

Thursday 7 July 2016

P8_TA(2016)0314

Situation of persons with albinism in Africa, notably in Malawi

European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2016 on the situation of persons with albinism in Africa, notably in Malawi (2016/2807(RSP))

(2018/C 101/10)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 4 September 2008 on the killing of albinos in Tanzania ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the report of 18 January 2016 of the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism,
 - having regard to the EU press release of 13 June 2015 on the International Albinism Awareness Day,
 - having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 69/170 of 18 December 2014 on an International Albinism Awareness Day,
 - having regard to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Resolution 263 of 5 November 2013 on the prevention of attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism,
 - having regard to UN Human Rights Council Resolution 23/13 of 13 June 2013 on attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
 - having regard to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities of 18 December 1992,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Partnership Agreement,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas albinism is a congenital disorder affecting about one in 20 000 people worldwide; whereas this rate is much higher in sub-Saharan countries, with Tanzania, Malawi and Burundi having one of the highest concentrations of persons with albinism (PWA);
- B. whereas PWA are facing some of the most extreme forms of persecution and human rights violations, ranging from widespread societal discrimination, verbal abuse and exclusion from public services to killings, abductions, rape and mutilations; whereas human rights observers reported 448 attacks on albinos in 2015 alone across 25 African countries; whereas it is highly likely that these numbers are underestimated as the authorities do not systematically

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 295 E, 4.12.2009, p. 94.

Thursday 7 July 2016

monitor and document such crimes or lack the capacity and resources to conduct thorough investigations;

- C. whereas the biggest threat to persons with albinism in Africa comes from the widespread superstitions and misleading belief systems about their condition, including the myth that PWA have magical powers, resulting in them being regularly killed by criminal gangs and traffickers for their body parts, which are believed to bring luck, health and fortune; whereas, in several countries, the graves of PWA have been opened and body parts or bones stolen;
- D. whereas, in Malawi, where an estimated 10 000 people live with albinism, the police have reported 69 attacks since November 2014, of which 18 were murders; whereas four people were killed in April 2016, including a two-year-old baby, leading the authorities to declare PWA an 'endangered species';
- E. whereas the President of Malawi, Peter Mutharika, has publicly condemned the recent spate of attacks;
- F. whereas, in addition to Malawi, attacks against PWA have been reported in several other east-African countries, notably in Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya and Mozambique;
- G. whereas women and children with albinism are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion; whereas albino women are often the target of sexual violence, owing to the widespread belief that sexual intercourse with a woman with albinism can cure HIV/AIDS, and whereas women who give birth to albino babies are rejected and discriminated against at work; whereas children represent a large proportion of the victims of ritual attacks and face a high risk of abandonment; whereas the fear of attacks has resulted in school-age children not being able to enjoy their right to education;
- H. whereas the Tanzanian Government has engaged in serious and tangible action to tackle witchcraft in the country, including the suspension of traditional healers' licences and numerous arrests of witchdoctors; whereas the Tanzanian President appointed the first member of parliament with albinism in 2008, and the first albino deputy minister in December 2015;
- I. whereas, despite increasing international visibility and the adoption of new legislation in the countries affected, prosecutions and convictions remain very few in number and crimes and torture continue to be committed with total impunity in many African countries;
- J. whereas on 1 March 2016 in Southern Malawi, an angry mob lynched and set on fire seven alleged 'albino hunters'; whereas Malawi's Inspector General of Police ordered his officers to shoot to kill anyone caught abducting PWA;
- K. whereas discrimination, harassment and stigmatisation of PWA has caused hundreds of people to flee and seek refuge in temporary shelters; whereas this situation has caused greater precariousness and insecurity for PWA, limiting their access to basic services such as healthcare and education, their employment opportunities and their participation in society;
- L. whereas this discrimination can lead to life-long trauma and psycho-social problems and causes great apprehension and fear among the albino community; whereas PWA normally have more difficulties in accessing appropriate medical care, including preventive medication for skin cancer;
- M. whereas, in March 2015, the UN appointed its first independent expert on the human rights of persons with albinism and officially declared 13 June International Albinism Awareness Day;
- N. whereas in June 2016 the UN sponsored the first-ever regional forum for Action on Albinism in Africa, which laid down a roadmap of specific, simple and effective measures to combat human rights abuses against PWA;

