

Human Rights Council: 23rd Session
Item 5: General Debate
Oral Intervention
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)

Delivered by: Peter Ash, 7th June 2013

Thank you Mr. President,

I give this statement on behalf of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project and Under The Same Sun.

I have albinism (or as many might say "I am an albino"). Today I wish to address a little known but very serious human rights violation being perpetrated against people with albinism in many African nations. My NGO, Under The Same Sun, has evidence of the witchcraft related attacks and killings of 207 people with albinism in 16 African nations. The majority of the victims are children. From Tanzania and Burundi in the East, to Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire in the West and South Africa and Swaziland in the South, people born with this genetic condition live in fear every day.

There exists a lucrative black market in albino body parts used to make what is promoted as powerful muti medicine. The hand, arm or any albino organ is combined with other ingredients and then sold for thousands of dollars: \$3,000 for a hand or over \$100,000 for an entire set of organs. Sometimes body parts are even shipped across borders.

In the last five months, Tanzania has experienced 5 such attacks. On January 31st, 2013, Lugolola, a 7 year old boy with albinism, was brutally murdered in the Tabora Region. The attackers violently slashed his forehead, right arm, left shoulder and savagely hacked off his tiny left arm. The boy's 95 year old grandfather was also murdered as he tried bravely to protect his grandson.

Sadly, situations like these repeat themselves all too often. In addition, many with albinism in several African nations die through skin cancer due to denial of basic health care. Others will live lives of complete social exclusion, not attending school and being denied employment simply because they look different.

We seek a day when people with albinism will take their rightful place in all levels of African society and such days of discrimination will be a faint memory. To this end, we call on this Council to pass a resolution condemning acts of violence and discrimination against persons with albinism and to request the OHCHR or the Advisory Committee to carry out a study on such violations. As Edmund Burke so rightly stated, "all that is necessary for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing."

Thank You.