



TRAC

Transvaal Rural Action Committee

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TO: The Secretary, Wap Group 4 FAX NO.: 397 2211
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Chief Pupsey Sebogodi
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March 26, 1992

CODESA
The Secretary, Working Group #4

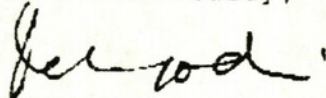
Dear Members of Working Group #4;

We are writing to you as members of the Bafurutshe бага Sebogodi tribe living in Braklaagte. Braklaagte became part of Bophutatswana because of South Africa's forced incorporation policy.

We want to draw your attention to the problems that we have had living in Bophutatswana. We have attached a memorandum which was compiled by the representatives of the Bafurutshe бага Sebogodi tribe living in Braklaagte. We urge the committee to take seriously the cry of our people to disband Bophutatswana, or at a minimum, to reincorporate Braklaagte back into South Africa.

Wishing you all success in helping to form a the united, democratic New South Africa.

Yours faithfully,



Pupsey Sebogodi
Chief of the Bafurutshe бага Sebogodi

SUBMISSION TO CODESA FROM THE BRAKLAAGTE COMMUNITY - 30.03.92

INTRODUCTION

In 1889 the Bafurutshe бага Sebogodi tribe purchased a piece of land known as Braklaagte from a white farmer, Mr Hutton. The farm, estimated to be some 4000 morgan, is situated some 22 kilometres from Zeerust and accommodates approximately 13,000 people.

The people of Braklaagte first heard of the South African Governments intention to incorporate their land into Bophuthatswana when it was announced in Parliament in 1986. A mass meeting was immediately called by the leaders of the community to find out what the views of the people were about the incorporation. The result of that meeting was a unanimous rejection of incorporation into Bophuthatswana.

The community requested its legal representatives to inform the South African Government of its dissatisfaction with its plans of incorporation.

On 15.12.88 a delegation from the community, accompanied by its legal representatives met with Minister Viljoen. The Minister promised to raise the matter with the Cabinet and relevant government departments but warned the community that it would be difficult to overthrow an agreement between the two governments.

On 27.12.88 the Braklaagte community received a letter from Minister Viljoen informing them that their land would be incorporated into Bophuthatswana on 01.01.89. Proceedings were immediately instituted in the Pretoria Supreme Court but on 08.03.89 the community lost its case against incorporation. An appeal against the judgement was later heard in Bloemfontein but again failed to find in the communities favour.

Dating from the loss of the initial court case in Pretoria there was ongoing confrontation between homeland authorities and the community. Hundreds of members of the community suffered harassment, detention and assault.

On 02.02.91 between 6 and 7 thousand members of the community were forced to flee from Bophuthatswana and seek refuge in churches in Zeerust where they spent 5 months. The flight from Braklaagte came as a result of continuing attacks from a vigilante group backed by the Bophuthatswana forces. The refugees were only able to return to Braklaagte after long negotiations between a community delegation lead by Chief Pupsey Sebogodi and Bophuthatswana officials and their Minister of Foreign Affairs. These negotiations were held in the presence of local South African Government officials.

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY THE BRAKLAAGTE COMMUNITY SINCE INCORPORATION.

1. 1990 - CHIEF JOHN SEBOGODI DEPOSED BY BOPHUTHATSWANA.

In 1990 the Bophuthatswana Government deposed Chief Sebogodi and imposed Chief Edwin Moilwa on the community. Chief Moilwa was never accepted by the vast majority of the community. He was able to suppress the will of the people as he had the support of President Mangope who used him as an instrument of repression. The majority of the people remain opposed to Chief Moilwa and demand that the son of Chief John Sebogodi - Pupsey Sebogodi be reinstated as chief of the Bafurutshe бага Sebogodi.

2. HARASSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.

Immediately after Chief Sebogodi was deposed the Bophuthatswana police set up a camp inside Braklaagte from which regular raids were made on the community. Beatings, torture and detentions, including that of Chief Sebogodi and his family were common.

2:1 Schools.

Police intimidation and violence were directed towards the pupils and teachers of the schools. Road Blocks were set up, school buses stopped and children who claimed to be South African rather than Bophuthatswanan citizens were beaten and kicked. Children as young as 14 were tortured and detained.

2 female teachers were taken to nearby farms where they were tortured and raped. Male staff were tortured and detained. Many older children were forced to flee from their homes and younger children dropped out of school. As a result the schools closed down.

In March 1991 community representatives opened discussions with Mr Tom Sitilwane, Minister of Information about the re-opening of the schools, and schools were re-opened in July 1991.

During the period in which the schools were closed the classrooms were occupied by Bophuthatswana forces who caused considerable damage to the buildings. The government agreed to repair the damage during negotiations but as yet little has been done.

2:2 Clinic.

In 1984 the community started to build its own clinic. At the time of incorporation the incomplete clinic buildings were taken over by the government and converted into a police station. After repeated representations were made to the South African and Bophuthatswana governments and the International community the

clinic was returned to the community in July 1991. The clinic is however still not opened. Mediciens du Monde who have cared for the health needs of the community since 1991 were closed down on 20.03.92 by the Bophuthatswana authorities leaving the community with no health services whatsoever.

3. PENSIONS.

On incorporation the South African Government handed over responsibility for the payment of pensions and disability grants to the Bophuthatswana authorities for all persons resident at Braklaagte.

Pensioners were told to apply for Bophuthatswana citizenship in order to apply for pensions. As they were unwilling to give up their South African citizenship they have remained without pensions since incorporation. This has caused untold suffering to the pensioners and their dependents.