Thursday 7 July 2016

O. whereas the EU has carried out public advocacy campaigns to generate wider awareness on the matter and has supported the engagement of civil society organisations and capacity-building efforts of local authorities in the fight against PWA killings;

1. Recalls that people with albinism have the right to live like anyone else, without any kind of fear, as stated in Articles 2 and 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;

2. Expresses its deep concern at the continuous and widespread discrimination and persecution faced by persons with albinism in Africa, in particular following the recent rise in violence in Malawi; strongly condemns all killings, abductions, mutilations and other inhuman and degrading treatment suffered by PWA and expresses its condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims; condemns also any speculative trading in PWA's body parts;

3. Deplores the silence and inertia surrounding these events; recalls that the primary responsibility of a state is to protect its citizens, including vulnerable groups, and urges the Government of Malawi and the authorities of all the countries affected to take all the necessary measures to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against PWA and protect their dignity, human rights and well-being, as well as those of their family members;

4. Urges the Malawian authorities to put an end to impunity and to seek, as a matter of urgency, international support to conduct impartial and effective investigations into all reported attacks against PWA in order to bring those responsible to justice and hold them accountable;

5. Welcomes the statement by President Mutharika condemning the attacks and calling on security agencies to provide maximum protection for PWA; warns, however, against any escalation and recalls that incitement to hatred and violence cannot be the response to the current discrimination against PWA; condemns, in particular, any attempts by people to take the law into their own hands;

6. Calls on the Malawian Government more effectively to meet the medical, psychological and social needs of PWA by guaranteeing them equal access to healthcare and education, as part of inclusion policies;

7. Welcomes the Malawian National Response Plan of March 2015, which aims to raise awareness, increase internal security, and improve human rights monitoring, administration of justice and legislation, as well as to empower people with albinism; calls on the Malawian Government to enforce the five-point action plan and demands that more resources be allocated to this project;

8. Welcomes the efforts made by the Tanzanian Government to combat the discrimination against PWA and its decision to outlaw witchdoctors in a bid to stop the killing of PWA, while acknowledging that too few cases are brought to justice; calls on the government of Malawi, accordingly, to amend existing laws in order to reflect the gravity of crimes against PWA;

9. Believes that more efforts should be put into addressing the root causes of such discrimination and violence through public awareness campaigns; stresses the crucial role of local authorities and civil society organisations in promoting the rights of PWA, informing and educating the population and shattering the myths and prejudices about albinism;

10. Is concerned at the specific challenges faced by women and children with albinism, which make them more exposed to poverty, insecurity and isolation; insists that all victims should have access to appropriate medical and psychological care, and that adequate policies should be put in place to facilitate their reintegration into their communities;

11. Calls on the authorities of the countries affected, in cooperation with their international and regional partners, to commit to taking all the necessary measures to prevent and tackle the illegal trade in albinos' body parts, to revisit cases of suspected grave robberies, to trace and identify the source of demand for such body parts, and to bring the 'albino hunters' to justice;

Thursday 7 July 2016

12. Believes that prosecutors, investigators and police staff should receive special training aimed at providing them with the knowledge required to deal with cases involving PWA;
 13. Underlines that the general lack of understanding and health information on albinism tends to aggravate the health condition of PWA; stresses the need to ensure that they have access to healthcare, in particular in rural and remote areas; considers that health personnel should be given sensitivity training on albinism;
 14. Calls for improved training of teachers and school administrations on albinism, and for the Malawian authorities to facilitate PWA's access to and enjoyment of education;
 15. Welcomes the establishment by the UN Human Rights Council of the position of Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism in 2015, and her subsequent launch of the first-ever regional forum for Action of Albinism in Africa in Dar El Salaam, which took place from 17 to 19 June 2016;
 16. Calls for the EU and its Member States to keep engaging with the countries affected in order to effectively support their efforts to formulate policies addressing the special needs and rights of albinos, on the basis of non-discrimination and social inclusion, by providing the necessary financial and technical assistance;
 17. Encourages all affected states to share best practices in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with albinism;
 18. Calls for the EU to closely monitor the human rights situation of PWA in Africa, in particular through regular reporting and follow-up work by its delegations, and to continue to promote significant improvements in their protection and social integration;
 19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Governments and Parliaments of Malawi and Tanzania, the African Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
-