

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 61/92 hunger-strike / medical concern

19 February 1992

SOUTH AFRICA (Bophuthatswana):

Christopher MAKGALE, on hunger-strike since 18 December 1991

Petrus MOTHUPI, on hunger-strike since 2 January 1992

Amnesty International is concerned about the deteriorating health of the above prisoners on hunger-strike, Christopher Makgale and Petrus Mothupi, particularly in view of reports that they may not be receiving adequate medical attention and are being denied regular access to visits by relatives and human rights monitoring groups.

Christopher Makgale is currently in Odi Prison near Ga-Rankuwa in the nominally independent "homeland" of Bophuthatswana. He is a political activist who is serving a 15-year sentence for murder imposed in October 1991. He began his hunger-strike on 18 December 1991, on the grounds that as a political prisoner he ought to be released under the current program for the release of political prisoners negotiated between the South African Government and the African National Congress (ANC). During his trial the Attorney General of Bophuthatswana reportedly acknowledged that the crime of which he was accused was politically-motivated. Christopher Makgale was admitted to Odi hospital on 28 January 1992, but was discharged on 5 February 1992 and returned to Odi prison, where he is believed to be held in isolation from other prisoners. Members of Bophuthatswana human rights monitoring organizations have not been allowed to visit him in order to monitor his condition on a regular basis, and family visits have also been restricted. He is now on day 69 of his hunger-strike and is reported to be in a very weak condition, unable to walk or to speak above a whisper.

Petrus Mothupi is in Bophelong hospital and has been on hunger-strike since 2 January 1992. He is a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, serving a 15-year sentence for attempted murder imposed in July 1986. He, too, has undertaken a hunger-strike on the grounds that, as a political prisoner, he should be released. On 18 February he was permitted a visit from a lawyer, but requests by human rights monitors to visit Petrus Mothupi regularly have been refused. Visits by his relatives are also restricted. He is now on day 49 of his hunger-strike and is reported to be in a weak condition and to have difficulty speaking.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Following a long-running wave of hunger-strikes by political prisoners in Bophuthatswana between June and November 1991 (see UA 221/91 (AFR 53/23/92, 28 June 1991) and follow ups AFR 53/24/91 (4 July 1991), AFR 53/25/91 (10 July 1991), AFR 53/26/91 (18 July 1991), AFR 53/31/91 (17 September 1991), AFR 53/32/91 (27 September 1991), AFR 53/36/91 (24 October 1991), AFR 53/42/91 (20 November 1991) and AFR 53/43/91, 13 December 1991), approximately 150 prisoners were eventually released, the majority in November and December 1991. During that period, human rights workers attempting to monitor the situation of the hunger-strikers repeatedly expressed concern that hunger-strikers were given inadequate medical monitoring and care, and in some cases were ill-treated by prison warders.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the deteriorating health of Christopher Makgale and Petrus Mothupi in view of their lengthy hunger-strikes;
- urging that each be granted full access to a medical doctor of his choice and to the treatment prescribed by the doctor, both during the hunger-strike and thereafter, including hospital treatment if recommended;
- appealing for them to be permitted regular visits by their relatives and human rights workers;
- urging that the South African and Bophuthatswana authorities speedily complete their review of the cases of all political prisoners, in order to avoid further suffering to the prisoners and their families.

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APPEALS TO:

1) State President:

Mr F W De Klerk
State President
State President's Office
Private Bag x83
Pretoria 0001, South Africa
Telegrams: President de Klerk, Pretoria, South Africa
Telexes: 321695 SPLIB SA 321890 PRES SA/322158 PRES SA
Faxes: + 27 12 323 3982
Salutation: Dear President

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Mr R F Botha
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs
Private Bag X152
Pretoria 0001, South Africa
Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Pretoria, South Africa
Telexes: 0959 350060 EXTERN TTX SA
Faxes: + 27 12 323 1664
Salutation: Dear Minister

3) President of Bophuthatswana:

Chief LM Mangope
President
Government Office, Mmabatho, Bophuthatswana, South Africa
Telegrams: President Mangope, Bophuthatswana, South Africa
Telexes: 937 3008 BOP
Faxes: + 27 140 842626

4) Minister of Justice, Bophuthatswana:

Mr S G Mothibe
Minister of Justice
Department of Justice
Private Bag X2033
Mmabatho 8681
Bophuthatswana, South Africa
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Bophuthatswana, South Africa

COPIES TO at least one of the following:

- The Editor, The Sowetan, POB 6663, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

- The Editor, New Nation, PO Box 10674, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
- Mafikeng Anti-Repression Forum, PO Box 158, Ratshidi 8681, South Africa
- Lawyers for Human Rights, 713 Van Erkom Building, Pretorius Street, Pretoria, South Africa
- African National Congress, Legal and Constitutional Affairs Department, PO Box 61884, Marshalltown 2307, Johannesburg, South Africa
- National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), PO Box 2346, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
- Medical Association of South Africa (MASA), PO Box 20272, Alkantrant, Pretoria 0005, South Africa

and to diplomatic representatives of South Africa in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 April 1992.