



March 31, 2018

Report to the Committee Against Torture regarding Senegalese with Albinism

- This report is respectfully submitted by the NGO Under the Same Sun to the committee against torture at the stage of concluding observations with regards to the situation of persons with albinism in the republic of Senegal.
- Under The Same Sun (UTSS) is a civil society organization committed to ending the often-deadly discrimination against people with albinism. UTSS promotes, via advocacy and education, the wellbeing of persons with albinism who are misunderstood, marginalized, and even attacked and killed because of their genetic condition. While UTSS acts globally, much of our focus has been on the crisis faced by people with albinism in Tanzania.

What is Albinism?

- Albinism is a relatively rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition characterized by a lack of pigmentation in the hair, skin and eyes. It occurs regardless of ethnicity or gender. Both parents must carry the gene for it to be passed on, even if neither have albinism themselves. In Africa, estimates on the incidence of albinism range from 1 in 5,000 to 1 in every 15,000. In some populations in the region, it may be as high as 1 in 1,000.¹ There are no up-to-date reliable statistics on the number of persons with albinism
- Almost everyone with albinism is visually impaired. The majority are “legally blind” and very sensitive to light. Eyeglasses can only partially correct this impairment. While most can read large print and do not require Braille, they often cannot see the blackboard in a regular classroom setup. In most cases, structural barriers prevent full participation in society on an equal basis with others in a manner proscribed by the CRPD.
- With no melanin or pigment for protection, their skin burns immediately in the sun. Most Africans including Senegalese with albinism have severely sun-damaged skin, often acquiring dramatic, visible skin damage at an early age.²

¹ Preliminary Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Persons with Albinism,” September 12, 2013 at para 14, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session24/Documents/A_HRC_24_57_ENG.doc, and Esther S. Hong, Hajo Zabeed, Michael H. Repacholi, “Albinism in Africa as public health issue”, BMC Public Health, vol. 6, No. 212 (August 2006). www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/6/212

² Yakubu, Alkassim, Mabogunje and Oluwatope. “Skin Cancer in African Albinos” Acta Oncologica, Vol. 32, No. 6, pp. 621-622. 1993.



Fatal skin cancer will ravage and claim the vast majority by the age of 40. There is little awareness of the need for sun protection and sunscreen is not commonly available or affordable in most African countries.

Albinism in Senegal

- According to the general census of the population conducted in 2002, there were 2,040 persons with albinism in Senegal, which represented a frequency of 0.7%. A subsequent census in 2004 conducted by the Department of National Statistics estimated the number of persons with albinism in Senegal at 10,500 and 0.8% of the population of persons with disabilities. However, the general census of the population conducted in 2013 did not mention any data about persons with albinism, likely because of the method of the assessment of disability which did not consider the specificity of the group of persons with albinism.³
- Albinism is still deeply misunderstood at both social and medical levels. The physical appearance of persons with albinism is subject to erroneous beliefs and myths resulting from superstitions which favor marginalization and social exclusion. Myths about persons with albinism abound. For example, the myth that having intercourse with a person with albinism will bring riches or cure HIV/AIDS or sacrificing a person with albinism can help win an election. These myths lead to all kinds of stigma and discrimination as described below.⁴
- The forms of discrimination faced by persons with albinism in Senegal are interrelated. For instance, their right to education is undermined by their low vision which forces many to abandon school. A low level of education may in turn lead to unemployment that can prevent them from enjoying an adequate standard of living; thus, relegating many persons with albinism to poverty.⁵
- The worst expression of discrimination are physical attacks. Since persons with albinism are considered supernatural beings or spirits, they are mutilated – when they are not killed – for their body parts to be used in witchcraft rituals. These attacks make many victims across Africa including in Senegal.⁶ A detailed report of documented attacks for Senegal is presented later in this report.
- In Senegal, the situation is particularly critical during election times when ritual killings of persons with albinism are allegedly on the rise.⁷

³ Report sent to UTSS by Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, chairperson of ANAS on March 26, 2018

⁴ Report sent to UTSS by Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, chairperson of ANAS on March 26, 2018

