



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As Albino butchery increases, Tanzanian courts abandon prosecutions

WARNING: Extremely graphic photos of a dead, mutilated child are attached

Vancouver BC, Canada - August 6, 2009: As the slaughter of albinos continues, promises from Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete and Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda that the killers would be brought to justice swiftly have not yet been fulfilled. Now the Kahama and Shinyanga High Courts which have been holding trials for 4 of the suspected killers of victims with albinism say they have run out of funds. **THESE TRIALS HAVE NOW BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.** For Tanzania's 170,000 albinos, there is an increasing sense of fear and abandonment. With their government unable or unwilling to protect them from the machetes of the witchdoctors' henchmen, there is no place to hide and little reason to hope.

When Peter Ash, Founder of the Canadian NGO "UNDER THE SAME SUN" returned from his second fact-finding mission to Tanzania this past April, he was cautiously optimistic. During the visit, Ash and his delegation met with leaders in the albinism community as well as religious leaders and government officials, including the Prime Minister Mizengo Peter Pinda and Vice-President, Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein. Unfortunately, four months later as the genocide continues unabated, Ash seriously questions if there is any political will within this East African government to provide meaningful protection for its citizens with albinism.

The most recent victim was 4 year old Muanda Sita of Madilana village in the Bariadi District, Shinyanga region. Murderers, violently wielding machetes, overtook the little boy and hacked off his legs one by one as he screamed in agony. His slaughter brings the number of murders of Tanzanians with albinism during the past month to 4. In addition, other African countries are now reporting similar occurrences, including neighboring Burundi where at least 12 people with albinism have been slaughtered in the last year. However, the Republic of Burundi does not appear to be afflicted with the same kind of judicial apathy. While the trials in Tanzania have completely stalled, 9 people in Burundi have recently been convicted for the murders. All 9 killers are serving time in jail, with one of them serving a life sentence.

According to Ash, the crisis in Tanzania has only intensified. "If you have albinism in Tanzania", he says, "you live in a constant state of fear. Since 2007, police reports confirm that at least 53 innocent children and adults have been slaughtered like animals so that their bodyparts can be traded and sold as mere commodities by witchdoctors to their customers. The darkness of Witchcraft is rampant with documented accounts of tiny babies, some as young as 6 months of age, being slaughtered alive in front of their families, dismembered one frail limb at a time."

"In another case earlier this year, he adds, "the body of a two day old baby with albinism in Shinyanga was exhumed from a grave dug the day after its birth. This tiny infant was found without arms or legs. There are repeated accounts of throats slit, blood drained and sometimes drunk on the spot by the killers. Victims have no one to trust and nowhere to turn because evidence shows that in many cases, relatives or close friends of the victims are directly involved in the murders. Tragically, law enforcement officials have also been implicated. This spreading evil has reached epidemic proportions."

More

While visiting Tanzania on February 28, 2009, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon himself condemned the killings, remarking that ***“I have received complaints about this gross violation of human rights. It is a very serious issue...”***. In the small number of trials that were until recently occurring, witnesses say that prosecutors have often botched the investigations. Tanzania’s 170,000 people with albinism now feel totally abandoned by their justice system with nowhere to turn for rescue from this genocide.

The reassuring press releases of politicians did nothing to save beautiful 14 year old Eunice Bahati of Sengerema district (Mwanza Region) on February 17 this year when killers hacked off each of her limbs as her family watched. The horrific and graphic photos below of Eunice’s body provide evidence of this crime against humanity which is spreading across Tanzania:



Increasing International Pressure

World media has taken serious note of this continuing killing spree. The desperate plight of Tanzania’s albino community and the work of Under The Same Sun have recently been featured in international media coverage such as The New York Times, BBC, The National Post, The Guardian, Voice of America, NBC News and countless other radio, TV and newspapers. And with the Tanzanian judicial system’s recent declaration that they cannot continue the prosecutions of suspected murderers due to a lack of money, Ash believes that the international community must pressure the Tanzanian Government to reconsider this decision. “The courts must act swiftly to prosecute the perpetrators of these grizzly crimes” says Ash, “and then the government must commit sufficient resources to protect Tanzania’s vulnerable albino community”.

“We must all raise our voices and join with our fellow human beings with albinism in Tanzania!” Ash implores. “We must shout with a loud and passionate cry for justice and a plea for safety. All that is needed for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing. Please do not be counted among those who failed to bring about life saving change.”

An international petition can be signed and more information obtained by visiting: www.underthesamesun.com.

For interview requests, please email media@underthesamesun.com or telephone +1-604-587-6502.