

Alarm over violent attacks on lawmakers, opposition in Malawi, ahead of elections

In Malawi, the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), voiced alarm on Friday over increasing, horrific violence there, linked to upcoming elections.

The victims have included politicians, male and female party activists and persons with albinism – the condition where those affected are born with lighter skin, hair and eye colour.

In one recent incident in the north of the country, a 55-year-old man with albinism was repeatedly stabbed in front of his child, before his arms were amputated by his attackers.

UN spokesperson Rupert Colville told journalists in Geneva that Member of Parliament, Bon Kalindo, was also set upon after being arrested for allegedly insulting the President.

“Following his release on bail, on 16 January, Mr. Kalindo was violently assaulted, allegedly by members of the governing Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) youth wing”, he said, adding that the offence took place on the premises of the District Commissioner in the southern town of Mulanje, requiring the parliamentarian to seek hospital treatment.

Mr. Colville added that Edward Govati, a supporter of another opposition party, Malawi Congress, “was savagely attacked” in Blantyre, also reportedly by DPP cadets. “He was extremely badly beaten and also required hospital treatment. Mr Govati had previously been threatened because of his political activities.”

Mr Colville noted that women candidates have faced threats, harassment and intimidation ahead of national elections in May.

DPP cadets were also allegedly involved in an attack last Sunday on several supporters of the United Transformation Movement, (UTM), as they made their way to a political rally in Mangochi.

According to OHCHR, they were forced to take off their party T-shirts, leaving the woman in her underwear and the man who was assaulted, half-naked. He was also reportedly beaten with a beer bottle.

On 23 January, President Peter Arthur Mutharika publicly condemned political violence, including acts aimed at humiliating women in the political arena.

Welcoming the presidential announcement, OHCHR expressed concern that so far no one had been brought to justice for numerous politically motivated attacks committed in the last year.

It also called on the authorities to step up their efforts to protect persons with albinism, and to prosecute and punish alleged perpetrators.