

# URGENT ACTION

## PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM UNDER THREAT IN MALAWI

**Thousands of people with albinism and their families in Malawi have been living in fear of attacks, including killings, abductions and mutilations. There are grave concerns for the safety and security of people with albinism across Malawi. At least 11 people with albinism have been killed in Malawi since December 2014.**

Thousands of **people with albinism** live in fear of being abducted or killed in Malawi, where their body parts are being sold for use in witchcraft. At least 11 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 whereabouts remain unknown. In 2015 alone, 45 other crimes against people with albinism, include attempted abductions and opening up of graves in search of bones of dead people with albinism, were reported.

A nine-year-old boy with albinism, **Harry Mokoshini**, of Moto Village in Machinga district 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. A head was discovered in a neighbouring village on 3 March. It was confirmed to have been that of Harry Mokoshini. No one has been arrested for this crime.

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.

With attacks against people with albinism increasing, families have withdrawn children from schools for fear of attacks. Some families have moved to urban areas for safety. The right to freedom of movement for people with albinism has severely been restricted as many need to be accompanied by family members for their safety.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Expressing concern over the safety and security of people with albinism in Malawi following reports of killings, abductions and attempted abductions;
- Urging the government to urgently provide effective protection for people with albinism including by protecting their right to life and personal security, in accordance with Malawi's international human rights obligations and commitments;
- Calling for prompt, thorough and transparent investigations into the death of Eunice Phiri and Harry Mokoshini and for those suspected to be responsible to be brought to justice through trials that meet international standards of fairness.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 APRIL 2016 TO:**

President of the Republic of Malawi  
His Excellency Professor Peter Arthur  
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

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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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 living with albinism 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. This has been the main basis even in cases of abductions, attempted abductions and other violence towards people with albinism in Malawi. The few perpetrators who have been arrested in the past have either been acquitted or given lighter sentences. Societal attitudes about albinism are not changing and people with albinism continue to be at risk of attacks with some children being abducted and sold by family members

Malawian President Peter Mutharika issued a statement on 19 March 2015 condemning attacks on people with albinism, and calling 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 sentences which were not in line with the gravity of the crime.

Name: People with albinism in Malawi  
Gender m/f: Both

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