

NEWS

House team concerned over security of albinos



Robinson Simiyu Mkwama, the Kitale watchman who was to be sold to witchdoctors in Tanzania. FREDERICK KATULANDA | NATION

By CAROLINE WAFULA
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IN SUMMARY

- House committee faults the Government for failing to take the needs of people with albinism seriously.
- The team wants head count of the albinos saying this will make it easy to plan for their needs and know where they are.

The Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities is concerned about the rising insecurity of albinos in Kenya and faulted the Government for failing to take their needs seriously.

The chairman Mr Mohammed Affey said the Government is yet to heed to a request to conduct a national census of all people with albinism to determine their exact population.

The committee held a meeting on Thursday after which the chairman urged the Government to immediately commission a national head count of the albinos saying this will make it easy to plan for their needs and know where they are.

This came against the backdrop of the arrest and imprisonment of a Kenyan man who tried to sell an albino man to witchdoctors in Tanzania.

The committee asked the Minister for Planning to ensure the albinos are counted in every province.

Last year Parliament discussed a petition presented on behalf of albinos by Saboti MP Eugene Wamalwa on measures the Government was to adopt to protect the country's population.

The petition from the Albinism Society of Kenya was signed by 300 people with the condition and in it, they asked the Government to amend the Disability Act to have them recognised.

On Thursday, Mr Affey said albinos were a marginalized population and that the committee will push the Government to have them protected.

"The committee has previously asked the Minister for planning to carry out census of the albinos in Kenya and the Minister has not done that. We had asked that they be factored in the just concluded census," he said.

He said specific actions were needed to protect them in law. "The Minister for Planning should undertake an urgent survey to provide for information that will help in coming up with measures to protect them," he said.

The Committee is concerned that the matter is not being treated in the manner in which it should be. "The responsibility of Government is to provide necessary facilities for them. We are glad they are covered in the new constitution but before we reach there, we need to know where they are and how many because without that it is not easy to plan and we have reached a critical stage," Mr Affey said.

Meanwhile, the committee is also working on a report on ethnicity in Government. It is conducting a survey on the presence of the various ethnic groups in the civil service against the general population.

The chairman said the committee is making note of the presence of the marginalized tribes and groups as well as gender balance.

"We are working on numbers and exchanging views with relevant authorities," he said after a meeting with the chairperson of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission Dr Mzalendo Kibunja.