Albino Human Rights Violations in Africa: Gravity of the Problem , and Efforts made to face up to it

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مستخلص:

كما يشير عنوانها (إنتهاكات حقوق المُهق في أفريقيا: خطورة المشكلة والجهود الرامية إلى مواجهتها), تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الأضواء على مشكلة طالما أبقتها وسائل الإعلام والحكومات في خانة المسكوت عنه حتى كاد أن يطويها النسيان . والمُهق هم من نُطلق عليهم في السودان إسم «أولاد الحور». المهّق حالة وراثية نادرة الحدوث غير مُعدية تطال حوالى واحد من بين كل عشرين ألف مولود. ولإن كانت هذه الظاهرة شائعة في سائر أنحاء العالم, فأنها أكثر شيوعاً في أفريقيا جنوب الصحراء. تشيع في بعض دول أفريقيا سيما تنزانيا وملاوي وإلى حد ما كينيا وجنوب أفريقيا أساطير حول المُهق , بعضها يصفهم بأنهم من سلالة الجن وبعضها ينعتهم بأنهم نذير شؤم , والبعض الآخر ينحو منحاً يجعل المُهق أهدافاً للقتل البشع بل وأكل لحومهم إعتقاداً بأن ذلك يجلب الثروة . وللمهّق من الفتيات نصيب أبشع, حيث يشيع إعتقاد ساذج وجائر بأن مضاجعتهن تشفي الرجال من مرضى نقص المناعة/الايدز!!!!, فضلاً عما يطال الجنسين من المُهق من إنتهاكاتٍ لحقوقهم الأخرى تستعرضها هذ الورقة. يتعرض المُهق للعديد من المشاكل الصحية التي تتراوح ما بين صعوبة الرؤية والحساسية المفرطة لأشعة الشمس التي تخلف بثوراً على أجسامهم قد تتطور إلى نوعٍ من سرطان الجلد الذي قد يؤدي بحياتهم في سنٍ باكرة , حيث تقدر بعض الإحصائيات بأن 98% من المُهق نادراً ما يبقون على قيد الحياة بعد سن الإربعين. وقد ظلت مشكلة المُهق في أفريقيا في طي النسيان حتى مطلع ثمانيات القرن الماضي نتيجةٍ لعوامل عُدة أهمها عدم قيام القائمين على الأمر من أهل الطب بإطلاق صافرة الإنذار ولفت الأنظار لحجم معاناة المُهق في حينها, إلى جانب تأخر أهل حقوق الإنسان في تصنيف المُهق ضمن فئة أصحاب الإحتياجات الخاصة وضمن الأقليات حتى يتسني إدراجها تحت مظلة المجاميع البشرية الواجب خصها بالحماية القانونية في التشريعات الوطنية والدولية. تستعرض هذه الورقة أيضاً حجم المعاناة التي يتعرض لها المُهق في عددٍ من الدول الأفريقية , إلى جانب الجهود المبذولة على المستويين الوطني والدولي لحماية حقوقهم الإنسانية. وفي هذا الخصوص تسلط الورقة الضؤ على الجهود التي تضطلع بها الأمم المتحدة والإتحاد الأفريقي والإتحاد الأوروبي , إلى جانب المنظمات غير الحكومية الوطنية والدولية, وفي مقدمتها منظمة العفو الدولية.وتختم الورقة بإقتراح بعض الإجراءات التي ينبغي على الدول القيام بها لضمان تمتع المُهق بحقوق الإنسان التي تكفلها لهم الشرائع السماوية والتشريعات الوطنية والدولية, ومن أهم هذه الإجراءات , إلى جانب تشريعات الحماية , إدراج حقوق المُهق ضمن التشريعات التي توجب خصهم بالتمييز الإيجابي عند تخصيص الوظائف لأصحاب الإحتياجات الخاصة.

Introduction:

Albinism is a non-contagious, genetically inherited condition which is very rare and, worldwide, affects approximately 1:20.000 people although rare in the western world, albinism is quite common in sub-Saharan Africa, likely as a result of consanguinity of both parents, who may or may not be albinos themselves, and yet would carry the gene if it is to be passed on to the child. (1)

Albinism is a non-contagious, genetically inherited condition that results from insufficient production of melanin. It is characterized by the partial or complete absence of pigment in the skin, hair, and eyes, making persons with albinism appear pale in comparison to those with typical melanin production.

