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Regional parliament decries albino killings

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Regional parliament decries albino killings

By Zephania Ubwani, Arusha

The East African Legislative Assembly (Eala) has decried the killing of albinos in the region and urged "tougher measures" to stop the ritual murders and protect albinos.

At the ongoing meeting of the regional parliament in Bujumbura, Burundi, MPs from the five EAC member states called for regional cooperation to protect albinos victimised by superstitious fortune seekers.

This is the second time in the last two weeks the Eala members from Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda have called for concerted efforts to arrest albino killers.

Last week, the MPs held a meeting with the Burundi Albino Society where they were briefed on the gravity of the situation.

They said the continued killings of albinos and other disabled people in the region could not be allowed to continue.

Tanzanian MP Abdallah Ali Hassan Mwinyi donated \$700 (Sh910,000) to the

president of the Burundi albino association in a show of solidarity.

More than 40 albinos have been murdered in Tanzania in the past year alone by fortune seekers acting on recommendations from witchdoctors.

The killings are also rampant in some parts of Burundi and Kenya. The Tanzania Albino Society in Arusha says the total number of murdered albinos in the country is as high as 80.

At the Bujumbura meeting, MPs stressed the need for the EAC to cooperate with civil society organisations in defending and advocating for the rights of albinos and disabled people in the region.

The legislators said while "considerable progress" had been made on human rights issues in the EA region, the current killings and hostility portrayed towards the albino community showed there was still a long way to go in achieving the full respect for human rights.

Albinos in Burundi commended President Jakaya Kikwete for spearheading the country's efforts to contain the barbaric killings and appealed to other regional leaders to follow suit.

The Government revoked licences of witchdoctors and sought the cooperation of the International Police (Interpol) in a bid to curb the killings in the Lake Zone regions where most of the killings have occurred in Tanzania.

The meeting with the albino community in Bujumbura was a prelude to the presentation of a proposed draft Bill of Rights for the EAC by a Ugandan based regional organisation, the Kituo Cha Katiba (KCK).

The Bill of Rights is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring adherence to the principles of good governance set under the treaty establishing the EAC.

It seeks to buttress the principles of democracy, rule of law, accountability, transparency, social justice, equal opportunities, gender equality as well as the promotion and protection of human and people's rights.

The KCK was established in 1997 to promote constitution making and democratic governance in the East African region. It is governed by a board, whose members come from all the EAC member states.



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