

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 221/91 (AFR 53/23/91, 28 June 1991) and follow-up, AFR 53/24/91, (4 July 1991) - Hunger-Strike

SOUTH AFRICA: Twenty-three hunger-strikers from Rooigrond Prison, (Bophuthatswana), including some of the following:

Lawrence MAHILA, aged 44
Johannes SIMELANE, aged 30

Frans MOKOMANE, aged 29
Johannes MOLEFE, aged 30

Zachariah SEABI, aged 28

plus,

Thapelo MANYENENG,
Abram SELEKE,
Patrick LESANE,
Augustin TWAIBILE,
Gideon KEEPILWE,
William METSWAMERE,
David MOLELEKENG

Patrick MONGAKE
David MOSEBI
Moses TSWAILE
Solomon MATSHABA
Daniel MOSHANE
Vincent SEKHU

and several others

Amnesty International has received reports that the political prisoners on hunger-strike in Bophuthatswana are in a critical condition. As of 8 July 1991, 23 prisoners remain on hunger-strike including all those listed above.

Five of the original hunger-strikers, Timothy Phiri, Patrick Cebisa, Davis Matshego, Michael Ranku and Simon Lefakane, have ended their hunger-strike.

With the exception of Lawrence Mahila and Frans Mokomane, those still on hunger-strike are former members of the Bophuthatswana Defence Force convicted of treason. They are in the twenty-fourth day of their hunger-strike, and their condition is deteriorating rapidly.

Delegates from a human rights organization visited the hunger-strikers at Odi Hospital on 7 July 1991, and were "shocked at the physical condition of the hunger-strikers". Eighteen of the twenty-three prisoners named above are in the hospital. Medical reports of their conditions from the delegates describe numbness of legs, vomiting blood, kidney and back pain, dizziness, loss of ability to concentrate, severe insomnia, diarrhoea and cramps, constant headaches, heart palpitations and irregular pulse, dangerously low blood pressure (which Odi Hospital does not have the facilities to treat, thereby forcing the transfer of patients to other hospitals that do have such facilities), and very low weights. One prisoner lost consciousness on 8 July 1991.

Despite their weakening physical condition, the hunger-strikers sent out a message that they are determined to continue their hunger-strike to the end. They are demanding their immediate release as political prisoners under the terms of the Pretoria Minute, and short of their release, they will not end their hunger-strike. Amnesty International is concerned that the prolongation of this situation will lead to permanent damage to the prisoners' health or possibly deaths.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the increasingly deteriorating condition of the hunger-strikers in Odi Hospital in Bophuthatswana;
- urging that all prisoners on hunger-strike be granted full access to a medical doctor of their choice and to the treatment prescribed by that doctor, both during and after the hunger-strike;
- urging that all hunger-strikers be allowed regular access to their families and lawyers;
- urging that the South African government speedily complete its review of the cases of all political prisoners, including those in the "homelands", in order to prevent further suffering to the prisoners and their families.

APPEALS TO:

Chief L M Mangope
President
Government Offices
Mmabatho

Bophuthatswana, South Africa
Telegrams: President Mangope
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Telexes: (+937) 3008 BOP

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Mr R F Botha
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COPIES TO one or more of the following:

- The Editor, The Star, PO Box 1014, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

- The Editor, New Nation, PO Box 10674, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
- Human Rights Commission, PO Box 32723, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa
- Mafikeng Anti-Repression Forum (MAREF), PO Box 158, Ratshidi 8681, 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 17160, Congella 4013, 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 21 August 1991.