, except for those of our fellow citizens working in essential services, are confined at home, in residential care homes, and in quarantine centers.

We are appreciative of the measures taken by Government to protect people, to educate them, and mitigate transmission. The story of the old couple residing in Phoenix, an older man with disabilities following two strokes and his equally older wife staying without food for four days, is perhaps one of many stories going untold for quite some time.

This one case would not be classified as one of **ageism** but this has triggered in many of us a special focus on older men and older women in similar situations and in abusive relationship. The cadres of your Ministry, the officers of the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs of whom DIS-MOI have, over the years, conducted sensitization programmes on Elderly Abuse and Ageism because Elderly Abuse and Ageism are a recognized fact of our society.



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As you aware Elder Abuse as well as Ageism is a tough hydra taking different aspects – physical, verbal, ‘uncare’, theft, sexual abuse, abuse of trust in own homes, residential care homes, health care systems, or in public. Older people were not made to align separately in supermarkets as a matter of respect to their rights.

Within the ambit of the Protection of Elderly Persons Act 2005, the Monitoring Committee and the Elderly Persons’ Protection Unit have over time constructed a list of potential risk cases which would require monitoring and follow up.

Just as the officers of the Ministry are braced for house to house remittance of pensions to older persons in their residence, we are making a solemn request for visits by officers of the Ministry to households where there would be suspected cases of Elder Abuse. This initiative will go far in alleviating the stress and boosting the morale of many.

Thank you for consideration of our letter.

Vijay Naraidoo, Secretary-General of DIS-MOI

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