

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 53/40/91  
Distr: UA/SC

8 November 1991

UA 383/91

Fear of Extrajudicial Execution

SOUTH AFRICA: Chechela MACHITJE, 30 years of age, member of  
the African National Congress

---

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of a former political prisoner and African National Congress (ANC) member, Chechela Machitje, who appears to be under threat by a group of men who are keeping him under surveillance. On 19 October 1990 Chechela Machitje was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for contraventions of the terrorism provisions of the 1982 Internal Security Act. He was released on bail pending the outcome of his appeal. As a result of the appeal hearing his sentence was changed, on 5 September 1991, to a five-year suspended sentence. From 18 September 1991 until Chechela Machitje went into hiding in mid-October, he has been followed by men in a white Mazda car. The same car has been seen regularly outside his family home in Thokoza township, which is about 30 kilometres south-east of Johannesburg, and outside the home of a close friend.

Through the car registration number, individuals concerned for Chechela Machitje's safety were able to trace the ownership of the vehicle to a car rental company. The renter of the vehicle, they discovered, was the same person who had on a number of occasions in late 1990 encountered Chechela Machitje near his home and asked him about the progress of his court case. He had also informed Chechela Machitje that he ran a taxi business between Johannesburg and the Venda "homeland". According to the rental company information, the Mazda was booked to be delivered to an address next door to the home of Chechela Machitje. There is in fact no house at that address. On 14 October 1991 Chechela Machitje's close friend was followed by the Mazda. Her family were able to identify one of the occupants of the vehicle as a policeman who had been involved in arresting and questioning Chechela Machitje before his 1990 trial.

Other Thokoza residents have also seen the same vehicle moving about the township and have identified another occupant as a person who has sought out other ANC members. He has apparently introduced the occupants of the vehicle to some people as former members of the ANC's armed wing from Venda and claimed that the ANC had instructed them to form defence units in Thokoza. Residents regard their activities and claims with alarm in view of the highly volatile situation in the township since the massacre of 23 supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) on 8 September by unknown gunmen. Further incidents occurred in Thokoza subsequently, including the killing of 18 mourners at the funeral on 7 October of assassinated ANC member and community leader, Sam Ntuli. At least two of the gunmen involved in this second massacre have been identified as members of the police force.

Amnesty International is urging the South African government to take prompt and appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Chechela Machitje who appears to

be a potential victim of assassination. It is also urging the government to investigate the activities of the group of men who are keeping Chechela Machitje under surveillance, and in particular reports that police have been involved in trailing him, to confirm if the police are engaged in official operations, and to order the police to desist from any unlawful activities.

Page 2 of UA 383/91

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Thokoza resident Chechela Machitje who appears to be under threat by a group of men who are keeping him under surveillance and, although this has been reported to the police, that no action appears to have been taken to stop their activities;

- urging the authorities to investigate fully the activities of this group of men, including reports that an identified member of the police force has been involved in trailing Chechela Machitje, to confirm if they are engaged in official operations, and to order the police to desist from any unlawful activities.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Mr F W De Klerk **Dear President**  
State 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/322158 PRES SA**  
**Faxes: + 27 12 323 3982**

2) Mr H J Kriel **Dear Minister**  
Minister of Law and Order  
Private Bag X463  
Pretoria 0001, South Africa  
**Telegrams: Minister Law/Order, Pretoria, South Africa**  
**Telexes: 321353/321358 HABS SA (via Ministry of Home Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 27 12 322 2559**

3) Lt-Gen Van Der Merwe **Dear Commissioner**  
Commissioner of Police  
Police Headquarters  
Private Bag X94  
Pretoria 0001, South Africa  
**Telegrams: Police Commissioner Van der Merwe, Pretoria, South Africa**  
**Telexes: 3-20772 SAPQM SA; 3-20838 SAPOB SA**  
**Faxes: + 27 12 323 2033**

4) Maj-Gen G N Erasmus **Dear Regional Commissioner**  
Regional Commissioner, Witwatersrand  
Private Bag 5

Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

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

**COPIES TO: one or more of the following:**

- The Star, PO Box 1014, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
- The New Nation, PO Box 10674, Johannesburg 2000 South Africa
- The Sowetan, PO Box 6663, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
- The Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal Repression (IBIIR),  
PO Box 32293, Braamfontein Johannesburg 2017, South Africa
- The African National Congress, Legal and Constitutional Affairs Department,  
PO Box 61884, Marshalltown 2307, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Human Rights Commission, PO Box 32723, Braamfontein 2017, 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 20 December 1991.