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## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **STRENGTHEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM TO END ATTACKS AGAINST PERSONS WITH ALBINISM**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned with what seems to be a new wave of attacks and killings of persons with albinism in Malawi. In the past 3 months, there have been 6 recorded attacks of persons with albinism, ranging from killings, grave tampering, attempted abductions and physical violence.

The government has an obligation under the constitution of Malawi and the international treaties it has ratified to protect the right to life, equality and access to justice and remedies to all people in Malawi. Despite some legislative steps, amendments of laws and public condemnation of the attacks of persons with albinism by the government of Malawi, the violence has continued.

On 17 November, a police road block in Mulanje near the border between Malawi and Mozambique intercepted two men on a motorcycle. The men abandoned the motorcycle and fled into a nearby field leaving a black bag. Upon searching the bag, police officers discovered fresh body parts (arms and limbs) of a person with albinism. The police have since launched an investigation into the incident.

Authorities must launch a thorough, effective and impartial investigation into the killings and trafficking of body parts of persons with albinism to ensure that victims and their families can access justice without discrimination. The government of Malawi has an obligation under domestic and international law to protect persons with albinism and deliver justice to the victims of the attacks and killings.

Amnesty International also urges the government of Malawi to strengthen transnational collaboration on policing and investigations, and mutual legal assistance from neighbouring countries. Studies have shown that a large number of crimes against persons with albinism are cross border in nature and often take place in border regions.

In light of the increasing risks that persons with albinism are facing, the government of Malawi should adopt the Regional Action Plan on albinism to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons with albinism. Amnesty

International further urges Heads of State and Government in southern Africa to commit to the protection of persons with albinism across the region and launch a regional action plan to effectively combat attacks and the trafficking of body parts of persons with albinism.

## **BACKGROUND**

Persons with Albinism endure structural and systematic discrimination across southern Africa. They continue to live in fear for their lives, as they are actively hunted and killed for their body parts in many countries across the region.

Approximately 152 persons with albinism have been killed in countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia since 2014 for their body parts. Trafficking of body parts of persons with albinism is rife across borders, particularly between countries such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa.

Failures in the criminal justice system, which include the slow movement of cases, tampering and disappearance of evidence, and death in custody of suspects have led to impunity sending a message that attacks against persons with albinism in Malawi will go unpunished.