



MEDIA STATEMENT

Issued by the Department of Women, Youth & Persons with Disabilities

Attention: Journalists and News Editors

Pretoria, 12 June 2021 (Issued ahead of International Albinism Awareness Day – 13 June 2021)

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INTERNATIONAL ALBINISM AWARENESS DAY OBSERVED UNDER THE THEME: STRENGTH BEYOND ALL ODDS

13 June is recognised globally as International Albinism Awareness Day, and South Africa joins the world in recognising and observing this day in partnership with persons with albinism. The 2021 theme for the day is *Strength Beyond All Odds*.

The theme is chosen to recognise the complex challenges persons with albinism face on a daily basis. Globally, as the world still deals with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent impact on economies and communities, the department appeals to everyone to stand in solidarity with persons with albinism through their challenges. In this unprecedented time, persons with albinism continue to suffer human rights violations.

International Albinism Awareness Day calls for the prevention of attacks on persons with albinism, emphasizing that they should also enjoy inherent human rights. This day provides countries including ours, with the opportunity to focus on the challenges that persons with albinism face.

Albinism is still profoundly misunderstood, socially and medically. The physical appearance of persons with albinism is often the object of erroneous beliefs and myths influenced by superstition, which foster their marginalization and social exclusion. This leads to various forms of stigma and discrimination. This also places their lives at risk.



The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in December 2015 recognises albinism as an impairment that must be seen from a disability rights perspective.

South Africans living with albinism are among the most marginalised and vulnerable of the country's citizens, yet very little attention is given to protecting them from human rights violations, threats and violent crime. This applies more so to children with albinism who are often kidnapped and murdered as part of barbaric practises. During Child Protection Week, the plight of children with albinism is a consistent talking point because parents of these children are even afraid to send them to school, in fear of them being kidnapped and murdered.

The United Nations defines Albinism as a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited difference present at birth. In almost all types of albinism, both parents must carry the gene for it to be passed on, even if they do not have albinism themselves. The condition is found in both sexes regardless of ethnicity and in all countries of the world. Albinism results in a lack of pigmentation (melanin) in the hair, skin and eyes, causing vulnerability to the sun and bright light. As a result, almost all people with albinism are visually impaired and are prone to developing skin cancer. There is no cure for the absence of melanin that is central to albinism.

Available statistics point to there being approximately 12 000 affected individuals in South Africa, however this number can be much higher due to unregistered births, as well as parents with children with albinism fleeing to South Africa to protect their children.

The Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities will host a webinar to commemorate International Albinism Awareness Day on Sunday, 13 June 2021. Members of the media are invited to join the webinar which will take place as follows:

Date: Sunday, 13 June 2021

Time: 11:00 – 13:00

Platform: <https://meet.jit.si/InternationalAlbinismAwarenessDay> (Use Google Chrome to access the link)

Programme for the webinar include:

- Health challenges of people with albinism
- Mental health affecting youth with albinism
- People with albinism and human rights



- Violence and discrimination against persons with albinism
- Socio-Cohesion and community perceptions about persons with albinism

ENDS

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Mr Shalen Gajadhar (Director: Communications, Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities)
060 979 4235

Know and Share these contact details:

GBV Command Centre: 0800 428 428 / *120*7867# from any cell phone

Persons with disabilities, SMS 'help' to 31531

Women Abuse Helpline: 0800 150 150

Child line: 0800 055 555

SAPS Crime Stop: 0860 10111 / SMS Crime Line: 32211

GBVF-related service complaints (SAPS): 0800 333 177

National AIDS Helpline: 0800 012 322

National Human Trafficking Helpline: 0800 222 777

Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567

Twitter: @DWYPD_ZA

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Website: www.women.gov.za