Genetically speaking, both parents must carry the gene for a person to have albinism; in such cases, there is a 25% chance that their child will be born with albinism.

Judging by his own case, an albino writer described albinisms as “some sort of a genetic lottery” saying: “In my case, I have five brothers and sisters, and I am the only one who has albinism”. (2)

Children in African communities born with oculocutaneous albinism look significantly different to their peers due to the lack of melanin pigment in their hair, skin and eyes – leading to light colored hair, blue/hazel eyes and pale skin which are very sensitive to the damaging effects of the sun. Albinism also affects eyesight including involuntary nystagmus which causes eyes to move from side to side, photophobia, poor depth perception, strabismus (squint), poor visual acuity and refractive errors. In one study, 85% of children with albinism in South Africa had less than 30% vision, even with the best optical correction. (3)

The problem of albinos in Africa is unfortunately, stigma story that has long been covered up to just recently be told after its victims had long been forced to live in limbo.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the grave dimensions of the problem plighting albinos in the first place and efforts made to put an end to Albinos persecution in second place. The paper also attempts to answers the questions: why albinos' human rights violations have long been ignored, and how these rights can be ensured based on criteria set forth by human rights` international legislations?

Towards achieving its purpose, the paper first sheds some light on the phenomenon as it is shrouded with misconceptions that make the agony of Albinos either pass unnoticed, or pave the way for impunity for those violating albinos` human rights.

The paper, moreover, surveys Albinos suffering in Africa with special emphasis on countries where Albinos` inhumane treatment is an everyday occurrence. The paper, furthermore, highlights efforts made by states and organizations worldwide to end albinos' tragedy.

Frequency of albinism in Africa:

Determining the number of people with albinism in a country is difficult in spite of the fact that due to their skin color, albinos can be easily spotted among African population.

The World Health Organization attempted to obtain data on albinism in Africa, with estimated overall frequencies varying from 1 in 5000 to 1 in 15,000 in different countries. This is higher than the estimated worldwide frequency of 1 in 20,000 quoted by the US' National Institute of Health in 2016. Few large scale surveys on albinism have been conducted on African populations. One epidemiological study of 1.6 million schoolchildren in Zimbabwe gave a frequency of 1 in 4182 for the country as a whole, although the distribution was not even, with 73% of the pupils identified attending rural schools. There were hotspots where the prevalence of albinism was significantly higher, notably in the capital city of Harare with a frequency of 1 in 2661. In a geographically isolated area of the Zambezi River valley 1 in 1000 people has albinism. Across the border to the south of Zimbabwe, in northern South Africa, a community based survey of 35 rural villages gave a prevalence of 1 in 2239 among the Venda people. Even in this limited geographical area, the frequency in one clan was significantly higher, at 1: 832. The Tanzanian National Census of 2012 documented 16,127 people with albinism (8872 males and 7255 females) giving a frequency of 1 in 2652. (4)

Health Problems associated with Albinism:

The health needs of those with albinism differ from the general (black) population in Africa. In this group, exposure to the sun results in many types of injury to the skin, ranging from sunburn and blisters, to more permanent damage such as thickening and wrinkling of the skin, and potentially life threatening skin cancers. In the extreme cases, lack of recognition and appropriate treatment of pre-malignant stages can lead to aggressive cancers and consequently to early deaths. Even for those who manage to access specialist care, the cost is often prohibitive. Medical experts confirm that without the right treatment, up to 90% of albinos die before the age of 40 in Africa. (5)

Superstitions, myths and other Misconceptions as the main source of albinos' agony.

African rituals and spiritual ideas about albinism have led to brutal attack on innocent men, women and especially children which most often claim their lives. These ideas have been around for many generations, but in recent years, witch doctors have been teaching misconceived ideas about the promise of wealth, success and power when albino hair or limbs are used in a potion as part of witchcraft practices. This has gained public attention nationally and internationally as these crimes have been reported as crimes against human rights. Infanticide, kidnapping, amputations, and decapitations, committed for purposes of supplying highly valued body parts used for amulets, which are then sold in underground witchcraft market are not uncommon.

