

Media Analysis of Albino Killings in Tanzania: A Social Work and Human Rights Perspective

Jean Burke, Theresa J. Kaijage and Johannes John-Langba

Murders of people with albinism are a recently emerging human rights issue in Africa, particularly Tanzania. Thus far, public debates about albino killings in Tanzania and other African countries have been dominated by media reports rather than academic writing. This paper presents the findings of a content analysis of Swahili and English Tanzanian media reports published between 2008 and 2011 on albinism and albino murders in Tanzania, and the diverse activities that have unfolded in response to these attacks. Using a human rights framework, the article explores these responses from a social work perspective. It finds that interventions are often framed with reference to African conceptions of humanness. These conceptions are found to be compatible with notions of human rights as relational, in which the various rights and responsibilities of different members of society are seen as interconnected. In practice however, some interventions have resulted in trade-offs between competing rights, causing further harm to victims and their families. To become sustainable therefore, interventions should aim to support all the human rights necessary for the well-being of Africans with albinism, their families and communities. Further research to this effect is recommended.

Keywords Albinism; Social Work; Human Rights; Tanzania; Media, Africa