

Synopsis:

ALBINO KILLINGS IN TANZANIA

Photography by
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There is currently a frightening trade of albino body parts that takes place in the Lake Victoria Region in Tanzania. Local witchdoctors use them to concoct potions that are supposed to bring wealth and prosperity. Their « clients » are mostly businessmen that wish to make the most money out of their goldmines or politicians that hope to be elected. Officially, since 2007, 68 people with albinism have had their legs or arms amputated by machete and only 9 of them have survived to these attacks. The body parts were sold to witchdoctors for amounts that are hard to imagine: \$ 2.000 for a leg, an arm or the blood... which makes an entire albino body worth no more than \$ 10.000. This horrifying market has become recently a cross-border trade (Congo, Burundi, Kenya).

Albinism is a genetic disease that causes absence of pigment in the hair, eyes and skin. Tanzania is the country that counts the highest number of albinos in the world, 1 out of 3.000 whereas there is 1 out of 20.000 in Europe. Added to the dreadful killings, African albinos suffer from discrimination in their daily lives and from eyes problems which handicaps them considerably in order to graduate from school, which leads to unemployment and poverty. This status deprives them from any access to sunscreen and sunblock clothing. Skin cancer gives them a life expectancy of 30 years whereas in Europe it is the same for all.

The goal of the Tanzania Albino Society is to protect, educate and help its members. But corruption is ever present. The Tanzanian government is also divided despite the efforts of the Prime Minister and President Kikwete (nomination of an albino deputy, police operations to arrest witchdoctors...). The Interior Minister stands his ground on this issue and says of BBC journalist Vicky Ntetema who brought out the story that « *she is a shame for our country!* »