Therefore, such heinous practices cause great unrest and angst among the albino population, who must be protected and often live in a state of solitude simply to protect their own lives and to prevent being hunted like animals. (6)

There are superstitions prevalent in some parts of Africa that albino body parts bring wealth, power or sexual conquest. Attackers sell albino body parts to witch doctors for thousands of dollars, according to Amnesty International. (7)

Among the most lamentable misconception about albinism is the widely prevailing belief that albinism is a punishment from God or bad luck, and that it is "a disease" that could be contagious, which is often the view of even some members of the medical and professional community. These misconceptions, coupled with poor education, are some of the key reasons that albinism is so heavily persecuted.

In some African communities, not only albinos are victimized, but also their mothers because of the prevailing belief that a woman would give birth to an albino child only when she has sex with a white man while on her cycle. Therefore, it is common that a women giving birth to an albino baby would hurry to flee for her life for fear of her in-laws' retaliation which usually amounts to killing.

The UN report submitted as part of the Human Rights Council resolution 23/13 of June13th. 2013 reveals that albinos are often regarded as "ghosts and not human beings, who can be wiped off the global map. They are often persecuted as devils or people who are a bad omen, or suffer from a curse. In some communities it is believed that, contact with albinos would bring bad luck, sickness or death." Therefore, this belief alone amounts to discrimination, mental and emotional persecution, where severe bullying of children, exclusion and abandonment occurs even without brutal physical persecution. (8)

Another myth that poses a risk on people with albinism is the belief that “sexual intercourse with a woman or a girl with albinism can cure HIV/AIDS. This evil belief makes albino girls prone to rape.

Sacrifice of albinos is also believed to “appease the god of the mountain “ when fear of a volcano eruption is possible, and it is believed that pulling the hair of albinos can bring good luck. It has also been reported that “miners use the bones of persons with albinism as amulets or bury them where they are drilling for gold. The attacks which occur usually result in the death or severe mutilation of the albino, which according to the Human rights council can in “some cases involve trade in organs, trafficking in persons and sale of children, infanticide and abandonment of children. (9)

Superstations and misconceptions about albinism are not something new; they are, rather deep-rooted in the history of some African tribes. For instance, most tribes in ancient times would have committed infanticide upon an albino child, seeing it as a bad omen, practiced by the Sukuma, the Digo and the Maasai tribes. However, in some tribes, albinos were made the sacrifices of offerings to the gods. (10)

It is reported that, in Africa, attacks targeting persons with albinism are usually carried out with machetes, resulting in severe mutilation or death. In most cases, the persons attacked are dismembered; body parts such as fingers, arms, legs, eyes, genitals, skin, bones, head and hair have been severed from the body and taken. In several of those cases, body parts have been hacked off while the person was still alive. Reportedly, there is a corollary witchcraft belief that it is preferable to harvest body parts from live victims because screams increase the potency of the potion for which the parts are used. Possible human sacrifices of persons with albinism have also been reported, including through immolation. (11)

Superstitions, myth and misconception seem to be the source of albino's misery only in other parts of Africa. In North Africa, they do not have such a negative impact. In Sudan for instance, superstitions play a positive role in favor of albinos. The name "Awlad Al-Hour" which literary stands for children of Houris, i.e. women in Islamic eschatology who will accompany faithful believers in Paradise. Albinos are moreover, believed in Sudan to be a source of good luck, rather than an omen, as it is the case in other parts of Africa. By virtue of these positive myths, Sudanese albino children enjoy special status in their families and communities, where, if not adorned, they are at least not discriminated against, nor abused.

African countries where albinos' human rights violations are most common.

