

Promoting the Enjoyment of Human Rights by Persons with Albinism

Forum: Human Rights Council

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Introduction

The Declaration of Human Rights states that human rights are universal and should be enjoyed by all individuals, regardless of who they are or where they reside. Human rights are vital for everyone to enjoy a fulfilling existence. Problems such as prejudice have happened throughout human history as some of the population was “different” from the majority.

Albinism is a kind of hereditary condition, and persons with albinism have a decreased quantity of melanin, or none at all, which impairs their pigmentation and vision. It was named after the Latin word “albus” meaning white. In addition, owing to the absence of melanin, individuals with albinism are very sensitive to light and sun, which prevents them from fully enjoying public amenities and private and public services.

Albinism is categorized as a disability, and persons with albinism have distinctive skin and hair colors. As a result, people with albinism are often exposed to discrimination, stigmatization, and prejudice. Due to their color, some believe that people with albinism are non-human, like ghosts or other magical beings, so cases of murder to use the body parts for witchcraft rituals also occur. Owing to these instances of discrimination, people with albinism cannot fully enjoy their human rights.



A Boy with Albinism

Background

Going back to 1908, a man named Sir Archibald Edward Garrod discovered the first recorded case of albinism while observing a patient who experienced hypersensitivity to light and eye misalignment. At first, it was considered to be caused due to a lack of melanocytes, but later in 1950 proved that albinism was caused by tyrosine kinase inactivity. Others say that albinism was first discovered in Africa, where the oldest mutation of albinism, which was thought to be a result of human development in Africa, was discovered.

In the United States, there are between 18,000 and 20,000 individuals with albinism, although, in other areas of the globe, the incidence of albinism is just one in every three thousand people. As the number of individuals with albinism is less than that of other racial or

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ethnic groupings, they are categorized as minorities. According to the Declaration of Human Rights, all people are born free and with equal dignity and rights. Even if the rights of minority groups have been protected, many members of minority groups, including people with albinism, continue to face discrimination and exclusion in various contexts, including employment possibilities, the right to public service laws, etc. Specifically, the issue of discrimination and exclusion has been one that society has struggled with throughout its history.

International Actions

International Albinism Awareness Day

On June 13, which is marked as International Albinism Awareness Day, festivities are held worldwide. The United Nations created the holiday to prevent discrimination against persons who have been diagnosed with albinism and to encourage the growth of an educated society. The objective of this day is to promote and celebrate unity among groups of people with albinism, to magnify the voices and visibility of people with albinism in all aspects of life, and to draw attention to the work being done by albinism organizations throughout the globe. Citizens who are unaware of the difficulties faced by those with albinism will get a better understanding of albinism rights.



People Protesting for Albinism Rights

Minority Rights

To address the issue of discrimination, the world has established Minority Rights. Individual rights are designed specifically to defend the rights of racial and ethnic minorities. Despite the presence of these rights for members of ethnic and racial minorities, discrimination and unjust conditions continue to exist today. The primary objective of Minority Rights is to foster political and social peace and stability. Specifically, Language rights, property claims, religious exemptions, mandated participation in legislative or advisory bodies, and different geographical or cultural autonomy types are examples of minority rights.

A/HRC/RES/23/13

As the problem of promoting the enjoyment of human rights by people with albinism demanded a global solution, the United Nations has developed a resolution aimed exclusively at people with albinism. This resolution, endorsed by the Human Rights Council during its 23rd session in 2013 without a vote, expressly asks for the avoidance of violence and discrimination against individuals with albinism. However, the resolution's shortcoming is not precisely depicting new methods for resolving the problem. Instead, it only repeats and asks the states to update the current sections on minority rights.

Problems Raised

Dehumanization

The most egregious manifestation of prejudice towards individuals with albinism is dehumanization. This creates the groundwork for horrible physical assaults. Their body parts are also used in witchcraft ceremonies because others acknowledge them as supernatural entities or ghosts. The surviving victims and their families are severely traumatized by these atrocities. People with albinism ought to have their rights to life and security safeguarded and their right not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Education and awareness initiatives can combat superstition and stigma related to Albinism.



