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## Malawi: Five Jehovah Witnesses Arrested for Failing to Donate Blood to Their Anaemic Child

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By Arnold Namanja

Police in Mangochi have arrested five members of a family for failing to donate blood to their 7-year old anaemic child due to religious beliefs, Malawi News Agency has established.

The five have been identified as 34 year old Simon Kamwendo (father of the child), his grandfather Bernard Kamwendo, 69, brothers Solomon and Divason Mwabwino, both 21, and Byson Chidandala an uncle to the child.

Failure to provide a child with necessities contravenes section 242 of the Penal Code, hence the arrest of the five who belong to the Jehova's Witness faith.

A source, MacDonald Danger told Mana that medical doctors at Koche Health Centre diagnosed the boy of Malaria with anaemia and recommended blood transfusion, but the five rejected the prescription.

"The child was suffering from Malaria and was taken to Koche Health Centre where it was discovered that he was anaemic and needed blood," he said.

"When asked to donate, all the five guardians who are family members refused to do so saying that their faith does not allow them to receive or to donate blood," Danger added.

According to Danger, the resistance prompted officials at the hospital to seek the intervention of Makolola Police Unit, which led to the arrests.

Mangochi Police Station Public Relations Officer, Inspector Rodrick Maida confirmed the arrests of the five Jehova's Witness members.

"We arrested the five following a report from Koche clinic which asked for our intervention in the matter whereby these people were refusing to donate blood to a patient who needed to be saved from dying," he said.

He said the five will soon appear before the court to answer to a charge of failing to provide necessities to a child under their care.

All the five hail from Mapata Village in the area of Traditional Authority Mponda in Mangochi.

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