⁵ Report sent to UTSS by Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, chairperson of ANAS on March 26, 2018

⁶ Report sent to UTSS by Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, chairperson of ANAS on March 26, 2018

⁷ See <https://lesmoutonsenrages.fr/2012/03/20/senegal-les-albinos-seraient-lobjet-dune-chasse-aux-sacrifices/> accessed on March 25th, 2018



- Over the past eight years, we have read and heard various media reports, individual accounts and testimonies mentioning cases of abuse targeting persons with albinism in Senegal.
- In an article published by Agence de Presse Sénégalaise in 2010, Mrs. Aissatou Cissé⁸ a then member of a research group on women and laws in Senegal (GREFELS) said that sexual rights of young virgin females with albinism are increasingly violated in Senegal especially during election times, and for the purposes of sacrifices. The rights of women living with disabilities are violated, for example young virgin females with albinism who are raped in Dakar and its outskirts.⁹
- The following testimony made by a PhD student in Dakar, Senegal on February 19, 2013 summarizes the daily life of a person with albinism in Senegal:”
- *My name is Hamady Woury DIALLO. I am a PhD student in Sociology at the University Cheick Anta Diop of Dakar. For a significant amount of time now, I have been particularly struck the daily life of a -40-year-old woman with albinism by the name of Awa Toure, whom I live with in the same ward. I live in Grand-Dakar for three years now side by side with that woman. My instinct of observant and sociologist has permitted me to comprehend the relationship between the woman and other pigmented people. I dare affirm that the woman faces a real ordeal in her relationship with others. In fact, she suffers profound discrimination. This can be observed in her distant relationship with others. She is always lonely. I have never personally surprised her talking with others. It was in fact this situation that started rising my attention. Months ago, I heard one of my neighbours talking about her (the woman with albinism). He said it would be quite impossible for him to share the same roof with that woman, simply because he would not be able to sleep at night. At last, the other thing that struck me these days is that she was booed by a group of children aged between 7 and 10, simply because she is different. And some residents have even reported that she is sometimes the victim of stone-throwing by certain kids. To be quite honest, that woman suffers a serious rejection from her family and from the society. And, worst, neither her family nor the society seem to be willing to do something to pull the woman with albinism out of this terrible discrimination and stigmatization.”¹⁰*
- In 2013, Senegalese media reported that the President, Mr. Macky Sall was advised by a community of traditional healers also known as fortune-tellers to

⁸ Aissatou Cissé was appointed a special advisor to Senegal's President, Macky Sall. She has worked with the Minister of Health and Social Action to improve the country's sports facilities for people with disabilities. She assists with a Senegalese organisation called ASEDEME. ASEDEME is a self-help group started in 1989 to assist 50 children with learning difficulties to have an education.

⁹ See http://senemag.free.fr/spip.php?article704&debut_meme_rub=72&debut_articles_mot=12;
<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201001280906.html> accessed on March 25, 2018

¹⁰ Testimony of Mr. Hamady Woury Diallo, PhD Student, February 19, 2013.



select 3 persons with albinism, use them in ritual sacrifice to attain peace in the restive region of Casamance.¹¹ Examples like this where persons with albinism are used like objects for offerings and sacrifices are not uncommon in Senegal.

- Begging in the street has often been mentioned by various albinism groups as a real plague among persons with albinism in Senegal. Some children with albinism are forced by their parents or guardians to beg in the streets, in the sun with no sun protective gear whatsoever with high risk of life-threatening skin cancer.

Applicable Human Rights Instruments

- Senegal has ratified the main international human rights treaties including the convention against torture and other inhuman and degrading treatments in 1986¹². In addition, the Constitution of Senegal clearly states: "the human person is sacred. The State has the obligation to respect and protect it," article 6. The constitution's preamble states the country's adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1789 and to the Universal Declaration of human rights. All this to say that the country has various legal instruments that clearly ban and prohibit torture and other inhuman and degrading treatments.
- Until recently, international human rights mechanisms were silent about the rights of persons with albinism. But in 2013 and 2014 that changed. The United Nations Human Rights Council passed several resolutions on albinism (23/13, 24/33 and 26/10) and so did the General assembly, including Resolution 69/170 which proclaimed the 13th of June as international albinism awareness day. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights did the same, passing resolutions 263 and 373 demanding an end to attacks and discrimination against people with albinism and establishing the regional action plan to end attacks and related human rights violations against persons with albinism. The Regional Action Plan is a five-year plan (2017-2021) which lays out specific measures for addressing attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism through prevention, protection, accountability as well as equality and non-discrimination measures.

