

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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13 August 1993

SOUTH AFRICA (Bophuthatswana):

Thabo Sejanamane, human rights monitor

Themba Gwabeni, chairperson, Mafikeng branch of the African National Congress (ANC),

Nomvula Hlongwane (female)) all Mafikeng ANC

Ephraim Motoko) branch executive

Gordon Kgamanyane) members

Johannes "Jones" Molefe)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the six above detainees, who appear to be held incommunicado in detention without charge, and fears that they could be assaulted or tortured by the Bophuthatswana security police.

Thabo Sejanamane, coordinator for the Mafikeng Anti-Repression Forum (MAREF), was arrested by officers of the Bophuthatswana "homeland" security police at about 3 a.m. on 13 August 1993, at his home in the same building MAREF office. The police confiscated documents, including the constitution of MAREF and reports about police powers and the human rights situation in Bophuthatswana. So far the police have given no information as to where Thabo Sejanamane is currently held, or the reasons and legal basis for his arrest.

Nomvula Hlongwane, Ephraim Motoko, Gordon Kgamanyane and Johannes Molefe were arrested at their homes by Bophuthatswana security police officers in the early hours of 12 August 1993. Themba Gwabeni was arrested at about 10 a.m. on the same morning at his workplace. All five are active members of the ANC Mafikeng branch executive.

Lawyers representing the detainees have asked the police where they are being held, under what legislation, and the reasons for their detention. So far the police have not provided this information or granted lawyers access to the detainees. However, relatives have been allowed to hand clothing in to Mmabatho police station for the five ANC executive branch members.

The official reason for these arrests is not known. Thabo Sejanamane has been involved since 1991 in MAREF's work of monitoring human rights in the nominally independent "homeland" of Bophuthatswana. Amnesty International is concerned that he appears to have been detained solely because of this work and regards him as a prisoner of conscience, and is urging the Bophuthatswana authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally.

It appears the arrests of the five ANC branch executive members are intended to obstruct ANC plans to hold a march on 14 August, to present a petition to South Africa's representative in Mmabatho. The ANC Mafikeng branch executive applied for permission for the march, as they are required to do under the terms of Bophuthatswana's Internal Security Act, but the police refused permission. In addition, the funeral of an ANC Youth League member killed in a car accident is also due to take place on 14 August, within certain restrictions imposed by the police. Lawyers are seeking assurances that the police will not use excessive and unjustified force against marchers at either event. Nomvula Hlongwane was formerly a MAREF fieldworker and has been detained repeatedly over a period of some three years. Amnesty

International believes that she and her four ANC colleagues may also be prisoners of conscience and is appealing to the authorities to release all five immediately if they are not to be charged promptly with a recognizably criminal offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These detentions follow an ongoing pattern of severe harassment, repression and assaults of critics and political opponents of the Bophuthatswana authorities over the past two years or more. The authorities continue to use the stringent controls provided by the "homeland's" Internal Security Act (as amended and strengthened in March 1991) to prevent political meetings, demonstrations, marches and funeral processions and to prosecute participants. Moreover reports of torture in Bophuthatswana police custody continue to reach Amnesty International.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the detention of Thabo Sejanamane, who Amnesty International believes is a prisoner of conscience, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- expressing concern too at the detention of Themba Gwabeni, Nomvula Hlongwane, Ephraim Motoko, Gordon Kgamanyane and Johannes Molefe, who Amnesty International believes may also be prisoners of conscience, and calling for them to be released immediately if they are not to be charged promptly with a recognizably criminal offence;
- seeking assurances that they will not be subjected to threats, assaults or torture while in the custody of the Bophuthatswana police;
- seeking assurances that the Bophuthatswana police will at all times act with restraint when policing peaceful marches and demonstrations, and will commit themselves to respecting the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials adopted in 1990, which restricts the use of force and firearms against non-violent demonstrators, even if the demonstration is illegal.

APPEALS TO

1) Chief L M Mangope
President
Government Offices
Mmabatho

Bophuthatswana, South Africa

Telegrams: President Mangope, Bophuthatswana, South Africa

Telexes: 937 3008 BOP

Faxes: + 27 140 842626

Salutation: Dear Chief Mangope

2) Major-General P J Seleke
Commissioner of Police
Private Bag X2006
Mmabatho 8681

Bophuthatswana, South Africa

Telegrams: Police Commissioner, Mmabatho, Bophuthatswana, South Africa

Salutation: Dear Major-General

3) Mr Rowan Cronje
Minister of Defence
Department of Defence
Private Bag X2003
Mmabatho 8681

South Africa

Telegrams: Defence Minister, Mmabatho, Bophuthatswana, South Africa

Salutation: Dear Minister

4) 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 12 325 8669

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

- Sowetan, POB 6663, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa;
- The Mail, Mafikeng 8670, Bophuthatswana, South Africa
- Lawyers for Human Rights, Mafikeng Regional Office, POB 945, Mafikeng 8670, South Africa
- Mafikeng Anti-Repression Forum, PO Box 158, Ratshidi 8681, South Africa

and to diplomatic representatives of South Africa accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 September 1993.