Prevalence of anti-albino superstitions, misconceptions and myths creates a serious risk to the lives of persons with albinism standout in some countries as the major motor force behind albino human rights violations as revealed by the survey below:

Tanzania:

In Tanzania, albinos represent one in every 1429 births, a much higher rate than in any other nation. According to Al-Shyamaa Kway-Geer, an albino member of parliament, there are 6977 officially registered albinos in Tanzania. However, it is believed that there may be up to 17000 undocumented. Quite a big number of albinos have migrated to the Dar es Salaam city, as they feel safer in an urban setting. Tanzania is thought to have the largest population of albinos in Africa. Albinos are especially persecuted in Shinyanga and Mwanza, where witch doctors have promoted a belief in the potential magical and superstitious properties of albinos' body parts. Senior police officers claim that, these body parts may be sold for as much as US$75,000 on the black market for a set of arms, legs, ears, and genitals from an individual with albinism. Therefore, there has been an extensive number of albino murders in the past decade especially in Burundi and Tanzania, where in 2007 more than seventy documented killings took place and one hundred and fifty body parts of albinos were reported to have been chopped off. Now the number of killings is well over one hundred, with low conviction rates, and albinos continue to have their limbs severed, leaving many crippled or severely maimed, traumatized and tortured in the process. Ms. Shyamaa Kway-Geer described her life as a schoolchild: “When I was at primary school, people used to laugh at me, tease me - some even didn’t even like to touch me, saying that if they touched me they would get this color. People used to abuse me on the road when I took the buses to school. They would run after me - crowds of kids would follow me - shouting ‘zeru, zeru’ (a derogatory term for someone with albinism meaning (Ghost).

There are further issues which arise when there is lack of education about albinism. Fathers often suspect mothers of the albino child of infidelity with a white man or that the child is the ghost of a European colonist. This can cause immense strain on families and relationships. An albino child is often seen as a bad omen and treated as unwanted. Many albino babies become victims of infant

Malawi:

After 2015 when Tanzania enacted tougher steps against violence against albinos, Malawi has seen a “steep upsurge in killings” with 18 reported killings since November 2014, and the likely toll being higher because of missing persons and unreported murders. President Peter Mutharika has formed a committee to study the situation. Additionally, Malawi has faced an immense amount of graves belonging to Albino people being robbed in more recent history. In 2017, police found at least 39 cases of illegal removals of the bodies of Albino people from their graves or having body parts removed from their corpses· Another phenomenon that has also begun to occur is an increase in religious leaders, police, and government officials being charged and convicted of slaying Albino people in Malawi.

South Africa:

There have also been reports of albino killings in South Africa, although such crimes are less common there than in Malawi, Tanzania and Burundi. A South African court has sentenced a traditional healer to life imprisonment for murdering a 20-year-old woman living with albinism. The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN agency that deals with human rights issues, reported in 2016 that albino hunters sell an entire human corpse for up to $75,000, while an arm or a leg could be sold for about $2,000. (13)

Persecution of people with albinism is based on the belief that certain body parts of albinos can transmit magical powers. Such superstition is present especially in some parts of the African Great Lakes region, it has been promulgated and exploited by witch doctors and others who use such body parts as ingredients in rituals, concoctions and potions with the claim that their magic will bring prosperity to the user (muti or medicine murder).

Consequently, people with albinism have been persecuted, killed and dismembered, and graves of albinos dug up and desecrated. At the same time, people with albinism have also been ostracized and even murdered for exactly the opposite reason, because they are presumed to be cursed and ominous.

The persecutions of people with albinism take place mostly in Sub-Saharan African communities, especially among East Africans. (14)

Other countries where the phenomenon is less common

By June 2008, killings had been reported in neighboring Kenya and possibly also the Democratic Republic of Congo. In October 2008 AFP reported on the further expansion of killings of albinos to the Ruyigi region of Burundi. Body parts of the victims are then smuggled to Tanzania where they are used for witch doctor rituals and potions. Albinos have become “a commercial good”, commented Nicodeme Gahimbare in Ruyigi, who established a local safe haven in his fortified house. By 2010 cases had also been reported from Swaziland. (15)

Social Exclusion of albinos:

Albino children are most often confined to special housing facilities or to their parents` homes as a measure for protecting them against abuse or brutal treatment to which they might be prone. This social isolation of children with albinism can also be confounded by the barriers they face to being able to play outside with other children, and take part in outdoor activities at school.

