

## STATEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON THE DESECRATION OF THE GRAVE OF A WOMAN WITH ALBINISM IN NGUNDI VILLAGE, SENANGA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

*“Zambia must urgently ensure accountability for the desecration of the grave of a woman with albinism and decisively address ritual-related violence and posthumous violations targeting persons with albinism.”*

We, national and regional Civil Society Organizations, express our deep outrage and condemnation over the desecration of the grave and theft of the remains of a woman with albinism in Ngundi Village, Senanga District, Western Province, Zambia.

The deceased, a woman with Albinism, born in 1980, was laid to rest on 8 October 2025. In December 2025, unknown individuals reportedly exhumed her grave and stole her remains.

We have noted that the incident was reported to the Zambia Police Service, and officers visited the site. However, as of the date of this statement, the coffin and the remains have not been recovered despite ongoing investigations. The prolonged absence of accountability heightens fears of impunity and deepens the trauma suffered by the family and the albinism community.

This act constitutes a serious criminal offence, a gross violation of human dignity, and a continuation of ritual-related violence against persons with albinism, even after death. This grave desecration is not an isolated act. It reflects the persistent targeting of persons with albinism in Zambia and across the region, driven by harmful myths, superstition, stigma, and criminal networks that traffic human body parts.

### 1. LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS BASIS

We recall and reaffirm that Zambia is bound by its constitutional, regional, and international human rights obligations, including:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Zambia, which guarantees the right to life, human dignity, equality, and security of the person, and obliges the State to protect all individuals without discrimination.
2. Section 130 of the Zambian Penal Code addresses the offense of trespassing on burial places.
3. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, notably:
  - Article 2 (non-discrimination),
  - Article 4 (right to life),
  - Article 5 (respect for human dignity),
  - Article 16 (right to health);

4. The Africa Disability Protocol(ADP) which protects inherent dignity and prohibiting harmful practices (Article 11)
5. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which obliges States Parties to protect persons with disabilities, including persons with albinism, from violence, abuse, exploitation, and degrading treatment (Articles 10, 15, and 16);
6. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), particularly Articles 2, 6, and 7, guaranteeing the right to life, dignity, and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment;
7. The United Nations Human Rights Council resolutions on albinism, which recognize ritual killings, grave desecrations, and trafficking in body parts of persons with albinism as serious human rights violations requiring urgent State action;
8. The State's heightened duty of due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish, and provide remedies for acts of violence and desecration committed by private actors, including posthumous violations.

## **2. OUR COLLECTIVE CONCERNS**

We express grave concern regarding:

1. The desecration and exhumation of the grave, representing an extreme form of violence and dehumanization directed at a person with albinism, even after death;
2. The persistence of ritual-related crimes targeting persons with albinism, indicating gaps in prevention, community protection, and law enforcement responses;
3. The lack of publicly available information on investigative progress, arrests, or prosecutions, raising concerns about transparency and effectiveness;
4. The psychological and social impact on families, communities, and other persons with albinism, who continue to live in fear;
5. The risk of impunity, which may embolden perpetrators and perpetuate cycles of violence and grave desecration and other forms of attack.

## **3. OUR DEMANDS**

We call upon the Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the relevant authorities, to:

1. Urgently intensify investigations into the grave desecration, recover the stolen remains, and identify, arrest, and prosecute all perpetrators, accomplices, and networks involved, in accordance with the law;

2. Ensure full transparency by regularly communicating investigative progress to the family and the public, while respecting due process;
3. Provide protection and psychosocial support to the affected family and community members, including measures to prevent reprisals or further attacks;
4. Strengthen preventive measures, including:
  - Community surveillance of burial sites of persons with albinism;
  - Public education campaigns to dismantle harmful myths and beliefs;
  - Engagement with traditional, religious, and local leaders;
5. Reinforce national frameworks for the protection of persons with albinism, including effective implementation of laws, policies, and action plans addressing ritual-related violence;
6. Cooperate with national, regional, and international human rights mechanisms and civil society organizations to ensure sustained monitoring and accountability.

#### **4. OUR COMMITMENT**

We, Civil Society Organizations and human rights defenders, commit to:

- Closely monitoring the investigation and judicial follow-up of this case;
- Supporting the family in their pursuit of truth, justice, and dignity;
- Advocating for systemic reforms to end violence, grave desecration, and trafficking targeting persons with albinism;
- Mobilising national, regional, and international solidarity to ensure that no crime against persons with albinism goes unpunished.

No one should be violated in life or in death.

Justice, dignity, and accountability for persons with albinism are non-negotiable.

Done on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026

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