

Memo

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KAMPALA: EHAHRDP welcomes the establishment of the Uganda Albinos Association

EHAHRDP is happy to announce the recent establishment of the Uganda Albinos Association (UAA) which is both a timely initiative and an important development on the road to protecting and promoting the rights of this community which is demonised, marginalised and ostracised throughout the sub-region.

Given the everyday challenges, prejudices and discrimination facing this community, the size of which is very difficult to verify given the tendency to hide albinos most particularly in rural areas, the establishment of this organisation is an achievement in itself.

Non-state actors tend to be the primary violators of the rights of Albinos - albino children are often abandoned by their parents, notably their fathers, or serve as domestic help for relatives instead of being sent to school. Yet, the State also heightens the discrimination suffered by Albinos notably in the education and health systems. Given the risk of skin cancer and blindness which albinos face, such discriminations can be a question of life. Lack of education is clearly stemming the development of both individual albinos and the albino community. Discrimination in the work place is also frequent. Despite these wide ranging challenges, the Ugandan government has of yet put in place no measures to tackle and overcome the discrimination faced by this community.

“The challenges facing both Albinos in general but also activists working on albino rights are immense and support for this sort of initiative is essential” says Mr Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of EHAHRDP.

The Albino community itself, as a result of years of living in a state of shame and of continual exclusion from public life, has often proven to be staunch opponents of what they perceive as opportunistic members of their community mobilising on their behalf.

“Albinos are very rarely considered as valuable members of civil society. Activists will therefore need to overcome both their own entrenched reluctance and fear of speaking out as well as the public’s perceptions in order to ensure that their rights are promoted and protected” concludes Mr Shire Sheikh.

The establishment of the Uganda Albinos Association (UAA) comes at a very timely moment given the increasing cases of murders of Albinos in the sub-region. In Tanzania in particular a series of targeted killings of albinos have occurred in the last two years and are believed to be linked to witchcraft. The Tanzanian government had in fact responded to these events, arresting

many traditional healers, revoking their licenses and also arresting other actors, notably police officers, believed to have been involved in trading in the body parts of albinos.

“We hope that the government in Tanzania and their counterparts throughout the region will put in place concrete measures to ensure that they abide by their responsibility to protect and promote the rights of their albino citizens” says Mr Ssebyanzi Yudah, Chairperson of UAA. *“We believe that our organisation and other albino rights organisations in our region have a key role to play in speaking out about the discriminations of our community and changing firmly entrenched attitudes.”*

For more information please contact Ms Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP: advocacy@defenddefenders.org or +256-775-141756 or alternatively contact the Uganda Albinos Association directly at ugandaalbinosassociation@gmail.com