The author of this paper has intermittently served in the Tanzanian town of Arusha during the period 2016-2019 and remembers seeing only one albino girls who seemed to be closely guarded by her father, an owner of a restaurant who is always keen to seat her beside his cashier desk.

The development of self-esteem through group and team activities is being denied to albinos. According to Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, because of the social and educational exclusion which can often occur there are often very low education levels among albinos, so that they lack social and economic tools to lead productive lives. It is also “a common belief that albinos have low brain capacity and are unable to function at the same level as ‘normal people’. Therefore, their ability to learn is often deficient due to the fact that most albinos suffer from some form of visual impairment and there are often insufficient educational facilities, learning supplies or funding to support children with limited sight. This causes extensive bullying, exclusion from peer groups, low self-esteem and confidence, along with emotional and mental illness stemming from rejection by society and often family members who harbor superstitious myths about albinos.

It is clearly revealed that no matter what mythical or spiritual mantra a person may be following or believing in about albinos, there is a general view in “nearly all cultures in the region of east Africa held and some still hold the view that albinos are less desirable beings who are less than human. Therefore, homes and schools specifically built for albinos, such as Buhangija Albino School, have been created as safe environments for learning, growing and permanently residing.

Many children living in Buhangija Albino School fear to ever return to their families, believing that, they may be killed by even their own closest relatives. A striking example of albinos’ social exclusion is Ukerewe Island which is home for a large community of people with albinism where 62 albinos reside, most likely to remain in solitude and away from albino hunters. (16)

Albinos Agony as a human rights` Issue:

Albinos in Africa have long suffered without the International community, especially Human Rights Organizations stepping in to defend them. The main cause for such stand which delayed international protection of Albinos is the failure of the international community to speed up deciding on the criteria to apply to qualify these violations as human rights violations, due to albinos’ absence from categories entailing protection of minorities.

According to Article (1) of the UN Minorities Declaration, 1992, the term minority as used in the United Nations human rights system usually refers to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, pursuant to the United Nations Minorities Declaration.

The strict abidance of human rights legists to the letter of this criterion of classification of minorities is also responsible for the delay of recognition of albino rights as human rights, although there are several criteria that may be applied to qualify albinos as a group with rights to be protected by domestic and international legislations without any delay.

This delay of the international community to respond by actions and legislations may also be attributed to the fact that members of the medical profession in Africa have long been oblivious of the dimensions of the albinos' agony and the need to report it. Like ordinary people, members of the medical and professional community in some countries fell a prey to the belief that albinism is a punishment from God or bad luck, and that it is "a disease" that could be contagious. (17)

Where albinos' rights fit? is a question that is answered by the provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. (UDHR), and The International Covenant on Civil, and Political Rights, among other International Covenants on Human Rights. All these international instuments provide for physical integrity rights', which concern the right to life, liberty and security of persons, and which offer protection from physical violence against persons, freedom of movement , torture and inhumane treatment which all apply to albinos , as they are subject to all these kinds of abuse.

Rarity of albinism occurrence places the rights of albinos under the category of minority human rights.

In is only in 2008 that People with albinism were defined as disabled by the United Nations and as such have human rights as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2006). This includes the right to life, education, health services, work and freedom of movement. Children with albinism not only have rights as disabled people, but are also afforded rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989 which has been ratified by almost all African governments. (18)

Albinos moreover do qualify to be placed under the umbrella of people with disability as the UN Convention on the Rights of

People with Disabilities, defines disability “as the interaction between a person’s impairment and the barriers in society that limits full inclusion and participation in communities”. For persons with physical disabilities, lack of access to transportation and infrastructure are the barriers. For persons with albinism, for instance, the barriers are lack of accommodations in the classroom and the attitudes and beliefs that many people have about persons with albinism that exclude them from education, the labor force, and even threaten their lives.

Under the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, governments have the responsibility to remove barriers so that persons with disabilities can participate on equal footing with others in their communities, and this includes deconstructing physical, communicational, and attitudinal barriers. (19)

Efforts by organizations to put an end to albinos` Tragedy

Efforts are being made by organizations at both regional and international levels to face up to the tragedy of albinos. At the regional level, for instance, the African union stands out as the body spearheading these efforts, while the United Nations Organization stands out at the International level. The European Union and International NGOs also have their considerable contributions to these efforts. Below is a review of work done by these entities in their persistent bid to put an end to the agony of albinos in Africa in particular?