Violence against persons with albinism in Senegal

- In Senegal, there have been nine alleged ritual attacks recorded, three of which were killings. Two Senegalese with albinism have sought asylum, fleeing the violence.¹³ This is part of a wider pattern of murders and attacks across

¹¹ Intriguing request involving persons with albinism made to President Macky Sall by a community of traditional healers, article posted on www.seneweb.com on June 3, 2013.

¹² See https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg_no=IV-9&chapter=4&lang=fr

¹³ Under The Same Sun (UTSS) Reported Attacks of Persons with Albinism – Most recent attacks included <https://www.underthesamesun.com/sites/default/files/Attacks%20of%20PWA%20-%20extended%20version.pdf> accessed March 26, 2018



Africa. Since 2000 there have been 556 reports of violence against people with albinism across 28 countries, including 204 killings, 352 abductions, mutilations, rapes and grave violations.¹⁴ This is fueled by a demand for the body parts for witchcraft related rituals. As such a corpse can be worth up to \$75,000 US. These are reported cases only. The actual incidence of attacks is predicted to be much higher, given that there are no robust mechanisms of monitoring and the fact that ritual attacks are often shrouded in secrecy, and sometimes involve family members.

- In 2008, a 15-year old schoolgirl with albinism from Senegal flew to Belgium, having experienced insecurity due to her albinism in Senegal. She used that occasion to move to France where Genespoir assisted her in legal and administrative procedures. She is currently a student at the university and has secured a resident permit in France.¹⁵
- Late in 2011, in the months leading up to the elections in Senegal, a group led by a politician kidnapped a young girl with albinism from her home in North Senegal. A hood was forced over her head and she was dragged to a cemetery. Fortunately, she was able to find a way to escape.¹⁶
- Three murders of people with albinism are alleged to be linked to the March 2012 elections in Senegal. Several different sources have purported 1 killing in 2012 and 2 killings in 2010. These charges were actually made by President Abdoulaye Wade but apparently not at the same time:
 - In 2012 during the electoral campaign, President Abdoulaye said before the steering committee of his own political party, the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS): “Some people told me that Pape DIOP killed a person with albinism they brought from Mali”.¹⁷
 - In July of 2010, Abdoulaye Wade accused the regime of his predecessor Abdou DIOUF and his political party, the Socialist Party (PS), “of the mysterious deaths of two young females with albinism whose disappearance was never clarified”.¹⁸
- On February 21, 2012, Georgien Ndecky, a boy with albinism narrowly escaped

¹⁴ Under The Same Sun (UTSS) Reported Attacks against person with Albinism – 1 page summary <https://www.underthesamesun.com/sites/default/files/Attacks%20of%20PWA%20-%20%201%20page.pdf> accessed March 26, 2018

¹⁵ SOURCE: France major PWA group *Genespoir* share a non-comprehensive list of asylum cases pertained to PWA in which they have been / are currently involved.

¹⁶ Source: President of ANPRAS, a nationwide organization representing persons with albinism in Senegal

¹⁷ See <http://xalimasn.com/encore-une-revelation-grave-de-wade-on-ma-dit-que-pape-diop-a-fait-tuer-un-albinos/> ; http://www.rewmi.com/encore-une-revelation-grave-de-wade-on-m-a-dit-que-pape-diop-a-fait-tuer-un-albinos_a62505.html;

