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## Kara Heritage Institute defames Witches

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In a recent article published in The Daily News on October 31 and republished on IOL entitled 'Muti killings on the rise in KZN', the reporter (?) states,

*"In KwaZulu-Natal, poverty and human suffering are believed to be some of the reasons behind the rise in muti killings and witchcraft".*

The reporter later alleges that Kara Heritage Institute director Dr. Mathole Motshekga told [him / her] that; *"the increase in witchcraft and muti-related crimes was the result of the socio-economic conditions that affect the majority of South Africans"*. Motshekga is also alleged to have said *"witchcraft and muti-related crimes posed a major challenge to the country"*.

President of the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Healers Association Sazi Mhlongo distanced traditional healers from the practice of human mutilations by allegedly calling those traditional healers found using human body parts "Witchdoctors" and "charlatans".

It is clearly the assumption of the author of this article that "muti-murders" and Witchcraft are related, and that Witches must therefore be the ones responsible for perpetrating murder and human mutilations, crimes which are alleged to be on the increase according to former head of the Occult-related Crimes Unit (ORCU) of the SAPS Kobus Jonker.

The article in question however does not provide any evidence to prove, or link, actual cases of murder and human mutilations to the practice of Witchcraft. The alleged Witches appear instead to be rogue traditional healers acting outside the boundary of accepted traditional practices and without the sanction of credible traditional healers themselves. The article cites "muti-related" cases in which several 'traditional healers' have been found collaborating with alleged criminals.

The South African Pagan Rights Alliance wishes to place on record within the public domain that all allegations of murder and human mutilations leveled at alleged Witches and the practice of Witchcraft by Dr. Mathole Motshekga are entirely fabricated and false.

Unless, and until Dr. Motshekga provides actual court testimony from alleged "witches" to prove that "they" are indeed self-defined witches who have been found guilty of engaging in the practices of murder and human mutilations, all allegations of criminal activity alleged to be undertaken by so-called "witches" or through the agency of so-called "witchcraft" remain entirely false statements.

The statements alleged to have been made by Dr. Mathole Motshekga, as well as the statements made by the author of this article about and against witchcraft, constitute defamation of character and dignity of self-defined Witches.

To the extent to which these defamatory statements may be believed to be factual by uninformed readers of both The Daily News and IOL, the content of the article in question is deemed to represent hate speech against an already recognised religious minority in South Africa, i.e. Witchcraft.

This Alliance regards Motshekga's often stated summary relegation of all harmful traditional practices as "witchcraft" amounts to the incitement to prejudice against self-defined Witches and Witchcraft. To the extent to which self-defined Witches regard Witchcraft as a spirituality and religion, Motshekga's incitement also amounts to religious discrimination.

The South African Pagan Rights Alliance calls on Dr. Mathole Motshekga to apologize publicly for his defamatory statements which are injurious to self-defined Witches.

The Alliance further calls on The Daily News and IOL to curb and prevent any further false and unproven allegations of criminality against Witches and Witchcraft, allegations which amount to harmful stereotyping and religious discrimination of and against a religious minority who self-define as Witches.