



AI Index: AFR 36/5808/2017
3 March 2017

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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 3: INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY PERSONS WITH ALBINISM

UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-fourth session
27 February-24 March 2017

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the findings of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism on her visit to Malawi in 2016.

Between December 2014 and February 2017, Amnesty International documented the killing of 20 individuals with albinism and the abduction of five others whose whereabouts remain unknown. The organization has also documented at least 112 crimes against persons with albinism until February 2017, including attempted abductions and grave robberies. It is believed that the real numbers could be higher.

The poverty facing communities and the belief that the body parts of people with albinism can be sold for large sums of money to practitioners of traditional medicine contributes to the targeting of this population group. Women with albinism are also at risk of sexual violence on the basis of harmful cultural beliefs that having sexual intercourse with such women can cure a man of HIV/AIDS.

Societal misunderstandings of albinism have led to a lifetime of fear, marginalization and structural denial of economic, social and cultural rights for people with albinism. They have also resulted in barriers to full enjoyment of the rights to education, work and adequate standard of living. Students are withdrawn from schools for their safety. Many teachers lack knowledge of the medical condition affecting the vision of people with albinism which requires reading glasses and large font textbooks.

Amnesty International welcomes the steps taken by the government of Malawi to amend laws, in particular the Penal Code and the Anatomy Act which negatively affected people with albinism and its support for the office of the Special Legal Counsel and initiatives to raise awareness about albinism including condemnation of the attacks.

Perpetrators of crimes against people with albinism include individuals, criminal gangs and family members. So far, Amnesty International is aware that 35 individuals have been prosecuted and 43 remain under investigation for trespassing graves, graveyard robberies, kidnapping and abductions.

What non-legal measures should the government prioritize to better protect the rights of people with albinism?

Thank you.