The United Nations Organization:

The UN has remained active in sending independent experts to help countries with high recurrence of albinos’ human right violations, in particular Malawi. Recommendations made by these experts and assistance rendered by the UN have helped the concerned African countries make big strides in the fight against albino abuse, improving albinos’ human rights, conditions, and raising awareness of their plight.

In June 13th. 2013, a UN resolution promoting and protecting the human rights (civil, political, economic and cultural) was adopted and June 13th. designated as “the International Albinism Awareness Day”. (20)

The Human Rights Council:

The Human Rights Council mandated an Independent Expert to identify and consolidate the measures to end and prevent attacks targeting persons with albinism in consultation with states, civil society, international and regional bodies and agencies, as well as other stakeholders. The specific measures identified will be based on those already identified, particularly those adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, namely:

(a) Effective protection of persons with albinism and members of their families;
(b)Conduct of impartial, speedy and effective investigations into attacks against persons with albinism;
(c) Prosecution of perpetrators of attacks against persons with albinism;
(d)Ensuring that victims and members of their families have access to appropriate remedies;
(e)Increased education and public awareness-raising activities;
(f)Inclusion of information in reports submitted by states parties to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights under article (62) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the situation of persons with albinism, including good practices in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with albinism;
(g)Promotion, in collaboration with relevant regional and international organizations, bilateral, regional and international initiatives aimed at protecting persons with albinism. (21)

The African Union Commission:

The African Union commission`s efforts to protect albinos’ human rights are embodied in the African Union Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Albinism in Africa.

The Regional Action Plan is the first-ever regional mechanism to proactively address eradicating discrimination and violence against persons with albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its overarching objective is to monitor the true impact of efforts to protect and integrate persons with albinism by multiple stakeholders across Africa. The plan in particular, consists of concrete and specific measures to realize the enjoyment of peace and human rights by persons with albinism. It is developed from recommendations made by the Independent expert, various human rights bodies and mechanisms at the UN and AU levels. These recommendations have been further refined into various objectives which are achievable over the immediate, short to medium term (1- 5 years) while triggering long term initiatives (beyond five years). The objectives are divided into four clusters: prevention, protection, accountability and equality and non-discrimination.

In July 2019, during its 35th. ordinary session, the Executive Council of the African Union adopted as continent-wide policy, the Regional Action Plan on Albinism in Africa. The African Union also decided that a special envoy would be appointed to ensure the implementation of that Plan. (22)

The European Parliament:

As part of its efforts to put an end to albinos` human rights violations in Africa, the European Parliament held a special session on the problems of Albinos in African countries. The session concluded by adopting a resolution (B80908/2016) which calls on the authorities of the countries where albino people are attacked or killed to step up efforts to bring the “albino people hunters” and those who trade in body parts to justice; urges all authorities of the concerned countries to undertake immediate actions launching awareness campaigns to end the stigma and discrimination associated with albinism; considers that such measures should particularly be implemented in rural areas where people tend to be less educated and more superstitious.

The European Parliament`s resolution makes special reference to Malawi, as country with high recurrence of albinos' human rights violations, Urges the Malawian authorities to seek, as matter of urgency, international support to conduct investigations and ensure accountability for crimes committed against people with albinism, and bring perpetrators of these gross human rights abuses to justice in accordance with its regional and international human rights obligations.

The resolution makes a special call to the Malawian government for the enforcement of the five-point action plan unveiled in March 2015 and is supported by the UN which comprise the development of an educational and awareness rising program and increased cooperation with civil society organizations; calls for improved training in the field of education to clear out traditional beliefs discriminating against people with albinism and allow albino children to go to school without any fear of being kidnapped, killed or even just beaten up. (23)

Efforts made by African countries with high rate of Albinos`
Human rights violations:

Mostly due to Tanzanian police interventions, albino murders dropped from 22 in 2008 to 11 in 2015. Responding to recommendations made by the UN Independent expert on albinism, the Tanzanian government and civil society has been active in providing visual aids and other assistance to albinos.

