

Centre on
Housing Rights
and Evictions



21 October 2005

President Festus Mogae
President's Office
Private Bag 001
Gaborone,
Botswana
op.registry@gov.bw
Tel: +267 395 0800
Fax: +267 395 0858 / 395 7800 / 581 028

Dear Mr. President,

Re: Forced Eviction in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve

With reference to the reply of C.S. Maribe, from the Public Relations Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana [see Annex A], to our letter of 13 September 2005 regarding the forced eviction of the Gana and Gwi Bushmen from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), we wish to state the following:

We have received information from various sources on this eviction, and are fully aware that there is some debate over the Government of Botswana's motive for the eviction of the Bushmen from the CKGR. Some organizations and individuals argue that the Government evicted the Bushmen in order to make way for further diamond mining, while the Government says that it wanted to provide better services to the Bushmen, such as schools and health clinics.

What is undeniable is that many of the Bushmen never agreed to leave the CKGR, which they regard as their homeland and their way of life. Other members of the group were initially persuaded to leave and were compensated to some extent by the Government during the 1997 and 2002 evictions, but never regarded their decision to relocate as giving up their rights to their land. Later, many of the Bushmen were dissatisfied with the relocation and some even returned to the CKGR. Not only had they been deprived of their traditional way of life, they were also being forced to live in terrible conditions and without access to income-generating opportunities in the area to which the Government had relocated them.

Although the Government persuaded several hundred Bushmen to leave, many others never agreed to leave and were forcibly evicted, in the process losing their housing, property and boreholes. In addition, those who managed to stay behind, were continuously harassed and threatened.

In the light of this information, COHRE maintains that the Government of Botswana has violated its legal obligations under international human rights law for various reasons including, but not limited to:

- (1) The Government of Botswana ended negotiations with the affected community prematurely;
- (2) The evictions have not been deemed to meet the "exceptional circumstances" threshold by an independent and impartial tribunal; and
- (3) No compensation was offered for the forced eviction and destruction of property and resources, such as water boreholes.

COHRE urges the Government of Botswana to return to negotiations with the Bushmen and allow those who so desire to return and remain in the CKGR. Any housing, facilities or property that have been destroyed, and services that were terminated, should also be restored to them.

We look forward to ongoing engagement with the Government of Botswana, until this matter can be resolved, and so look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Jean du Plessis
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
83 Rue de Montbrillant
1202 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41.22.7341028
RSA tel: +27.825575563
E-mail: jean@cohre.org

For Scott Leckie
Executive Director
COHRE

Cc:

C.S. Maribe
Public Relations, Research and Information Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation
Gaborone, Botswana
Tel: +267 3600763
Fax: +267 3913366
Mobile: 71642458
E-mail: cmaribe@gov.bw

Miriam Ross
Survival International
6 Charterhouse Buildings
London EC1M 7ET
United Kingdom
Tel: + 020 7687 8700
Fax: + 020 7687 8701
Email: mr@survival-international.org

WIMSA - Working Group of Indigenous Minorities
in Southern Africa
8 Bach Street Windhoek
PO Box 80733 Windhoek
Namibia
Tel: +264 61244909
Fax: +264 61272806
Email: wimsareg@iafrica.com.na

Alice Mogwe & Maureen Akena
DITSHWANELO
The Botswana Centre for Human Rights
Private Bag 00416
Gaborone, Botswana
Tel: + 267 3906998
Fax: +267 3907778
E-mail: legal.ditshwanelo@info.bw

Braam le Roux
Kuru Family of Organisations
Letloa Trust
PO Box 472
Shakawe
Botswana
Tel: +267 6875200
Fax: +267 6875084/5
E-mail: bleroux@botsnet.bw

Andrew Bone
De Beers Group
External Affairs
17 Charterhouse Street
London EC1N 6RA
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7430 3118 (direct)
Tel: +44 (0)20 7430 3405 (secretary)
Tel: +44 (0)7718 656 150 (mobile)
Fax: +44 (0)20 7831 0663

First People of the Kalahari
fpkbotswana@fastmail.fm

Roger Chennells
scarlin@iafrica.com

Annex A

=====
Date: Mon, 19 Sep 2005 17:11:51 +0200
From: C Maribe <CMaribe@gov.bw>
Subject: Allegations of forced evictions in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve
To: jean@cohre.org
=====

Dear Jean du Plessis,

It has come to our attention that you have expressed some concern about the relocation of the former resident of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and allegations made to the effect that Basarwa have been forcibly relocated from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Such allegations have been and are being circulated on the internet by a London based NGO called Survival International. Survival International has been provided with the true facts about the CKGR relocation, but have chosen to feign ignorance and persisted in making the grossly misleading and false allegations. Other people who have exposed to the information circulated by Survival International have made an effort to visit Botswana to establish the facts first hand. Their reports and observations stand in clear contrast to the allegations made by Survival International. I therefore suggest that you first familiarize yourself with information about this relocation which is posted at the Government of Botswana website www.gov.bw <<http://www.gov.bw/>> and you will be welcome to visit Botswana to see for yourself the situation on the ground.

I believe that the information provided in the Government of Botswana website will greatly assist you to discuss this issue with us from an informed standpoint. If you need any clarification please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

C.S. Maribe
Public Relations, Research and Information Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Gaborone, Botswana
Tel: +267 3600763
Fax: +267 3913366
Mobile: 71642458
E-mail: cmaribe@gov.bw