



“MUTI” KILLINGS

What is “Muti?”

Muti (pronounced mu:ti) is a zulu word that means traditional African medicine or magical charms.¹ It is a word most commonly used in southern Africa to represent African medicine. It specifically means African medicine involving the use of human body parts.²

Muti and the use of human body parts

Human body parts are used in muti to support the belief that regular muti medicine will be more effective if human body parts are involved. The body parts are often taken from live victims. This is because it is believed that the screams of victims being hacked enhances the potency of the medicine.³ Muti victims are mostly children and most recently in East Africa, persons with albinism. Body parts of muti victims are not only traded locally, but are also often transported across borders of various countries where there is demand.

Why?

Simon Fellows, author of a 2008 report titled *Trafficking Body Parts in Mozambique and South Africa* explains that where human-organ-muti is found, there is often the belief that such muti is a source of wealth and business prosperity.⁴ 70% of people surveyed by Fellows in Mozambique and South Africa for example, believe “that body parts make muti medicine more effective and that such medicine can solve any problem, from poverty to health issues.”⁵

Albino Killings are Muti Killings

The use of albino body parts for muti is part of a larger practice in the use of human body parts for muti. ⁶ Conservative estimates in the past decade show general muti-related killings of 30 persons per year in southern Africa.⁷ Muti killings specific to

persons with albinism is higher however. In East Africa, between 2007 and 2010, scores of persons with albinism have been killed. A more accurate estimate would be higher given that not all cases are reported. Also when one takes into account the link of muti to poverty and the rising rates of poverty on the sub continent, a higher number of victims of muti is likely more accurate.⁸

Why Now?

Muti killings have been going on for decades and in some cases, for centuries on various parts of the African sub-continent. The degree and extent and whether these killings have intensified or abated are questions that are not easily answered. This is because muti activities are often shrouded by a “code of silence” which makes reporting, and the necessary prosecution and investigation all the more difficult.⁹ The silence in muti-use and trading is made worse by the fact that the consumers of muti medicine often remain a mystery.

International Help

There is a *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, (“the Trafficking in Persons Protocol”) signed in the year 2000.¹⁰ This is the Protocol that comes close to covering trafficking in human organs.

Article 3 (a) of the protocol defines Trafficking in Persons as

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. [Italics Added]

In essence the protocol prevents human trafficking in the event that the victim is alive and the purpose of movement of that victim is to remove body parts. The protocol does not cover the issue of movement of body parts that have been

removed without any of the coercive elements above.¹¹ It is this gap in this international protocol that calls for stronger responses to muti from governments at the national level.

National Response

In line with our mandate here at UTSS, the following presents national responses **only** to those muti-related killings of persons with albinism.

Tanzania

In July 2010, The High Court of Mwanza, Tanzania convicted 50 year old, Kazimiri Mashauri and sentenced him to death for the brutal murder of a 5 year old girl with albinism. The girl was mutilated and killed for the purposes of muti-related beliefs.¹²

Other similar trials are currently underway in Tanzania.

Burundi

5 men accused of murdering and selling body parts of persons with albinism are jailed in Burundi. Of the 5, 1 was found guilty of "planning and carrying out the killings" and sentenced to life in jail. The other 4 were found guilty of attempted murder and kidnapping. Their jail terms ranged from 7 to 15 years.¹³

UTSS' Stance on Muti

Under The Same Sun condemns use of the human body for muti purposes. Particularly, UTSS condemns the targeting and killing of any human being, including persons with albinism.

At UTSS, our members of staff on the ground in East Africa and North America are working hard to ensure the health, safety and well-being of persons with albinism in sub Saharan Africa. We are doing this through several programs in education, health and public awareness. We are also inviting governments to condemn muti killings while asking national governments in East Africa to investigate, try and punish those behind this gruesome trade.

¹ Oxford Dictionary (online). “muti”,
http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0544420#m_en_gb0544420 Accessed August 3, 2010.

² BBC News. (2002, April 2). “I was forced to kill my baby.” *BBC News*,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1899609.stm Accessed August 3, 2010.

³ See note 2 above.

⁴ Mogakane, Tshwarelo eseng. (2009, March 6). “Muti Killings Up Ahead of 2010?” *News24*, (South Africa), <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Muti-killings-up-ahead-of-2010-20090305#> Accessed August 3, 2010.

⁵ See note 4 above.

⁶ Oloya, Opiyo. (2009, February 17). “Ritual Killing Cannot Make Anyone Richer.” op ed., *The New Vision*,
<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/20/671762> Accessed August 3, 2010.

⁷ See note 2 above.

⁸ See note 2 and note 6.

⁹ See note 4 above. Also see Fellows, Simon. “*Trafficking Body Parts in Mozambique and South Africa* (2008).” Human Rights League, Mozambique, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/23729111/Trafficking-Body-Parts-in-Mozambique-and-South-Africa-Mozambique-Human-Rights-League> Accessed August 3, 2010.

¹⁰ See note 9 at p.9. Also see United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC). “Human Trafficking, UNODC,” <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html?ref=menuaside> Accessed August 3, 2010.

¹¹ Fellows, note 9 at p. 10.

¹² Ng'wanakilala, Fumbuka. “(2010, July 28). Tanzania to Hang Blood-Drinking Killer of Albino Girl.” *Reuters* (Dar es Salaam), <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE66R3XF20100728> Accessed July 28, 2010.

¹³ Aljazeera. “Killers of Burundi Albinos Jailed.” (2009, July 23). *Aljazeera*,
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2009/07/20097231380929658.html> Accessed August 3, 2010.

Other Resources

AllAfrica.Com. “Probe Reveals Price of Body Parts for Muti,” (2010, April 3). *Cape Argus*,
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201004030005.html> Accessed August 3, 2010.