Logo of Standing Voice

Numerous nations have recorded hundreds of ritual murders of people with albinism, mostly youngsters. Because victims and their families face stigma and witchcraft is seen as a taboo, many incidents go unreported or unregistered. There is often a lack of response to violence, which is rarely investigated or prosecuted.

There is cause for alarm about the widespread lack of repercussions for violent acts committed against people who are albino. While there seems to be some inquiry and prosecution, sentences appear unusual. Victims have a hard time seeking justice for various reasons, including the fear of retaliation or additional stigmatization. People with albinism cannot assert or challenge their rights when exposed to abuses because they cannot rely on justice.

Marginalization/Exclusion

Alongside discrimination and dehumanization, one of the most common problems that ethnic and racial minorities, including persons with albinism, face is marginalization and exclusion. Marginalization and exclusion cause society to become less equal regarding stability and equality. Even under citizenship, persons with albinism suffer to enjoy their rights as they are both intentionally and unintentionally excluded by the society. A reason for their exclusion is that others acknowledge albinism as something that may harm the citizens' safety. This point was illustrated in various myths and stories from numerous cultural backgrounds, including Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Major Parties Involved

Standing Voice

Standing Voice is a nongovernmental organization that has the purpose of helping persons with albinism based in Tanzania, where most cases of albinism occur in Africa. The goal of the Standing Voice is to deliver health, education, and advocacy by planning regular community programs to help and amplify the voices of persons with albinism. According to the research by the members of the Standing Voice, there were 211 murders and 603 human rights violations towards persons with albinism in Africa, with several being witchcraft-related violence.

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The Standing Voice operates both online and offline to do its best to help persons with albinism to gain their human rights.

National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation (NOAH)

NOAH is a national organization that has the purpose of helping persons with albinism, established in 1982. NOAH promotes public and professional education, maintains a system of

local chapters and points of contact, and provides information, support, and appropriate referrals. In addition to promoting and supporting research that will enhance the diagnosis and treatment of albinism and hypopigmentation, the organization facilitates networking opportunities for persons with specialized knowledge in the field. By joining the Albinism World Alliance, NOAH can connect with and encourage the growth of similar support organizations for persons with albinism in other countries. The goal of NOAH is to create a world where persons with albinism are accepted and valued as equal members of society, where they are free from discrimination and prejudice, and where they have a satisfying, dignified, and fulfilling quality of life.



A Teenage Boy with Albinism Saying No to Discrimination

Possible Solutions

Raising Awareness

There are several approaches to persuade citizens to end prejudice. The most prevalent examples are campaigns and charity. In addition, social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are used. By doing so, the material would be able to disseminate around the globe, therefore increasing people's knowledge of prejudice. On the other hand, there are a few drawbacks to the internet approaches indicated to improve public awareness. The most apparent concern must be that it is difficult for older generations to consume internet information, which is crucial given that older generations have a typical tendency to discriminate against ethnic and racial minorities.

Enhancement of Education Programs Related to Albinism

As previously said, one of the primary reasons why individuals with albinism are seen through tinted lenses is due to incorrect cultural traditions and ideas regarding albinism. Enhancing current education programs and developing new education programs about albinism can help citizens with false ideas realize that people with albinism are not supernatural creatures but rather individuals similar to the rest of society. There are two primary forms of education available to residents. Education for pupils in both public and private schools comes first. As schools assist adolescents and children in establishing their identities and worldviews, students will be able to learn the right things. The second is an educational program for individuals with strong identities and convictions. As most of those who conduct crimes against individuals with albinism are adults with a religious background, it is vital that they get the proper education.

Glossary

Albinism: A congenital absence of pigment in the skin and hair (which are white) and the eyes (which are usually pink).

Dehumanization: The process of depriving a person or group of positive human qualities.

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability.

Marginalization: Treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral.

Stigmatization: the action of describing or regarding someone or something as worthy of disgrace or great disapproval.

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