It is important to note that at the time of incorporation SA pensions were higher than those in Bophuthatswana and continued harassment by the authorities was a further problem for pensioners who were obliged to apply to the same authorities for their pensions.

4. FREE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

From the time of incorporation all free political activity in Braklaagte ceased to exist. Many people were charged with attending illegal gatherings.

During negotiations in Zeerust the Bophuthatswana authorities agreed to call a mass meeting for the people of Braklaagte where the issue of incorporation would be discussed. The meeting was to be at a neutral venue under a neutral chair. The meeting has not yet been convened.

5. DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WITHOUT CONSULTATION.

5:1 ROADS - Much needed roads have been built by the authorities but without consultation over positioning. This has resulted in roads being constructed across fields damaging the productive capacity of the land.

5:2 WATER - Boreholes have been sited without taking community needs into consideration leading to a waste of resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS.**1. REFERENDUM**

The people of Braklaagte call on the Bophuthatswana government to hold a referendum, under international supervision, to determine the feelings of the people on re-incorporation into South Africa.

2. RE - INSTATEMENT OF CHIEF SEBOGODI.

The people of Braklaagte request that chief Edwin Moilwa be replaced by the Pupsey Sebogodi, son of the deposed Chief Sebogodi.

3. PENSIONS

The South African Government should immediately re-instate all pensions lost on re-incorporation to all South African citizens resident in Braklaagte and call on President Mangope to allow new applications from potential new pensioners resident in Braklaagte. Furthermore persons previously in receipt of pensions in South Africa should be entitled to all backpay for the period that they have been without pensions through no fault of their own. Families of recently deceased pensioners should be entitled to monies owed to their deceased relatives

4. POLICE.

All police units should be withdrawn from the Braklaagte village immediately as promised by Governor Mfundisi at a meeting held with the community on 5.2.92

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

No new developments in Braklaagte should be undertaken without consultation with the community and the building occupied by the police should be handed over to the community.

6. RE-INCORPORATION OF BRAKLAAGTE.

The people of Braklaagte demand to be re-incorporated into South Africa regardless of the fate of Bophuthaswana as a whole.

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23 March 1992

Medecins du Monde (MDM) is a humanitarian, non-governmental organization which was founded in 1979 by several French doctors. It currently runs projects in approximately forty countries worldwide, including France, providing health care to needy populations.

Medecins du Monde has worked since 1986 in deprived townships and rural areas of South Africa. MDM is now in the process of registering as an external company in this country. The programme is funded by the European Commission through Kagiso Trust and by the French Embassy, under the auspices of which it operates. MDM works in close conjunction with the progressive health sector in South Africa and some of its projects also have links with church structures. Expatriate doctors are registered with the South African Medical and Dental Council.

Medecins du Monde started working with the Braklaagte community in March 1991, at the request of the National Medical and Dental Association. Braklaagte was incorporated into Bophuthatswana on 31 December 1988. Most of the village's 10,000 inhabitants sought refuge in January 1991 in the township of Ikaleleng near Zeerust, 20 kilometres from Braklaagte, across the South African border, in response to the killing of five villagers. MDM initially employed a part time community nurse, Botho Mahila, to establish a clinic service for the refugees, and supplied essential drugs for the clinic. MDM also undertook the training of two community health workers, selected by the villagers.

After the inhabitants of Braklaagte returned to their homes in July 1991, it was decided by the village health committee to open a small primary health care centre. This was motivated by the fact that the Bophuthatswana government mobile clinic only visited Braklaagte one half day per month and that the villagers were refused South African governmental health care in the nearest town of Zeerust. A building was donated by Chief Sebogodi for the community clinic. Medecins du Monde agreed to continue to employ Nurse Mahila, to supervise the clinic and the ongoing training of the two community health workers, whose role was to carry out health education in the community. An MDM doctor also visited the clinic on a regular basis. Essential drugs were supplied by MDM.

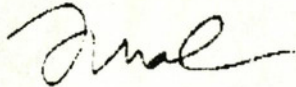
The Medecins du Monde coordinator, Dr J. Mathieson, and Nurse Mahila held meetings with Dr M.D.F. Myer, superintendent of Lehurutshe hospital and Matron Zeeman of Zeerust hospital in order to inform them of the activities of the community clinic and to request collaboration for referral of patients needing

hospital treatment.

On 20 March 1992, Dr Philippe Josue, a French volunteer physician working for MDM and Mrs Elsie Motsosi, a voluntary assistant at the clinic, were arrested and taken for interrogation first to the army camp in Braklaagte and then to the Governor's office in Lehurutshe. Although they were released the same day, they were advised that the clinic was "illegal" and anyone found there would be arrested again.

The clinic has thus been forced to close, despite the fact that the health needs of the community are still as acute as ever. The mobile clinic still pays only one visit to the village per month; moreover, pensions are not being received in Braklaagte because beneficiaries chose not to take up Bophuthatswana citizenship; and the villagers, who rely on subsistence farming for their livelihood, are already suffering the effects of the drought. The closure of the clinic is thus inflicting serious hardship on the inhabitants of Braklaagte and can be expected to result in severe morbidity and probably mortality in the village.

As an international humanitarian organization, without affiliations to any political organizations either inside or outside South Africa, Medecins du Monde therefore requests that the Braklaagte community clinic should reopen and that its staff be spared harrassment in the future.



Jane Mathieson, M.D., programme coordinator
23 March, 1992