

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Execution / Fear for safety

5 July 1994

SOUTH AFRICA

Blessing Vusumuzi NTULI, teacher and resident of
Gezinsila Township, Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal
Members of the Ntuli Family

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of the family of Blessing Vusumuzi Ntuli, who was shot dead outside his home in Gezinsila township on 20 June 1994, in circumstances suggesting he was extrajudicially executed.

Blessing Vusumuzi Ntuli had been subjected to death threats since at least April 1994 by individuals in a nearby squatter area known as the "Scrapyard". Those threatening him are reported to have said that they did not want supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) living in the area. According to reports, at the time of his murder a KwaZulu Police armoured vehicle was seen patrolling the area with its lights switched off. Also a teargas canister was thrown through a window of the house after the shooting. There are fears that members of the Ntuli family are being targeted by armed men living in the "Scrapyard". These men appear to include Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters who received paramilitary training in a camp established by the former KwaZulu "homeland". They are reportedly operating under the control of an IFP-aligned traditional leader and two other men, who have been repeatedly linked to killings and other violence, and with the assistance of members of the former KwaZulu "homeland" police force.

Since 22 June aggressive crowds of up to 50 people have been gathering outside the Ntuli house or in the Scrapyard. On 22 June the crowd moved around the outside of the house displaying so-called traditional weapons. On other occasions members of the crowd have fired at the home from the Scrapyard with automatic weapons and rifles. Some members of the Ntuli family have fled the house to places of safety. Others have remained in their home.

On 22 June members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) based at Eshowe Police Station arrived at the Ntuli home. The police reportedly failed to get the crowd to disperse, saying the situation was beyond their control and that they needed to call in South African National Defence Force (SANDF) troops. A number of soldiers arrived the next day, and when they were inside the Ntuli home, attackers shot at the house. The soldiers were apparently able to identify the weapons used as R1 rifles and G3 automatic weapons. On 23 or 24 June the soldiers raided the "Scrapyard", but reportedly found no weapons or ammunition; it is alleged that members of the KwaZulu Police allegedly removed them from the scene prior to the raid. On 30 June members of SAPS raided the Ntuli house, seized two homemade firearms and arrested six youths, some of whom were members of the family. Amnesty International has an unconfirmed report that the youths were released on 2 July.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following the April 1994 national elections and the adoption of the new constitution, the KwaZulu "homeland" ceased to exist legally and became part of the renamed KwaZulu-Natal province. However the police force of the

former "homeland" has still not been integrated into the South African Police Force (now called the South African Police Service) and the formal allocation of powers between the national minister of police services and the nine provincial ministries still awaits completion. Eshowe and Gezinsila township fell within the jurisdiction of the South African Police, but since mid-1993 members of the KwaZulu Police operated in the area illegally (see UA 207/93, AFR 53/27/93, 23 June 1993). During the two months prior to the elections, political violence intensified in the Eshowe area, with a number of residents being killed in circumstances indicating the active complicity of the KwaZulu Police (see EXTRA 19/94, AFR 53/25/94, 6 April 1994). This pattern has continued since the elections, with the locally-based South African Police apparently unable or unwilling to act effectively against those responsible for the violence.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the family of Blessing Vusumuzi Ntuli and other residents in Gezinsila township whose lives are being threatened by armed men operating from the nearby "Scrapyard", apparently with the complicity of members of the former KwaZulu "homeland" police force;
- calling for a full independent investigation into the circumstances of the killing of Blessing Vusumuzi Ntuli in Gezinsila on 20 June and into other serious acts of violence which have occurred in the area since the April 1994 elections, in particular into allegations that KwaZulu police have acted in complicity with those organizing the violence;
- requesting information from the authorities regarding any specific measures they have taken to protect the lives of the Ntuli family and other vulnerable residents of Gezinsila township;
- urging the authorities to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations in the Gezinsila-Eshowe area are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

1) Mr S Mufamadi
 Minister of Safety and Security
 Private Bag X463 Pretoria 0001
 South Africa
Faxes: +27 12 320 5065
Telegrams: Minister Mufamadi, Pretoria, South Africa
Salutation: Dear Minister

2) Lt-Gen W H Steyn
 Natal Regional Police Commissioner
 PO Box 391 Durban 4000
 South Africa
Telegrams: Natal Regional Police Commissioner, Durban South Africa
Salutation: Dear Commissioner

3) Rev C J Mthethwa
 Minister of Police
 Private Bag X06
 Ulundi, KwaZulu-Natal 3838
 South Africa
Telegrams: Minister Mthethwa, Ulundi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Faxes: +27-358-202 447

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

- Station Commander, Eshowe Police Station, Private Bag 505, Eshowe 3815, South Africa;
- Natal Monitor, c/o CSDS University of Natal, King George V Ave, Durban 4001;
- Human Rights Committee, Natal Office, Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrews Street, Durban 4001

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 15 August 1994.