



**PRESS STATEMENT
INTERNATIONAL ALBINISM AWARENESS DAY 2023**

THEME: AN INCLUSIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (the Commission) joins the rest of the global community in commemorating the International Albinism Awareness Day (IAAD) which falls on the 13th of June every year. Globally, this year's IAAD is celebrated under the theme "Inclusion is strength". Malawi has this year localized the IAAD theme which is aligned to the prevailing local situation concerning persons with albinism in Malawi. This year's IAAD will therefore, be commemorated locally under the theme "An inclusive justice system". The theme accentuates the importance of lobbying for inclusiveness in the justice delivery system to ensure that the rights of persons with albinism are respected, promoted and protected.

As the nation celebrates the achievements towards the attainment of justice on some of the cases related to the abduction, killings, mutilation of body parts and exhumation of the remains of persons with albinism, the day provides us with yet another opportunity to reflect on our efforts as a nation in ensuring that persons with albinism exercise their right to justice and legal remedies.

The Commission wishes to remind the public that since 2014, the nation has registered about 211 cases related to attacks against persons with albinism. Out of this number, only 80 cases have been concluded, with 20 cases being closed or undetected and 111 are still on-going. There are 28 cases still in court for hearing and 83 cases still under investigation. As the statistics indicate, it is evident that our justice system is yet to reach a point where we can confidently celebrate the attainment of justice in as far as attacks against persons with albinism are concerned. More work remains to be done.

It is disheartening to note that during the second half of the year 2022, the atrocious attacks against persons with albinism resurfaced. The Commission verified reports and incidences of attacks in Kasungu, Zomba, Phalombe, Balaka and Thyolo within a space of less than a month. The

resurgence of these barbaric and violent attacks came at a time when it was thought that as a nation, we are moving towards the right direction in understanding and protecting the human rights of persons with albinism.

As with our annual message, the Commission calls for the following: -

1. The nation and all citizens must be vigilant and alert because the perpetrators are still among us. Some people that unleash violence against persons with albinism are actually closely related to them. We reiterate that as we celebrate IAAD, the protection and safety of persons with albinism should be our number one priority in safeguarding the rights of persons with albinism.
2. We appeal to government for a proactive approach that aims at protection of persons with albinism in a broader perspective rather than reactions to individual incidences. The Commission particularly calls on government to invest in community protective structures that are mostly the first point for support for people with albinism when confronted with these barbaric and demonic attacks.
3. We further urge the government to prioritize prevention on the one hand, while tightening the prosecution and sentencing on the other hand. As a nation, we have reached a point where we need to move towards creation of safe spaces within the communities by having structures that identify and responds to suspicious moves by people of crooked minds, and call for external support if needed.

As a National Human Rights Institution, we are steadfast in our commitment to fighting for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with albinism in the country. In accordance with this year's IAAD theme, the Commission particularly calls on all stakeholders in the justice sector to promote inclusivity of persons with albinism in justice administration and ensure that they have maximum legal representation and access to a responsive justice system.



Habiba Osman
Executive Secretary