

Permission Withdrawn

Mrs. Masakona Molovhedzi came to the Johannesburg Advice Office at the beginning of 1971. She is a widow with three children, Eliza, who is twelve, Sarah, who is four, and Selina, who is two years old. She had been ordered to leave the prescribed area of Alexandra within 72 hours and to return to the Louis Trichardt area where she was born but where she no longer has any relatives or friends. She stated that she had been living in Alexandra since 1952 but she was unable to produce proof satisfactory to the authorities of this long residence. Since her husband's death she had been supporting herself and her three children by doing casual work in Alexandra and Johannesburg. She was also hoping that she might be entitled to some money from the Workmen's Compensation Fund in respect of her husband's death. Her appeal against her endorsement out of Alexandra failed but she was given temporary permission to remain pending the outcome of her claim for compensation. This permission was withdrawn in January, 1972, and she was removed from Alexandra with her children and "resettled" in her homeland. The terrible letters printed below show what has happened to her since then.

Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.
1/2/72.

I arrived well. The welfare people sent me without a cent. I don't know what to do especially with this small children. If you have R5 please help by posting it to me.

I was shown to a hut on my arrival and the hut has no door, nothing in the hut and no food to eat. My kids are hungry.

Please post the money as soon as possible. Do not wait another week. Those people just throw me to the Chief of the place.

I am trying to build a house. My belongings were alright except one chair which is broken.

I am also waiting for my child's birth certificate. Please reply as soon as possible. Do send me some postage stamps as well.

Answer please.

Yours faithfully,
Masakona Molovhedzi.

P.S. We arrived well.

The school here wants twelf books for writing and a ball point.

Yours faithfully,
Eliza Mulovhedzi.

Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.

I am happy to write this letter to you. I am so sorry my two children are sick. I have no money to take them to the doctor. Did anybody try to get a birth certificate for my child from the Government. I still have not been able to get it. The child is Selina, born in 1970.

The peri-urban people who sent me out here are now prepared to help me claim my money. If you can see me now you can pity me the way I am poor. When I was in Johannesburg I was better off because I have always tried hard to work and support my family.

I was promised by the Peri-urban people that the Government will pay out my husband claim to me at home. I have not been payed yet. My other child who was remaining in Alex arrived on Monday.

The rest of my goods followed but most of them are broken.

I am missing Eliza's birth certificate. She was born on the 2nd April.

Yours faithfully,
Masakona Molovhedzi.

Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.

Thank you very much for the money you sent. I got R17,00.

The baby is still sick. Selina is a bit better. I bought the door with some of the money and with the little that was left I bought a big bag of mealie meal. Now I have no money to buy the other door of the kitchen hut.

I am also worried about birth certificates of my children as I said before Eliza's one is still missing. I also told you before I left that I could not get Selina's birth certificate (the baby).

I still have not got a cent from my husband's claim. I don't know what to do. The big bag of mealie meal cost R5,30 here. They are very expensive.

Please send me the birth certificate of Elisa as soon as possible because if not she will not be able to start school in time.

Please answer my letter as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,
Masakona Molovhedzi.
Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.

Thank you very much for the last letter. I saw the Bantu Commissioner and he told me that the money of my late husband claim has not come yet. What must I do now? Selina is still sick. I took her to the hospital. The doctor says it is because of the milk I am now giving her here. I cannot get the milk I used to buy her in Johannesburg.

I have come to the end of the mealie meal I bought. I am now quite confused because I have no money. I used the rest of the money for the journey to town to see the Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

The return fare is R1. I have gone to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner for 6 days. I don't know what to do.

Yours faithfully,
Masakona Molovhedzi.

N.B. The old lady Masakona is getting thin each day. I am writing this letter because I feel terrible about it.

My name is Mr. Makana Mphigalale. I always write all her letters.

Masakona is asking for soap to wash, could you phone the welfare? Please tell the welfare that Masakona is starving.

Sarah wants to go to creche and there is no creche here.

Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.

The baby is so ill. Maybe the doctor at the hospital will admit her. Sarah is asking for a doll and soup. I think the journey to town is too much for the kids. I have nobody to watch them when I am out.

I really don't know when I will stop going to see the Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

I wonder why the welfare people are so quiet. I was hoping they would keep in touch with me.

Selina was born on the 1/5/70.

Yours faithfully,
Masakona Molovhedzi.
Nzhelele School,
P.O. Nzhelele,
Via Louis Trichard.

Please send me one dress, one pair of shoes, one ball point and exercise books with lines. Our school requires all the items I have asked for in this letter.

We must have all this by Monday.

I forgot, one berret also.

Yours faithfully,
Eliza Mulovhedzi.

N.B. I also ask for soap. Sarah my younger sister always cries. She misses her creche days. We have no creche here.