STOP DRAGGING OUR LEADERSHIP NAMES IN THE MUD! WE NEED ANSWERS TO THE ABDUCTION AND KILLINGS OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM!

We at the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) are dismayed but not surprised by the cheap, confused and dangerous allegations being peddled by the pro-government Poor and Concerned Persons with Albinism (PACPWA) and the so-called Islamic Commission for Justice and Freedom (ICJF) aimed at diverting stakeholder’s attention from discussing how government has helplessly failed to address the abduction and killing of person with albinism in Malawi.

The media is awash with a statement purportedly issued by the PACPWA and the ICJF, calling on security agencies to investigate and arrest the HRDC leadership based on some dreamt-up allegations. The statement alleges that the HRDC leadership is cooking-up evidence aimed at incriminating government in the killing of persons with albinism.

We are irked that the two groupings have deliberately chosen to advance their selfish and partisan interests at the expense of the lives of our brother and sisters with albinism. These careless utterances are aimed at frustrating sober strategies that are being championed by relevant authorities to get to the bottom of the attacks, abductions and killings of persons with albinism. PACPWA and ICJF should desist from being used by selfish politicians to satisfy their selfish interests.

While we are not in the habit of commenting or responding to cheap propaganda like the one at hand, we vehemently refuse to have the names of the HRDC leadership dragged in the mud on this issue. What these two groupings should know is that the HRDC has a mandate to research and investigate any human rights violations and abuses without the fear of being threatened by anyone, including PACPWA. The calls for arrest of the HRDC leadership are misguided, malicious and very laughable. We would like to warn these organisations that if they continue making such baseless and careless allegations against the HRDC leadership, we will have no option but to take legal action against them. Much as the Constitution of Malawi protects free speech, PACPWA should know that that protection does not extend to defamatory and character assassination remarks which the grouping has made against the leadership of the HRDC. The statement by PACPWA and the ICJF is highly defamatory to the leadership of the HRDC.
We would like to remind the nation that our work in human rights advocacy is evidence based and in this light we have a mandate to carry out necessary investigations in order to establish required facts and inform our advocacy. Therefore, our visit to Domasi Prison on 15th March 2019 (and not March 14th as PACPWA’s statement alleges) was solely in line with this mandate. The visit was aimed at investigating how – and why one key suspect in the murder of McDonald Masambuka, a person with albinism, was transferred from Zomba Central Prison to Domasi prison. We felt that it was very necessary to conduct this special investigation considering that recently, Lule Buleya, a key suspect in the abduction and murder of a 14-year old boy with albinism, Goodson Makanjira in Dedza, was murdered whilst in police custody before conclusion of his case. We were alarmed and suspicious upon being informed that Alfred Yohane, a key suspect in the murder of Masambuka, has been transferred from Zomba Central Prison to Domasi Prison.

It is utter nonsense to suggest that the purpose of this visit was to find dirt to implicate Mutharika and his government in the attacks, abductions and killings of persons with albinism. All conversations with the suspect were done in full presence of prison officials. The HRDC does not believe in doing things in secret, which is why we find allegations made by the two groups highly outrageous. Upon interviewing him, Yohane stated that he is living in fear and he does not know the reason behind his transfer. His court case is dragging and has not been concluded. As human rights defenders, we call upon the Government to ensure that his case is urgently concluded because justice delayed is justice denied.

We would like to tell PACPWA and its ally in the name of the ICJF that the HRDC is a highly professional organization. It is, therefore, an insult to allege that the HRDC was being funded by the UTM to carry out its investigations. We challenge PACPWA and ICJF to produce evidence to support their allegations. The HRDC does not have political interests and is not in the business of peddling political party agendas. Our business is purely human rights.

We urge President Mutharika and the DPP-led government to ensure that human rights organizations are able to operate freely without interference or intimidation.

It is unfortunate that the current leadership has adopted the shameless strategy of blame game against various stakeholders who are trying to find a meaningful solution to attacks and killings of persons with albinism. Recently, the President during the swearing in ceremony of the Commissioners in the inquiry of the attacks and killings of people with albinism, threw attacks on the leadership of Association of People with Albinism in Malawi (APAM), HRDC, the former leader of Opposition- Dr. Chakwera and Vice President- Dr. Chilima, for doing nothing but simply pointing out the leadership lapse and suggesting solution to these abhorrent and disgusting human rights abuses.

We take this opportunity to remind the Democratic Progressive Party and its functionaries to refrain from frustrating efforts that are aimed at ending killing of persons with albinism but rather hasten in finding lasting solutions to the national embarrassments; abduction and killing of persons with albinism.
We wish to remind all our detractors that no amount of propaganda, mudslinging nor smear campaign will slow us down in our drive to hold duty bearers accountable to the human rights promises. We will not tire in demanding accountability on all human rights violations and poor governance including corruption which is happening under full watch of the Mutharika leadership.

Signed by

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