

# Detainees speak out!

**THE HELICOPTER:** The victim's hands are handcuffed beneath his knees and he is suspended somehow on a stick between two tables. He is kicked so that he spins on the stick. While he is spinning on the stick, the victim is beaten with sjamboks.

This is how Siyolo Mashiqana, a worker at Pilkington who was detained on July 25, describes a common form of torture allegedly used during interrogation at the Louis Le Grange police station in Port Elizabeth.

His is just one of the many tales of police assaulting detainees. Brother Mashiqana's affidavit along with others was used in support of a Supreme Court application brought against the Minister of Law and Order and several high ranking Eastern Cape police officers on September 25.

In another affidavit, Vusumzi George describes how on July 21 at about 2.30 am the police woke him up by throwing stones on the roof of his house and hammering on all the windows and doors.

'Eventually the police gained entry by breaking and climbing through the window.'

'Two plainclothes policemen entered my bedroom where my wife and I were sleeping. My wife was nine months pregnant but the police nevertheless beat her and myself with quirts.'

'Shortly after the arrest but before I was placed in the back of the landrover, I was assaulted by being dragged violently across a wooden fence pole and having my foot heavily stamped upon.'

Vusumzi George was taken to St Albans prison where he was placed in a cell with 10 to 15 other detainees.

One week after he had arrived in prison, he says, he was taken to Louis Le Grange police station for interrogation.

'While questioning



me...they made me sit on the floor with my hands handcuffed behind my back and forced my legs open by beating the insides of my thighs with sjamboks. They then attempted repeatedly to kick me in my private parts.'

'They then asked me if I had seen Dennis Neer. I said I had and that he had a bruised face. They then said that if I did not tell the truth I would end up like Dennis.'

'They then beat me with a sjambok on my back and chest and smashed my toes

and head with a short wooden stick. They then took me to another room and four black policemen forced me to do physical exercises until I was exhausted.'

'They then made me hold a chair above the heads of the other detainees, while I was forced to crouch in an uncomfortable position. During this no questions were asked.'

'Then Tungata, another security policeman, came in and ordered me to stand as if I was embracing a metal filing cabinet. He then began punching me in the kid-

neys from behind and hammering me on my shoulders with two fisted blows. He repeated this type of assault a number of times and then beat my ears with open hands. He then threw me onto the floor while kicking me and asked me questions.'

'Two other policemen entered the room and assisted with the general assault which lasted about half-an-hour.'

'Tungata and two other policemen who had recently entered the room, took me to the next door room and beat

me with their fists and open hands until I began screaming. Two or three white policemen then came into the room and one of the three brought a wet towel which was placed tightly around my face and head. While the towel was suffocating me they beat me. They then removed the towel from my face and throttled me,' said Vusumzi George in his affidavit.

A National Automobile and Allied Workers Union shop steward at General Motors, James Tamboer, was detained at 3.30 am on July 22.

He writes in his affidavit that during interrogation two policemen instructed him to sit on the floor.

'The white policeman held my hands behind my back while the other walked on my ankles. It was very painful...He then put his hand against my forehead and banged the back of my head hard against the wall twice. He said 'Sit daar jou striker'. I still have headaches from these blows.'

Other detainees in their affidavits speak of how fellow detainees would arrive back from interrogation with gashes, bruises, swollen faces and some were hardly able to walk.

Siyolo Mashiqana describes how Dennis Neer, general secretary of the Motor Assembly and Components Workers Union of SA, left the cell one morning 'well and able to move normally' but when he came back in the evening 'he moved very slowly as if in great pain.'

'His right cheek was bruised and swollen and he cradled one forearm with the other. When he removed his jacket I saw that the arm was swollen from wrist to elbow. He also had swollen marks on his back near the kidneys.'

Siyolo Mashiqana in his affidavit says that Dennis Neer was eventually taken to Livingstone Hospital on July 25. He returned to the cell on August 30 with his arm bandaged in a sling.

## Workers clock-out early after police assaults

AFTERNOON shift workers at a Uitenhage textile factory, Cape of Good Hope, clocked-out early for three nights after five of their colleagues were sjambokked by members of the security forces on September 17.

The workers who knocked off at 5 pm instead of the usual 10 pm demanded that management take some form of action to ensure the safety of its workers.

The company threatened to fire the shift workers but backed down when the entire workforce pledged solidarity with them.

The workers agreed to return to the usual knock-off time

when the company said it would do all in its power to reason with the police.

Cape of Good Hope also said it would get the Uitenhage Chamber of Industries to look into the problems faced by workers because of the curfew regulations. It said it would get the Chamber to meet FOSATU representatives.

Workers have further demanded that the company pay them full pay for the hours they did not work and that the assaulted workers be paid compensation. Management have agreed to consider this request.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News, Wil-

liam Dondashe, one of the assaulted workers, said they were on their way home from work when they noticed that a Hippo was following them.

'It went past and blocked us by stopping across the road in front of us. Immediately police jumped out singing in Afrikaans and came running towards us wielding their sjamboks,' he said.

'Two came towards me and asked for my permit. One grabbed my clothes and started boxing me hard with his fist. And as I was trying to defend myself the other kept on hitting me on my back with his sjambok.'

'All along I was trying to pull my permit from my pocket. Eventually after a long struggle I was able to get it out and show it to the policeman who had been punching me.'

'The man then went away to inspect it. He noticed a cancelled word and wanted to know from me why the word was scratched out. I told him that a mistake was made at the factory as they thought we were staying in KwaNobuhle.'

'Suddenly the policeman ordered me to 'Hardloop Kaffir'. He gave me my permit and walked away,' Brother Dondashe said.

'The following day I rounded

up the others to find out what had happened to them as I was worried about Billy Mkrakra who had been assaulted the most.'

'I told people that I felt some pain in my ribs. Everybody reported the same feeling in different parts of their body.'

'It was then we decided to report the matter to the police. When we reported the incident at the police station I asked the policeman there whether the police were right in assaulting us whilst we were in possession of permits. He showed no concern,' Brother Dondashe said.

The police are investigating charges of assault.