



12th Session Human Rights Council

Item : 9 Racism

Joint Statement : RADDHO, Interfaith International, Espace Afrique International

September 30, 2009

M. President,

My name is Peter Ash. I would like to thank the rapporteur, Mr. Githu, for his report on the manifestations of defamations of religions. I am an albino. I am just like you except that I have no colour in my skin, hair and eyes and am vision impaired. Other than that you and I are the same. Today, several albinos are victims of the ancestral religious beliefs in Africa.

Albinos in Tanzania and east Africa are under siege. Since November 2007, 53 innocent albino children, men and women have had their limbs hacked off while screaming in agony. Why? Because some witchdoctors peddle the sinister belief that the use of albino body parts in magic potions will make their customers rich.

Take Mariam for example, a beautiful 5 year old albino girl, happily living near Mwanza, Tanzania. On February 21, 2008, that changed. Four men invaded her home. They violently pinned down her tiny body as she screamed in terror. Wielding machetes, they slit her throat, collecting her blood and drinking it. They then chopped off both her legs. Her mutilated tiny corpse lay lifeless on the floor as her siblings watched. The killers fled with a bag of her body parts which will quickly earn them thousands of dollars. That's one murder of 53 so far in Tanzania, with 12 more in Burundi.

Racial discrimination against albinos is rampant. Many believe we are not human but are ghosts who don't die but simply vanish. Or, that we are filthy curse to be ashamed of. Confronting this racism is why I founded the NGO, Under the Same Sun.

I am thankful today that after two years of butchery, Tanzania has, days ago, announced the first conviction in these crimes. We applaud PM Pinda for being vocal about ending this slaughter.

However, 52 more families in Tanzania still wait for justice and hundreds of thousands of albinos across much of Africa still seek racial equality. I implore the HRC to consider establishing a special monitoring team to review these cases and provide law enforcement resources where needed. Hold member states accountable.

THIS RACIALLY DRIVEN CARNAGE MUST END NOW!