

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Execution/
Fear of use of lethal force

25 August 1993

SOUTH AFRICA (Bophuthatswana):

School students in the neighbourhood of Itsoseng, near the Western Transvaal town of Lichtenburg, including David Letsile, aged 14 years, killed 10 August 1993

Amnesty International is concerned that the security forces of the nominally independent Bophuthatswana "homeland" are repeatedly using excessive and potentially lethal force against unarmed school and college students. In one incident, 14-year-old David Letsile was shot dead. Amnesty International fears for the safety of other young students in view of this pattern of indiscriminate assaults on students by the police.

On 10 August 1993, armed Bophuthatswana police officers arrived at Z M Seatlholo High School in Bodibe village, near Itsoseng. Students at the school had recently raised a number of grievances with the school principal, including a demand for a student representative body to be set up. The students were waiting to take a test when the police arrived.

According to eye-witness reports the police opened fire on the students with live ammunition. A bullet hit David Letsile in the head and he died in hospital the following day. As the other students fled, the police assaulted and teargassed them. Some sought refuge about 10 kilometers away at Tselagosi Secondary School, but the Bophuthatswana police in that vicinity teargassed students and teachers at that school too. On the same day the police also used teargas and *sjamboks* (whips) to disperse other high school students gathered in Itsoseng to present a memorandum to local government offices.

On 14 August 1993 at least 4,000 mourners attended David Letsile's funeral. Despite appeals from religious leaders and human rights workers, the police used water cannon, as well as teargas fired from an overhead helicopter, against the mourners. During a funeral procession that lasted about four hours, the police assaulted mourners indiscriminately, including elderly people, and many required hospital treatment for their injuries. According to an eye-witness, the mourners did not provoke the police with violence prior to these assaults. Eighty-one people were arrested. They appeared in Itsoseng magistrate's court on 23 August in connection with charges including attending an unlawful gathering, and the majority were released on free bail pending a further court appearance in September. Four remained in custody while they attempted to raise bail of 500 Rand.

Amnesty International has also received reports of assaults by the Bophuthatswana police on school and college students in the Mafikeng area, and some reports of detentions of students. The same pattern of assaults and violence by the Bophuthatswana police is occurring against university and higher education college students if they attempt to raise grievances over education issues or to challenge official prohibitions on freedom of assembly and expression. (See UA 170/93, AFR 53/20/93

of 25.5.93 and follow-up AFR 53/30/93 of 30.7.93.)

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

- calling upon the authorities to conduct an urgent, thorough and impartial investigation into the unprovoked assault on 10 August 1993 by Bophuthatswana "homeland" police on students at Z M Seatlholo High School in Bodibe village, Itsoseng, near the Western Transvaal town of Lichtenburg, and into the fatal shooting of 14-year-old David Letsile and urging that those responsible for human rights violations are brought to justice;

- calling for a similar investigation into police assaults on mourners at David Letsile's funeral;
- seeking assurances that other school students in Bodibe and other villages in the neighbourhood of Itsoseng, and students at schools in the neighbourhood of Mafikeng are protected against any further attacks and arbitrary detention;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to ensure that the Bophuthatswana "homeland" police 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) Mr F W de Klerk
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**
Faxes: + 27 12 323 3982

Salutation: Dear President

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

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Mr R P Meyer
Minister of Constitutional Development
Department of Constitutional Development and Planning
Private Bag X804
Pretoria 0001, South Africa

the following newspapers:

2) The Editor
The Sowetan
POB 6663, Johannesburg 2000
South Africa

Human rights organization:

4) Rustenburg Regional Council of Churches
P O Box 3274, Rustenburg 0300
South Africa

2) 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

4) Major-General P J Seleke
Commissioner of Police
Private Bag X2006
Mmabatho 8681, South Africa
**Telegrams: Police Commissioner,
Mmabatho, Bophuthatswana,
South Africa**

Salutation: Dear Major-General

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 6 October 1993.