

Virginity testing of Zulu girls 'demeaning'

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DURBAN: The Commission for Gender Equality has slammed the virginity testing of Zulu maidens which is taking place ahead of the Reed Dance at the weekend, saying the practice is "demeaning."

Thousands of girls are undergoing testing in various villages in preparation for the ceremony. It takes place at King Goodwill Zwelithini's eNyokeni Palace in Nongoma.

Nomagugu Ngobese, of the Nomkhubulwane cultural ensemble responsible for virginity testing, said more than 3 000 maidens had been tested in greater Pietermaritzburg so far.

However, the commission, a chapter nine institution, has called the practice an infringement of people's dignity.

"It is in this light that the commission views virginity testing as an infringement not only on those who may not support the practice but also the right to choice itself," spokesman Javu Baloyi said.

His organisation had spelt out this position in workshops in parts of KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and North West.

"It is the view of the commission that whatever purpose might have been previously served by this practice in its current form, it is at loggerheads with various principles of the constitution," he said.

"The testing of girl children places those who may have been considered virgins or those who may have refused to partake in the ceremony as well as those may have failed to prove their virginity in a vulnerable, demeaning and complicated position.

"The stigma attach to failing the test for whatever reason has deep psychological as well as social ramifications for girls who emerge without a certificate that proves their virginity," said Baloyi.