

URGENT ACTION

PERSONS WITH ALBINISM RISK FURTHER ATTACKS

A teenage boy with albinism from Malawi who went missing on 24 April has been found dead in Mozambique with his hands and feet chopped off. Thousands of people with albinism live in constant fear of being abducted or killed in Malawi, where their body parts are being sold for use in ritual purposes.

David Fletcher, a teenage boy with albinism, had gone to watch a football match at Tete football ground in Nambirikira village, in Malawi, on 24 April when he went missing. He was last seen in the company of a colleague, who is still missing. His remains have been found in Mozambique with his hands and feet chopped off. It is reported that David was sold to a traditional healer in Mozambique. Two men have been arrested and are in police custody in connection with his killing.

Thousands of **people with albinism** live in constant fear of being abducted or killed in Malawi, where their body parts are being sold for use in ritual purposes. Ritual killings of people with albinism are influenced by superstitions and myths that their bones or body parts can bring riches. At least 14 people with albinism are known to have been killed in Malawi since December 2014, while five others have been abducted during the same period and their fate and whereabouts remain unknown. At least 69 other crimes against people with albinism, including attempted abductions and opening up of graves in search of bones of dead people with albinism, have been reported between December 2014 and May 2016.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to prioritise providing effective protection for people with albinism and ensure their right to life and personal security, in accordance with Malawi's international human rights obligations and commitments;
- Calling for those suspected to be responsible for the killing of David Fletcher and for crimes against people with albinism, including abductions and killings, to be brought to justice through trials that meet international standards of fairness;
- Expressing concern over the safety and security of people with albinism in Malawi following high reports of killings, abductions and attempted abductions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 JUNE 2016 TO:

President of the Republic of Malawi
His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika
Office of the President and Cabinet
Private Bag 301
Capital City
Lilongwe 3
Malawi
Fax: +265 1 773 954/ 789 273
Salutation: Your Excellency

Inspector General of Police
Mr Lextam Kachama
National Police Headquarters
Private Bag 305
Capital City
Lilongwe 3
Malawi
Salutation: Dear Sir

And copies to:
The President
Bonface Massah
Association of People with Albinism
c/o FEDOMA
Private Bag 797
Limbe, Blantyre
Malawi
Email:
albinismassociationmw@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 51/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr36/3925/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Albinism is a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition present at birth. Both parents must carry the gene for it to be passed on, even if they do not have albinism themselves. The condition is found in both genders, regardless of ethnicity and in all countries of the world. Albinism results in a lack of pigmentation (melanin) in the hair, skin and eyes, causing vulnerability to the sun and bright light. As a result, almost all people with albinism are visually impaired and are prone to developing skin cancer. There is no cure for the absence of melanin.

The majority of people with albinism (PWA) in Malawi live in rural areas in extreme poverty. Erroneous beliefs and superstitions have put the safety and lives of people with albinism at risk, including from killings, abductions, and mutilations. Ritual killings of people with albinism are influenced by superstitions and myths that their bones or body parts can bring riches. The few perpetrators who have been arrested in the past have either been acquitted or given light sentences. The government has failed to implement programmes to change societal attitudes about albinism and people with albinism continue to be at risk of attacks, while some children have been abducted and sold by family members. As a result families have withdrawn children from schools for fear of attacks. Some people with albinism have moved to urban areas for safety.

Malawian President Arthur Peter Mutharika issued a statement on 19 March 2015 condemning attacks on people with albinism, and called on police to arrest perpetrators and provide protection to people at risk of attack. Although some arrests were made, concerns remain about the inadequacy of police investigations and some perpetrators getting light sentences.

A colleague last seen with David Fletcher, is still missing. The colleague does not have albinism.

The decomposing body of a 21 year old woman with albinism, Enelesi Nkhata, was found in a shallow grave by farmers at Mpale Estate on 14 April. Both arms and legs were cut off and she had a stab wound to the chest. She was tricked by her relative into believing that he had found her a job in Madisi, Dowa. Enelesi went missing a few days before 14 April. At least 10 men, including some businessmen, were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the killing of Enelesi. The relative, Gerald Phiri, pleaded guilty to the charge of "conspiracy to commit a felony" and "abduction in order to murder" under Sections 404 and 261 of the Penal Code; and was sentenced to 5 and 12 years imprisonment for each charge respectively.

A group of persons broke into the house where two year-old Whitney Chilumpha was sleeping with her mother in Chiziya village, Kasungu district on 3 April and took the child. The case was reported to the police. Whitney's skull, some teeth and clothes were found on 13 April. Her mother confirmed that those were the clothes the girl had on the night she went missing.

A nine-year-old boy with albinism, Harry Mokoshoni, was abducted on the night of 26 February by a group of unidentified men who broke into his family's home. The men threatened his mother and injured her as they took the boy away. His head was discovered in a neighbouring village on 3 March. Among those arrested are his uncle and a man previously arrested and convicted in 2015 for possession of bones of a person with albinism and fined 20,000 Malawian Kwacha (about US\$30).

Eunice Phiri, a 53 year old woman with albinism, was tricked by three men, including her brother, on 23 January to accompany them on a trip to Zambia. Eunice Phiri's body was found by a herdsman on 28 January with her arms chopped off in Kasungu National Park.

Name: People with albinism in Malawi

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 51/16 Index: AFR 36/3949/2016 Issue Date: 4 May 2016