There have been positive measures taken by the Tanzanian government to address witchcraft practices, including the registration of traditional healers, however, full oversight over their work has still not been achieved, and confusion still exists in the minds of the general public between witchcraft practice and the work of traditional healers," (24)

The gravity of albinos` conditions and the brutality of crimes committed against them prompted the Tanzanian law enforcement authorities to take protection of albinos and convicting their human rights violators more seriously. The first ever conviction for the killing of an albino in Tanzania occurred in September 23rd. 2009 at the High Court in Kahama. This was a "landmark verdict" was due to the fact that there have been more than fifty murders known at this time and this was the first actual conviction. The conviction came about following the murder and mutilation of a 14-year-old boy, Matatizo Dunia, who was attacked by three men in Bukombe district in Shinyanga region in December 2008. The men carried Dunia from his home late at night before brutally murdering him. One of them was later found with Dunia's leg in his possession, the rest of Dunia's body parts were located concealed in a shrubbery. The men confessed a desire to sell Dunia's parts to a witch doctor, yet despite this; their legal team had not anticipated the death sentence of hanging which the three men would receive. (25)

In Malawi, as of 2018, there has been speculation President Mutharika making moves toward implementing the death penalty to convicted murderers of Albino people as a way to significantly decrease the attacks being perpetrated, putting fear into those who do it for business or religious purposes and making it substantially less acceptable by witch doctors and other people who follow superstitions. There is a death penalty in place, but it has not been put in to use since the government changed to democracy in 1994, and convicts who are given the death penalty have remined in prison for life instead. The president sees this as a way to tighten judicial control and work to eradicate the hate crimes committed against Albinos.

As part of its effort to put an end to its albinos` agony Kenya made formidable success including the allocation of a substantial annual budget geared toward specific measures for persons with albinism, who had historically been left behind in the key sectors of health and education and had fallen prey to ritual attacks and the consequent insecurities.

In an endeavor to help Kenya with its struggle against albinos' abuse, the UN sent an independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, to Kenya.

In addition, Kenya is working hard to facilitate access to justice and judicial remedies for victims of attack as well as socio-economic support for victims and their families to help restore their lives, as well as putting in place tough measures for the protection of albinos in border areas like Migori and Taita Taveta counties, where fear of attack remains high. Kenyan authorities are reported to have launched a country-wide campaign to raise awareness, particularly in rural communities, to confront the falsehoods that lead to attacks. (26)

African countries, at large have lobbied the international community to advocate for the human rights of those with albinism, such as the joint proposal by Tanzania and Malawi to the United Nations , calling for a combined effort by member states to ensure the security of people with albinism and address the challenges of lack of appropriate employment, health and education rights for this group.

In the USA, Congressman Gerry Connolly in 2010 introduced legislation to protect albinos and urge local governments to protect albinos, stating that "with their help and the passage of this resolution today, maybe we can bring an end to these horrific and heinous crimes". The discrimination experienced by those with albinism has been highlighted by the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations Human Rights with a dedicated website entitled 'People with Albinism: not ghost but human beings'.

In April 2016, Amnesty International called for Malawi, a country bordering Tanzania, to take action to protect people with albinism, expressing its concerns about the nature of the police investigations and the seemingly light sentences given to convicted perpetrators of albinism-related crimes, given their serious nature.

Amnesty International reports a vigilante backlash where local people respond to these injustices in their own way, taking the law into their own hands. In one incident in March 2016 a mob burned to death men who were allegedly found with the bones of someone with albinism.

Some writers note that laws protecting people with albinism do exist but need to be effectively implemented. Other authors argue that international responses are identified as being limited to little more than political rhetorics, with only the media and NGOs seen to have had any success in raising awareness and advocacy work. The major issue is that, the International Law does not regard Albinos as a minority which makes it very difficult to place this category of ill-fated people under the umbrella of protection by the International Law.

