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Tanzania: Albinos Call for Public Hanging of Murderers

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The Tanzania Albino Society (TAS) has called for the public execution of three people who were yesterday sentenced to death for murdering an albino.

Masumbuko Madata, 32, Emmanuel Masangwa, 28, and Charles Kalamuji, alias Masangwa, 42, all residents of Shinyanga Region, were sentenced to death by the High Court sitting in Kahama for the brutal murder of a 13-year-old boy.

TAS national chairman Ernest Kimaya urged President Jakaya Kikwete to assent to the death sentences as soon as possible.

"The society hopes that President Jakaya Kikwete will authorise the death sentences the soonest, and that the executions will be carried out publicly to show that the Government is serious in its war on albino killers," he said.

He commended the Government for expediting the trial and the High Court for "delivering justice".

Nominated MP Al-Shymaa Kwegyir said she was delighted by the sentence, adding that people who murdered fellow human beings had no right to live.

"The sentences should send a powerful message to all those thinking about killing others they are an appropriate deterrent," she said.

Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) executive director Francis Kiwanga said the court had acted within the confines of the law by handing out the death sentence to the killers.

However, he pointed out that it had always been LHRC's position that capital punishment should be abolished in Tanzania.

Mr Kiwanga said over 40 lives had been lost in murders targeting albinos, adding that sentencing the convicts to death would not bring about any positive results.

He noted that the fact that the murderers had been found guilty according to the law should not deny them the right to life.

"Efforts should focus on preventing crime rather than letting people freely commit horrendous crimes and later sentencing them to death it's not very helpful."

Delivering the court's verdict in a packed courtroom in Kahama, Mr Justice Gabriel Rwakibalila said it had been proven beyond any reasonable doubt that the accused committed murder on the night of December 1, 2008 at Bunyihuna Village in Bukombe District.

He said although some defence witnesses told the court that the accused were not present at the crime scene, the same witnesses indicated that the defendants had conspired to kill the young albino.

Mr Justice Rwakibalila said discrepancies in the prosecution's case did not alter the fact that the trio had in one way or another taken part in the murder. He said the Chief Government Chemist had confirmed that the accused's DNA was found on the severed legs of their victim.

The defence immediately said it would appeal against the conviction and sentences.

Lead defence counsel Kamaliza Kayas said they were not satisfied with the verdict delivered at the end of the trial that began on June 8.

"Justice has not been done we will appeal once all formalities have been finalised," he told The Citizen.

In Mwanza, several TAS members received the judgment with joy, and commended the judiciary for expediting the trials.

"They killed an innocent and defenceless albino and they too deserve to die," said Ms Grace Wabanu, an undergraduate student at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT).

"I believe this judgment will serve as a deterrent to people who intend to kill albinos in the belief that their body parts will make them rich," said Ms Wabanu.

Mr Jamathon Magodi, the executive chairman of Concern for the Elderly (Coel), a non-governmental organisation specialising in safeguarding the rights of and protecting elderly women in the Lake Zone, said the judgment had encouraged the NGO to work even harder to end atrocities associated with witchcraft.

"We are used to seeing culprits walk out of courts free, but now justice has been done this is a very important step in our quest to end senseless killings against albinos and elderly women," he said.

In another development, the High Court sitting in Shinyanga has found four people accused of killing an albino with a case to answer.

Mr Justice Gadi Mjema said Mr Mboje Mawe, Mr Chenyeny Kishiwa, Mr Sayi Gamaya and Mr Sayi Mafizi were required to respond to charges that they murdered Lyaku Willy in Nkindabiye Village, Bariadi District, between December 4 and 8, last year.

One of the prosecution witnesses, Ms Glory Tom Machuve from the Chief Government Chemist's office, said DNA analyses had linked some of the accused to the murder.

Defence lawyer Serapion Kahangwa had earlier engaged state attorney Edwin Kakolaki in a legal tussle over the defence's request to be allowed to summon more witnesses.

Reporting Ray Naluyaga in Dar es Salaam, Patty Magubira in Mwanza, Felician Shija in Kahama and Herman Meza in Shinyanga.

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An albino boy carrying a baby

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