

Medically Circumcised Man Kidnapped and Forced into Traditional Rite

LULAMILE FENI – An Eastern Cape man with a previous medical circumcision was kidnapped, re-circumcised and forced into a traditional initiation school for a week before he was rescued by a family member.

Onwaba Masiba, 27, a driver in Ntabankulu, spoke about his harrowing experience at the hands of other village men, and the trauma and torture he was subjected to when a group of men overpowered him, calling him a boy.

Masiba said he had been medically circumcised in hospital 10 years ago.

Male medical circumcision was widely practised in his area of Silindile Siphethu near Ntabankulu, he added.

"In our community it is not shameful or a secret to be medically circumcised and it is public knowledge," he said.

"I was circumcised in hospital in June 2012."

I am not ashamed of that; it is our family custom.

"There have been no issues around that, and we do not have umgidi."

Masiba said on December 16 he had been hired to drive people to a traditional initiation school to drop off 25 litres of umqombothi.

"These people asked me to assist them and now they did this to me.

"They asked me to carry a container of umqombothi to the initiation lodge.

"As I entered it I was attacked, stripped naked, beaten and re-circumcised.

"They forced me to drink a mutilike imbila [yellow maize drink] and I became weak and unconscious for a while.

"I was tortured and beaten again. They boasted that they were making a man out of the boy I was.

"I told them I was a circumcised man and in fact they could see that themselves.

"My constitutional rights were violated, and my customary practices undermined and insulted.

"I was forced to undergo a foreign custom. My manhood was questioned and my being belittled.

"I never expected this from people who grew up with me."

Masiba said he was tortured and kept there for three days before a family member rescued him.

"It was like being there for three years. They made me drink this muti-like imbila, which made me weak for hours.

"Though there was an initial grass hut we were made to sleep outside in the cold, exposed to rain, cold and wind while the so-called amakhankatha slept inside.

"I was treated like a slave and made to suffer; I was even starved," he said.

Masiba said he was rescued by his cousin, who is one of the traditional initiation monitoring team members.

"When he and his team visited the initiation school he saw me. He asked if I was there of my own accord.

"I told him the whole story and he removed me from there.

"I was taken to hospital. I consulted a sangoma to cleanse myself of the imbila I was forced to drink.

"I just pray the muti does not create a permanent mental ailment," he said.

Family spokesperson Philiswa Masiba called for justice to be done.

Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders chair Mpumalanga Gwadiso lashed out at Masiba's attackers.

"This is wrong," he said, adding it was not correct practice to force anyone to undergo circumcision or initiation.

"We will investigate this matter," Gwadiso said.

Police spokesperson W/O Majola Nkohli confirmed that a case of kidnapping, assault and unlawful circumcision had been opened.

No one had been arrested, he added.