



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND

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The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, and has the honour to forward responses, as requested by your esteemed Office, on the human rights situation of People Living with Albinism in Swaziland.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 10 April 2014
OHCHR REGISTRY

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Recipients: HRCAC.....

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To: Secretariat of the Human Rights Council
Advisory Committee
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THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH ALBINISM IN THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the traditional Swazi set up, people living with albinism are treated like any other Swazi citizen and are recognised as any part of society. Over the years they were never treated as a separate and distinct group of the Swazi nation and even regarded as citizen/persons that needed special protection until the occurrence of two isolated cases where two children were murdered in the Shiselweni region in the year 2010.

SPECIFICS ON THE MATTER

Worth noting, is the fact that victims of the two incidences were pupils attending their primary school. The victims were subjected to the unscrupulous act while running family errands after school. These unfortunate and isolated incidences were the first to be recorded in Swaziland. However, as a country we have heard of murders in East Africa where their body parts have been used for ritual purposes.

QUESTION 1.

What is the human rights situation of persons living with albinism in your country or in any country you are familiar with? Are they a particular social group? Are they considered disabled? Are they considered to belong to another category?

[A] They are not considered to belong to another category however their condition is understood by the country to be of genetic origin. It is enshrined in section 20 (2) of the National Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland of 2005 that there shall be no discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed, or religion, or social or economic standing, political opinion, age, or disability. Traditionally speaking, Swaziland has an inclusive and tolerant culture.

QUESTION 2.

Does your country, or any country you are familiar with, have any problem of prejudice or stigmatization against the persons with albinism? How serious is it?

[A] Swaziland does not prejudice or stigmatise persons living with Albinism but there are perceptions by some individual that these people can be used for ritual purposes and are sometimes ostracised both at family level. It is unfortunate however to note that incidence of snowball stigmatization exists which is condemned at national level. It suffices to state that no systematic research has been carried out to ascertain the gravity of the matter.

QUESTION 3

What are the obstacles that impede the efforts to improve the human rights situation of persons living with albinism?

[A] There are no specific obstacles except for perceptions from individuals and families, and lack of understanding on what causes the condition. However, since after the murders an association was formed by people living with albinism. Its mandate is to educate people on the condition so as to remove negative perceptions of some individuals in regard to the condition.

Whilst the association maintains that people living with albinism are not a specific category, but after the murders it was necessary for society to act and an organization of people living with albinism was formed as a response to counteract negative perceptions against them. The organization has been on print and electronic media to educate society about albinism.

QUESTION 4.

What measures, if any (legislative, administrative, institutional, other policy/measures) have been put in place in your country to ensure the elimination of violence against persons living with albinism and their protection from all other human rights violations?

[A] The murder cases are still under investigation. There is no specific legislation in Swaziland that ensures the elimination of violence against persons with albinism and their protection from all other human rights violations. This is because the Kingdom of Swaziland does not categorize people living with albinism as a distinct social group. They are part of the broader Swazi society.

Different organizations have issued statements condemning the violence against people living with albinism, especially at the height of the murders. In addition there were interventions made by the Government of Swaziland. For instance the Prime Minister, issued a statement that condemned the act and assured the Swazi society of the protection of people living with albinism.

QUESTION 5

What improvements (if any) have to be made to such measures in order to make them more effective?

[A] As a response mechanism the country has embarked on educational awareness programs at different bureaucratic levels. Mostly, this has been through the national radio. However there is a need to escalate the campaign to be more aggressive even at regional level.

QUESTION 6.

How, if at all, does your country rehabilitate victims of attacks against persons living with albinism?

[A] With regard to reported cases, victims were taken for psychosocial counselling sessions so as to mitigate the traumatic effects of the attacks. Likewise families of the murdered children were also provided psychosocial counselling sessions.

QUESTION 7.

Do you have any information on allegations, complaints, investigations, prosecutions and their outcomes?

[A] Outwit the two known murders, there is an instance of an employee who was verbally abused and subjected to ridicule by unknown men with the intention to instil fear in him as person living with albinism. As a protective measure, the employer redeployed the possible victim from nightshift to dayshift. In all the reported cases, investigations are still ongoing. It is worth noting that Government and the Swazi nation strongly condemn such acts of violence against people living with albinism.

QUESTION 8

Do religious/spiritual institutions in your country play a role in helping persons with albinism? Are they effective in preventing attacks against these persons?

[A] Yes, they do. They provide support and care to every Swazi citizen including people living with albinism. More so because Swaziland does not discriminate against people living with the condition. They are effective in that they strongly believe all people are created in the image of God.

QUESTION 9.

In what ways can the Human Rights Council and other UN human rights bodies assist with improving the situation of persons living with albinism within your country or any country you are familiar with?

[A] Human Rights Council and other UN Human rights bodies can assist us in the following areas:

RESEARCH: There has never been a systematic study on the perceptions and intensity of negative attitudes against people living with albinism in Swaziland.

DATA: There is a need to develop a database of people living with albinism and ascertain their needs.

EDUCATION: The third intervention would be a rigorous campaign that demystifies albinism in society.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION: For advancing and supporting the case of people living with albinism.

QUESTION 10

What other institutional or practical measures should the Human Rights Council take to strengthen the efforts to improve the human rights situation of persons living with albinism?

[A] In practical terms, there is a dire need for technical support and institutional capacity building. Currently within government there is no structure that understands and would articulate issues of persons living with albinism in Swaziland. The mandate of ensuring the welfare of all people including people living with albinism falls within the Department of Social Welfare in the Deputy Prime Ministers' Office (DPMO). However, it is worth noting that the office has not been capacitated to deal with such specialised issues. Lastly, strengthening of the judiciary in handling such cases would also be helpful, especially with reference to ensuring that international instruments regarding the issue are upheld.