

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 114/94 (AFR 53/21/94, 21 March 1994) - Torture / Health concern

SOUTH AFRICA:Michael Mathe, age 16 years

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Concern for the well-being of Michael Mathe, who is still in custody at Alberton Police Station, East Rand, has been heightened by a recent report that his mental state has further deteriorated and that he is showing suicidal tendencies.

At the initiative of his legal representative and other concerned parties, Michael Mathe was seen by an independent medical practitioner on 21 April who recommended that he be examined by a clinical psychologist. After seeing him on 26 April, the psychologist expressed considerable concern regarding his emotional state and, in a letter to the Alberton Police Station commander, recommended that he be admitted to hospital as a matter of urgency. The psychologist believed that Michael Mathe was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder following physical abuse under interrogation, and that he showed clear signs of suicidal tendencies. The Alberton police responded that he could only be transferred to hospital care on the authorization of the district surgeon (doctor in official service), and to Amnesty International's knowledge no such authorization has yet been given.

Michael Mathe was arrested in Katlehong on 9 January 1994 and reportedly tortured at Nyoni Farm police base near Vosloorus between 9 and 11 January. A rubber car tyre tube was pulled over his face as if to suffocate him, he was repeatedly assaulted and forced to sign statements written by his interrogators. His injuries were brought to the attention of Alberton magistrate's court during a bail application hearing on 12 January, but he was denied bail. After the bail hearing he was initially held at Boksburg Prison but subsequently transferred back to Alberton Police Station where he had been held during the period of his interrogation and torture at Nyoni Farm. He was seen by the district surgeon and given pain-relieving tablets, but received no thorough medical examination.

On 7 March he was informed that he was being charged in connection with attempted murder, but the police have so far provided no details of these charges to his legal representative. On 7 March all charges were withdrawn against another youth initially charged with him. On 11 March a second bail application on medical grounds was brought on behalf of Michael Mathe, but the court did not accept that there were sufficient grounds to grant him bail.

On 16 April representatives of Amnesty International visited Alberton Police Station and interviewed Michael Mathe. He is held with a group of other teenagers in a crowded, dirty and dimly-lit cell. The cell contains a toilet, and floor space sufficient only for the required number of mattresses. The police station has no exercise facilities for prisoners and so the youths are locked together around the clock except when allowed out to wash. In Amnesty International's view, the conditions in which Michael Mathe is held exacerbate the symptoms he is now displaying after being subjected to torture during interrogation.

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

- expressing heightened concern for the mental well-being of 16-year-old Michael Mathe, who was arrested in Katlehong on 9 January 1994, is currently held at Alberton Police Station and was reportedly tortured at Nyoni Farm police base near Vosloorus between 9 and 11 January;
- noting that a clinical psychologist who examined him on 26 April found that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and displayed clear signs of suicidal tendencies, and that on this basis the psychologist recommended that he be transferred to hospital care as a matter of urgency;
- expressing concern that his transfer appears to have been delayed on the grounds that authorization by the district surgeon is required before the transfer can take place;
- urging that, if Michael Mathe has not yet been transferred to hospital care, he be admitted to hospital without further delay, and that he continue to have access to visits from his lawyer, relatives and independent medical professionals.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Lieutenant General J Van Der Merwe  
Commissioner of Police  
Police Headquarters  
Private Bag X94  
Pretoria 0001, South Africa

**Telegrams: Police Commissioner van Der Merwe, Pretoria, South Africa**

**Telexes: 3-20838 SAPOB SA**

**Faxes: + 27 12 323 2033, +27 12 326 5162, +27 12 323 2456**

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

2) Lieutenant-General J F Calitz  
Regional Police Commissioner, Witwatersrand  
Private Bag X5  
Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

**Telegrams: Witwatersrand Regional Police Commissioner, Johannesburg, South Africa**

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

3) The Station Commander  
Alberton Police Station  
Alberton 1450, South Africa

**Telegrams: Alberton Police Station Commander, Alberton, South Africa**

**Salutation: Dear Station Commander**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

- Colonel Kriel, Political and Violent Crime Unit, South African Police, Nyoni Farm, Vosloorus 1459, South Africa, **Fax: +27 11 866 7101**
- Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal Repression (IBIIR), PO Box 32293, Braamfontein, Johannesburg 2017, South Africa

and to diplomatic representatives of SOUTH AFRICA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO ARRIVE NO LATER THAN 5 MAY 1994. (After elections on 26-28 April the newly elected national assembly is due to meet on 6 May.)**