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Complaint: Defamation of Witchcraft and self-defined Witches

The South African Pagan Rights Alliance objects to the propagation of prejudicial assertions by traditional healer Schoeman Xulu, as reported by 'Witness Reporter' and 'Bongani Hans' on 31 July 2008, that the abhorrent practices detailed in the Witness are the work of Witches.

Self-defined Witches do not practice blood-sacrifice and would never harm an animal in the practice of Witchcraft. It is however common knowledge that both iSangomas and nYangas do sacrifice chickens in their traditional African magical practices.

The statements made by Xulu are irresponsible and constitute hate speech against self-defined Witches.

Witch-hunts are motivated by beliefs that instil fear. The false accusations such as those made by Xulu often motivate further violence against innocent men and women in response to a perceived threat, whether or not that threat is real or merely imagined. Self-defined South African Witches do not practice ritual killings or blood sacrifice. Witches are not responsible for the crimes we are being implicated in - implicated not through evidence, but through belief.

In publishing these false and malicious allegations against Witches and against Witchcraft, the Witness is providing credence, on the basis of belief alone, that self-defined Witches have committed and do commit such crimes.

The South African Pagan Rights Alliance objects to the summary criminalisation of Witchcraft. The Witness inadvertently stereotypes Witchcraft as harmful by portraying Witches as a danger to the communities within which they live and work. These harmful stereotypical definitions merely serve to justify irrational public fear of Witchcraft as an allegedly harmful practice that is associated with criminal activity.

Maintaining and reinforcing a definition of Witchcraft that is predisposed to eliciting violence against alleged or accused Witches does not promote religious tolerance. It only serves to incite further malice and violence against suspected Witches and thereby fosters further discrimination against Witchcraft as an internationally recognised religion.

The characterization of a person or group of persons (Witches) as 'evil' and so deserving of criminal classification by default – a characterization supported by centuries of religious and cultural prejudice - makes a mockery of the values of human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms on which the new Republic of South Africa is founded.

South African Witches regard harmful stereotypical definitions of Witchcraft as injurious to their dignity and the use of the terms Witch and Witchcraft to describe criminal activities as discrimination on the basis of belief. The use of the English term Witchcraft with which to describe harmful magical practices brings into disrepute anyone who may self-identify as a Witch, irrespective of whether or not said self-defined Witch is a European Pagan or a practitioner of Traditional African magic.

The South African Pagan Rights Alliance demands an immediate retraction of prejudicial statements made against Witchcraft and self-defined Witches.

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With reference:

**Witchcraft: Dog spell to trap victim**

31 Jul 2008  
Witness Reporter

Well-known Imbali-based traditional healer Schoeman Xulu viewed the discovery as the worst form of witchcraft.

“The perpetrators were trapping someone to death. Witches use black chickens and dogs and colourful candles to kill their targets. I feel sorry for whoever the practice was directed at,” said Xulu.

Pictured are (from left) Inspector Michael Wiid, Constable Sandile Nxumalo of the Pietermaritzburg Dog Unit and Thulani Khwela holding stuff found in Camps Drift yesterday.

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[http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B\\_id%5D=11161](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=11161)

**Hero: Homeless man dials 10111 to rescue buried puppy**

31 Jul 2008  
Bongani Hans

A HOMELESS man made the pitiful discovery of a border collie puppy, which had been buried alive with two spears inserted into its body, at Camps Drift near the Msunduzi River yesterday morning and rushed to get help for the stricken animal.

The puppy, which is estimated to be about seven weeks old, was buried with a dead black chicken, a mirror, underwear, a sock, two blue and red candles and headgear made from an animal skin.

Thulani Bernard Khwela said he was walking around Camps Drift looking for empty bottles to sell when he heard the puppy howling.

"I looked around but couldn't see where the noise was coming from," said Khwela. He followed the howls to a heap of freshly dug soil.

Khwela was shocked to unearth the puppy, which had two spears inserted into its tiny body in the form of a cross. He immediately ran to find help.

"I tried to stop a police van that was driving by, but when it didn't stop, I proceeded to call 10111," said Khwela.

Two officers, Inspector Michael Wiid and Constable Sandile Nxumalo, arrived at the scene of the and called the SPCA.

SPCA staff members sedated the puppy and took it away for treatment. The two officers and Khwela also found three other heaps of soil, under which were buried three dead black chickens, candles, spears and underwear and mirrors. It looked like the internal organs had been removed from the chickens.

Although Khwela believes in witchcraft, he said that when he saw the puppy in pain, he did not think twice about lifting it out of the hole to rescue it.

"People believe that when you touch things like this you get cursed, but I think what I did was right and I don't think it will affect me," he said.

Khwela survives by selling anything from scrap metal to bottles. He said he has never found anything like this before.

Wiid said the items found at the scene will be retained as evidence.

Police spokeswoman Inspector Joey Jeevan said that a case of cruelty to animals has been opened.

She said the Gauteng-based occult-related crime unit has been contacted and photographs of the remnants will be sent to them to assist in their investigation.

"If necessary they will come down to the scene to investigate further."

She said that police occult specialists would be unable to comment on the incident until they had seen the photographs.

Robert Deere of the SPCA said the puppy was still alive late yesterday. He said it had serious stab wounds to its lung and had intestinal injuries.

"It's in a lot of pain. The next 24 hours are critical. We are trying our best to keep it alive, and we'll see tomorrow if it is going to make it," he said.

He said the puppy, which has been nicknamed Assi (short for assegai), would be taken to the Border Collie Rescue Centre in Kloof to heal fully before being re-homed if it is not claimed.

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