¹⁸ Source - WikiLeaks, December 17, 2010



abduction in the country of Senegal at Sara Ndiougari, in the suburbs of the city of Kaolack in the South- East of Dakar. Criminal politicians are suspected in this crime as the electoral campaign takes a mystical turn. The criminals were driving a “4x4” vehicle and, according to the victim’s father, these individuals had been following his son over the past 4 days. Georgien managed to escape the kidnapping because he was sleeping at the neighbors on the night the criminals knocked down the door of his home. He was subsequently relocated to Dakar by his parents.¹⁹

- In January of 2013, Aboubakary Sakho, a man with albinism from Senegal said; “As an albino man, I have been repeatedly persecuted in Senegal. People who wanted to harm me broke into my house and vandalized my car, all because I am an albino man who founded and led an organization devoted to helping albinos in Senegal.” In recent years Mr. Sakho and his wife have received numerous anonymous phone calls and letters threatening terrifying acts of physical violence and death unless he stopped working with organizations set up to help people with albinism in Senegal. A number of the people who threatened him identified themselves as political or governmental leaders. The threats of violence escalated over time, and although he made numerous reports to Senegalese police, they were unwilling to log a report or protect him in any way.²⁰
- On September 8, 2014, an 8-year-old boy with albinism by the name of Mohamed Diop was fortunately released by his kidnappers in Thies, a city located about 70 km East of Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. Mohamed was on his way home when accosted by occupants in a black 4x4 who forced him into the vehicle and drove away. Providentially a local-taxi driver witnessed the scene and gave chase while raising the alarm. This alerted people near the vehicle and the assailants ending up stopping and throwing the boy out. Mohamed was then taken to his mother by the taxi driver.²¹
- On June 17, 2015, a man with albinism from Senegal (he wishes to remain anonymous) who underwent severe persecution due to his albinism was granted asylum in New York City, New York, USA.

Recommendations

Protection, Prevention and Accountability

¹⁹ Source: Seneweb.com Video is from The Radio TV Walfadjri - February 22, 2012 and Report sent to UTSS on May 22, 2013 by Mr. Mamadou Mactar Sarr, Journalist at the Radio Television Walfadjri in Senegal- West Africa
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²⁰ UTSS records

²¹ Source: Report received by UTSS on Friday, January 16, 2015 from Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, Chairperson of the Senegal PWA Group - association nationale des albinos du Sénégal – ANAS



- The Government of Senegal should take concrete steps to prevent and protect persons with albinism from ritual attacks and other harmful practices related to witchcraft.
- The electoral campaign for the 2019 elections is nearing and the albinism community is seized by fear, recalling the nightmare they endured during the 2012 elections. Therefore, government in partnership with local albinism groups including the association nationale des albinos du Sénégal (ANAS), Fédération nationale des albinos du Sénégal (FNAS), Care Albinos, and other grassroots organizations working on the issue must join hands to increase awareness around the theme of putting an end to ritual killings of persons with albinism particularly during elections.
- The Government of Senegal should implement the regional action plan to end attacks and related violations against persons with albinism as adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights through Resolution 373. That resolution calls on all member States of the African Union to adapt and implement the measures in the regional action plan.
- The government of Senegal should investigate reported cases by working with civil society and the national commission on human rights to promote monitoring and reporting of cases including seeing them through the various national mechanisms for juridical remedies.

Collect data

- The Government of Senegal should investigate, collect and publish data about attacks, murders, abductions, assaults and other incidents involving Senegalese with albinism. As well, information should be kept on investigations, arrests, charges, prosecutions, trials and convictions for perpetrators of violence against people with albinism. Information on attacks is sparse. Better data is needed. Albinism NGOs in Africa have limited capacity to investigate reports.
- Albinism NGOs should be supported to collect data to increase response rates and build confidence among the population with albinism. Data should be stored securely, so as not to provide information for those interested into prevent misuse for attacks and other illicit purposes. profiting from the trade in body parts of persons with albinism.

Raise awareness

- Lobby the government to engage in the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with albinism in Senegal including by implementing laws that punish mendicancy and begging to which many persons with albinism, mostly children



are forced.

- Support albinism NGOs by providing them with the financial means to increase awareness to people with albinism themselves and their families.