Most Prominent NGOs standing against albinos `persecution

Many organizations have been set up to help protect and provide for communities with albinism. Films have also been produced to encourage, educate and create an international understanding of the trials and tribulations which persons with albinism are facing in a modern world still dealing with ancient rituals and practices which encourage murder for medicine. There are over forty organizations advocating albino human rights most important among which in addition to TAC are Under the Same Sun and Amnesty International Organizations such as National Organization for Albinism and Hypo pigmentation (NOAH). Light is here below shed on the most active among these organizations:

Tanzania Albino Centre (TAC):

TAC based in Arusha, Tanzania; aiming at improving the lives of albinos through educational and medical assistance so that they may live safe, accepted, and prosperous and live in the society of their choice.

Under the Same Sun (UTSS):

Under the Same Sun is a Canadian-founded organization with support focused on Tanzania and based in Dar es Salam, founded in 2008 by Peter Ash with a vision to "promote via advocacy and education, the wellbeing of persons who are often marginalized or misunderstood. Describing the motive behind his organization, Peter Ash states that: "we are driven by the belief that all persons have intrinsic value and since they are created in the image of God. The organization is therefore, acting upon the moral and human rights values to support victims to end the discrimination and persecution of innocent persons with albinism". According to Under the Same Sun: "in order to eradicate attacks against persons with albinism, it is necessary to focus on eliminating reliance on witchcraft beliefs by strengthening the provision of infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, while enhancing the sense of fairness by improving the system of justice. Therefore, restoring the rights of persons with albinism to being treated as human, fairly as functioning members of society who may look different and suffer severe vulnerabilities die to their physical condition, but do not deserve to be murdered or hurt in any way because of ancient myths claiming sacrifice of these people will create future benefit for another person. (27)

Amnesty International (AI)

Amnesty International is a human rights organization that was established by Peter Benenson, a British lawyer and human rights activist, in 1961. It has many city-centered offices in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central, and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. The goal of the organization is to assist in obtaining freedom and success for everyone globally. It has launched several campaigns against the persecution and discrimination of persons with albinism, including "Stop the Killings" campaign which was organized by the organization in Malawi . In addition, the organization provides a plethora of information and statistical research on albinism for other organizations that fight for the same cause. (28)

The International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC):

The IFRC is a key part of the albino protection movements aiming at working to integrate persons with albinism back into society safely in Burundi ,striving to minimize their vulnerability to hunters, skin cancer, and educational and social marginalization. The IFRC particularly works with protecting mothers and children who are fearing persecution and assist them in providing safe homes and protection where children are frightened of attacker's and by providing a special arena for the albinos , the IFRC ensures safety protection and an environment of love, understanding of one another all with albinism, and unity in the battle against persecution and discrimination. The Red Cross has made it very clear in its publications that governments must also take drastic steps towards the protection of persons with albinism in order to stop their persecution. The IFRC moreover states that it is imperative that governments strive to "Ensure effective legal protection for people with albinism, use local administrative structures to locate and protect albino people living in hideouts, conduct public anti-discrimination campaigns and extend medical services to albinos in need. (29)

Conclusion and Recommendations:

This paper aimed at bringing to the lime light, the suffering by which albinos are plighted in Africa and the efforts made to put an end to it. Towards attaining this objective, the paper touched on several themes pertaining to the problems of albinism in Africa, including the medical cause of the problem, the mythical and superstitious dimensions behind the agony of albinos in some African countries, in addition to efforts made to eradicate cruel and inhumane treatment of albinos at both the legislative and law enforcement levels.

The paper also surveyed albinos` human rights violations in some African countries where such abuses are a day-today practice.

In conclusion, the paper would argue that legislative and law enforcement measures alone may not be sufficient to tackle this problem. Such measures must be accompanied by vigorous efforts to put the lid on myths and superstitions responsible for the tragedy of albinos in African countries where they prevail. In that, the paper recommends governments to, also sponsor large all out, wide scope media awareness-raising campaigns aiming at making other people well understand that persons with albinism are equal ordinary humans who have the right to participate in everyday life, as anyone else would, and rectify stereotypes that keep albinos sidelined and even their lives being threatened.

It is also important that legislations aiming at positive discrimination of people with special need take albinos on board.

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