

EXTERNAL

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*FOLLOW-UP TO INFORMATION ON EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION*

(Please see AFR 53/16/93 - 12 May 1993)

**Jeanette MAHONGO  
SOUTH AFRICA**

In October 1992 Jeanette Mahongo, a nursing sister and community leader, was killed in a petrol bomb attack on her home in Seymour, Ciskei in which Ciskei security police appeared to have been involved. Despite eyewitness evidence of police involvement, the authorities initially failed to conduct any thorough investigations into her death. At the end of July 1993, however, an inquest was held and on 3 August 1993 the inquest magistrate found a Ciskei security police officer and "other people unknown" to be responsible for Jeanette Mahongo's death. It is now a matter for the Ciskei Attorney General to decide whether or not to press charges against the police officer, Constable Mlungisi Willie.

### **Background**

Seymour is an isolated town in the nominally independent "homeland" of Ciskei with few basic amenities and a high unemployment rate. Jeanette Mahongo, who was in her 50s with several children, was a nursing sister at the local health clinic and a prominent member of her community. She was mayor of the town and active both within the local residents' association and the local branch of the African National Congress (ANC).

On 21 October 1992 at around 10 p.m. Jeanette Mahongo was in bed when a petrol bomb was thrown through the window of her bedroom, hitting her on the chest. Other occupants of the house heard a loud bang, followed by screams, and they rushed to her room and found her bed and clothing on fire. A second petrol bomb was thrown into the bedroom where her children and a woman companion were sleeping, but they escaped without injury. The people in the house struggled to put out the flames. Neighbours rushed to help with buckets of water, but were driven back by automatic gunfire aimed at them from the direction of the nearby police station. According to eyewitnesses, two local police officers were involved in shooting at the people who ran to help douse the flames. Jeanette Mahongo was taken to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Mdantsane, where she died from her injuries.

Immediately after the petrol-bomb attack an eyewitness saw two men running from the house to a car in which security police officers from Alice, a town some 50 minutes' drive away, had been seen earlier that day.

Lawyers acting for the Seymour community presented details about Sister Mahongo's killing to the Ciskei police and Attorney General, including allegations of security police complicity. When the Ciskei police appeared to be doing little to investigate the killing, Seymour

residents and others asked the South African Police to investigate. They responded by saying that they could not intervene as matters in Ciskei were outside their jurisdiction.

As a nominally independent "homeland", Ciskei has a head of state (currently Brigadier O.J. Gqozo). No country other than South Africa recognizes the "homeland" as independent. From late 1990, Brigadier Gqozo's administration has been dominated by officers from the South African Defence Force Military Intelligence who appear to have been instrumental in encouraging policies hostile to the ANC, which is widely supported in Ciskei and the Eastern Cape generally. Seymour has been regarded as consistently pro-ANC. Since Sister Mahongo's murder, the Ciskei authorities appear to have been engaged in a determined attempt to remove the remaining ANC-aligned members from the town council.

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In June 1992 Amnesty International published a 100-page report on security force complicity in torture and political killings entitled *South Africa, State of Fear* (AI Publications, Index no: AFR 53/09/92). The report covers the period 1990 to 1992 and documents incidents of politically-motivated killings and other grave human rights violations by members of the security forces or by others acting with their acquiescence. In the vast majority of cases, security force members and others implicated in these human rights violations have not been called to account for their actions.

In an oral statement to the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in February 1993, Amnesty International expressed its concern at the authorities' failure to carry out full investigations into killings and other abuses and stated that "This atmosphere of impunity resulting from what can at best be described as official negligence has been a major factor contributing to the perpetuation and escalation of the violence since 1990."

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that an inquest was held into Jeanette Mahongo's death by the Ciskei authorities. It is urging the authorities to ensure that the case will now proceed to trial in order that the full circumstances surrounding her death can be uncovered and all those implicated brought to justice.

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Africa  
Date: 25 August 1993

*MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Jeanette MAHONGO  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**Keywords**

Theme: Extrajudicial execution

Profession/association: Nursing sister

**Summary**

Jeanette Mahongo, a nursing sister and community leader from Ciskei, was killed on 21 October 1992 following a petrol bomb attack on her house in which security police officers appeared to have been involved. Initially, no thorough investigations were conducted into the killing, but at the end of July this year an inquest was held into her death and at the beginning of August the inquest magistrate found a local security police officer to have been involved with others in her killing. A decision must now be taken about whether to prosecute the officer. Please see the details attached.

**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below:

- welcoming the fact that an inquest was held into Sister Mahongo's killing
- noting that the magistrate found a Ciskei security police officer, Constable Mlungisi Willie, to have been responsible for her death, together with others as yet unidentified
- noting also that the magistrate's finding has now been referred to the Ciskei Attorney General's office for a decision about whether to prosecute Constable Willie
- expressing the hope that the case will now proceed to trial in order that the full circumstances surrounding Sister Mahongo's killing can be determined and all those responsible brought to justice
- urging that Constable Willie and any other suspects who may be police personnel be suspended from duty until the legal proceedings are over

*[In letters to the Ciskei Attorney General's office]:*

- welcoming the very encouraging fact that the Attorney General ordered an inquest into the killing and that the inquiry succeeded in identifying at least one of those responsible
- expressing the hope that the Attorney General's office will now decide to proceed with prosecution in due course. Noting that prosecution of those responsible for such killings is an effective way of deterring further human rights violations

### **Addresses**

Advocate J Jurgens  
Attorney General of Ciskei  
Supreme Court  
Bisho  
Ciskei  
South Africa

Mr F W De Klerk  
State President  
State President's Office  
Private Bag X83  
Pretoria 0001  
South Africa

Mr H J Kriel  
Minister of Law and Order  
Department of Law and Order  
Private Bag X463  
Pretoria 0001  
South Africa

Brigadier O J Gqozo  
Chairman of the Ciskei Council of State  
Private Bag X0016  
Bisho  
Ciskei  
South Africa

Mr H J Coetsee  
Minister of Justice, and Minister of Defence  
Department of Justice  
Private Bag X276  
Pretoria 0001  
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Supreme Court  
Bisho  
Ciskei  
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