Call for Papers

CONFERENCE
Advancing the rights of persons with albinism in Africa: A call to action

9 - 10 November 2016

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About the Conference

The focus of the conference is on developing responses to the persistence and intensity of the violations of the rights of persons with albinism in the African region. The conference will be held at the Centre for Human Rights from 9-10 November 2016 in Pretoria, South Africa. It is anticipated that papers presented at this conference will be reworked by authors and submitted for consideration for publication in 2016 in a peer-reviewed journal. Also we expect that the selected works will propose ideas and solutions which can be further consulted by policymakers and relevant institutions.

Background

Calls for the adoption of immediate and effective measures to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of persons with albinism have been intensifying of late with the spotlight squarely on the African region. The calls underscore the severe nature of stigma and discrimination faced by persons with albinism in many parts of Africa. Albinism manifests in all population groups across the world. Whilst albinism-related stigmatisation and discrimination are universal phenomena, in the African region, persons with albinism experience not just higher levels of stigmatisation and discrimination, but human rights violations of a much higher magnitude, including extreme acts of violence.

The most serious human rights violations faced by persons with albinism in the African region are killings and mutilations driven by superstition and fuelled by a demand for, as well as trade in, body parts. The demand and trade stem from erroneous beliefs and myths which associate albinism with the supernatural in combination with witchcraft practices that treat the body parts of persons with albinism as magical and sources of wealth, power and omens for good luck. Young children have been particularly vulnerable to killings, mutilations and abandonment on account of their dependence and general inability to defend themselves from attacks. Other serious human rights violations, which imperil the lives and physical integrity of persons with albinism, include the rape of women and girls in the belief that it is a cure for disease.

The human rights violations faced by persons with albinism extend far beyond violence. Fear of violence causes displacement and separation of families when, for example, young children are removed from their families and localities where they are believed to be vulnerable and placed into protective care. Societal stigma and discrimination against persons with albinism are also experienced in other socio-economic sectors, especially in the health, education and employment sectors. Marginalisation and exclusion of persons with albinism in these sectors ultimately impact negatively on life chances. Cumulatively, albinism-related discrimination produces a vicious cycle of socio-economic barriers that consigns many to poor health, unemployment and poverty.

The intensity of albinism-related discrimination in the African region has begun to inspire new human rights responses and developments. In 2013, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on attacks
and discrimination against persons with albinism. The resolution followed a report by the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Persons with Albinism*, documenting human rights violations committed against persons with albinism as well as recommending remedial action. The OHCHR report focused on Africa precisely because it is the region where the human rights of persons with albinism are most under attack. In December 2014, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising June 13 as International Albinism Awareness Day. In June 2015, the Human Rights Council appointed the first Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Ms Ikponwosa Ero, a national of Nigeria. The appointment marks a significant step towards augmenting human rights mechanisms for the protection of the human rights of persons with albinism.

From a regional perspective, in 2013, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted a resolution calling upon African States to adopt effective measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons with albinism, including violence. In March of this year, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child published a report - *Report on Investigative Mission on the Situation of Children with Albinism in Temporary Holding Shelters – Tanzania*. The report follows a visit to the Lake Zone region of Tanzania by the Committee to investigate the human rights of children with albinism. While commending the efforts of the Government of Tanzania to address the situation of children with albinism, the Committee also highlighted that the government had largely failed to discharge its human rights obligations. The Committee called for the implementation of immediate, medium and long-term remedial measures.

**Participants**

The conference seeks to bring together scholars, researchers, practitioners, human rights activists, advocates for law reform, persons with albinism, civil society groups, lawyers, and policymakers and analysts from across Africa and beyond to address the human rights violations faced by persons with albinism in the African region with a view to suggesting ways of strengthening human rights responses.

**Possible topics to consider**

Human rights violations related to albinism open themselves to a wide range of conference topics. These include but are not limited to the following topics (explored individually or in combination):

- Stigma and discrimination based on colour
- Socio-cultural constructions of albinism
- The role of superstition, myth and witchcraft in contributing to rights violations of persons with albinism
- Violence against persons with albinism
- Discrimination in health care
- Discrimination in education
• Discrimination in employment
• State protection measures vs. violations of the right to live and be included in the community
• Internal displacement
• Albinism, disability, and discrimination
• State responsibility for protection and law enforcement
• Role of non-state actors and international co-operation
• Role of regional and sub-regional systems and institutions
• Cross-border trade in body parts and mechanisms to stop this
• Litigation as a tool to protect the rights of persons with albinism

Priority will be given to submissions which respond to all of the following three criteria:

1. Current and locally-relevant;
2. Jointly conceptualised by academics, members of civil society organisations and persons with albinism;
3. Propose innovative and practical solutions that seek to contribute towards reform of policies, practices and attitudes.

Submission specifications

A committee will review abstracts that are in English, are 300-350 words in length and in MS Word format (not PDF).

Abstracts must include:
1. Title of abstract
2. Author’s name
3. Affiliation
4. Qualifications
5. Email address

Abstracts must be sent by email to charles.ngwena@up.ac.za

Funding

Limited funding for travel and accommodation is available to support authors whose abstracts have been accepted and have also submitted written papers.

Applicants seeking financial support should indicate in a separate letter, accompanying the abstract, the reason(s) for the application and the nature of support they are seeking.

Applicants will be notified by 30 August 2016 whether their application for funding has been accepted.